



CASE STUDY: WILBUR-ELLIS

TRANSITIONING FROM TRADITIONAL IT TO A SECURE CLOUD WITH ALERT LOGIC.

Founded in 1921, Wilbur-Ellis is a leading international marketer and distributor of agricultural products, animal feed and specialty chemicals and ingredients. Wilbur-Ellis' operating divisions include a wide range of products and services. For instance, in the United States, their agriculture division sells crop inputs to farmers. Another division markets and distributes animal feed to North America and Asia Pacific. Their oldest division distributes specialty chemicals and ingredients throughout 18 countries in Asia.

Wilbur-Ellis now has 250 locations worldwide. They have experienced strong annual growth and are now a \$3.1 billion dollar organization that ranks on Forbes' list of America's Largest Private Companies. With their massive growth came complexities and challenges, particularly for their Information Technology department. With a company dynamic fueled by rapid growth, the Wilbur-Ellis IT department set out to do more with their existing resources. Having multiple business units, and diverse mobile technologies means they needed to simplify and optimize their IT infrastructure while ensuring security across the enterprise.

In this success story, Rick Cahoon, Director Enterprise Security and Support, discusses his experience in driving the right strategy, lessons learned by Wilbur-Ellis, and the benefits received from leveraging the Amazon Web Services (AWS) cloud platform and Alert Logic solutions.



WILBUR-ELLIS®
Ideas to Grow With™

ABOUT

Wilbur-Ellis is a privately held agriculture, chemical, seed, fertilizer and services retailer headquartered in the United States. They are focused on providing growers with the newest and best technology to improve their return on investment. Having a food supply that is dependable and affordable is absolutely critical for humanity.

SOLUTIONS

ALERT LOGIC® ENTERPRISE

WAF, Managed intrusion detection and vulnerability scanning network system, and application layer monitoring for cloud, on-premise or hybrid environments



“CLOUD FIRST” PHILOSOPHY

About 15 years ago, the decision was made to make the company more of a holistically profitable enterprise versus a series of successful independent locations. Wilbur-Ellis envisioned their organization progressing with technology well before it happened. When it was time to build an agile infrastructure to support their customer facing application called “AgVerdict,” they knew they needed to build upon a scalable cloud platform. They chose AWS and the engineering precision of Options I/O to build a security footprint in that infrastructure. Options I/O, a partner to Alert Logic, is a cloud marketplace and consulting company which specializes in AWS technology.

“NOT HAVE TO LOOK AT EVERY INCIDENT AND EVENT ALL DAY, EVERY DAY THANKS TO ALERT LOGIC’S INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM.”

- Rick Cahoon, Director Enterprise Security and Support

Wilbur-Ellis has a “cloud first” philosophy which helped the AgVerdict implementation to be quick and successful. “Our ‘cloud first’ philosophy says that any net new application Wilbur-Ellis adopts will be analyzed for optimization in the cloud and for AgVerdict, AWS was the best fit. If it makes sense—which it usually does—we put the application in the cloud.” Now, Wilbur-Ellis uses the most popular cloud applications for all their Human Resources, Sales, IT procurement and many other applications. An example of this is their recent conversion to Microsoft Office 365 that includes all of their SharePoint components.

Also driving change for Wilbur-Ellis is the fact that the agriculture industry, as a whole, is going through a technological revolution by adding diverse mobile devices as part of the success metric for growing higher yielding and quality crops. As a result, iPads, smart phones, GPSs, and drones are now all part of the day-to-day operations at Wilbur-Ellis.

Their “cloud first” philosophy has also resulted in pushing their network perimeter out further than ever. The new perimeter implied greater risks and fueled the question of how Wilbur-Ellis will be able to be aware of what is going on in their network and AWS environment. Any answer other than a definitive “yes” would mean gambling with a data breach and the trust of fiercely loyal clients. The company was not willing to put the 94-year-old Wilbur-Ellis reputation on the line. They needed solid security solutions and expertise for AWS.

SELECTING IN-DEPTH SECURITY-AS-A-SERVICE

Wilbur-Ellis looked at their entire set of security solutions and focused first on log analysis and web application security. “I think there are certain pieces to a security program that are foundational upon which to build. A big step to getting on the path of developing a comprehensive security strategy took place when we implemented a next generation firewall. At that point, it was clear we needed to go beyond password and perimeter security,” explained Cahoon.

They also realized that when they saw unusual activity on the firewall, they really had no way to practically look at what was happening on servers or devices within their infrastructure. Since logs expire very quickly and there was no correlation, it was problematic to get data intelligence across their network. With their previous tool, they were unable to scale their manpower to determine when an issue started, who started it, or whether it occurred at the server or application level.

Alert Logic was one of several solutions tested and Alert Logic Enterprise was the clear leader. Wilbur-Ellis found that Alert Logic competitors were unnecessarily complex and far too costly to even compete. According to Cahoon, they were able to set up the Alert Logic solution quickly without issues. The solution allowed them to create alerts and nightly reports and keep an eye on key areas of their network. Cahoon’s team receives those reports from Alert Logic via email first thing every morning. By having Alert Logic Enterprise in place, Wilbur-Ellis has threat detection, vulnerability scanning, log management and web application protection that bolster their security posture.

Cahoon pointed out that, while the products provide tremendous value, it is the Alert Logic **ActiveWatch** incident management ~~ActiveIntelligence~~ team and services that bring it all together for them. "The ActiveWatch analysts correlate events they see within our environment to show us when there may be something we need to act upon. The great time saver for Wilbur-Ellis is that we do not have to look at every incident and event all day, every day."

If an Alert Logic security analyst recommends taking action on specific incidents or events, the Wilbur-Ellis team will take appropriate steps such as having their help desk address endpoint remediation or investigate specific user activity. With threat analysis and aggregation by Alert Logic, they do not have to waste time on investigating false positives. Instead, they are delivered insight only into specific events that truly matter, thereby keeping Wilbur-Ellis protected and giving their IT department time to focus on other key projects.

CHOOSING ALERT LOGIC TO SECURE THEIR DYNAMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Rick Cahoon recommends Alert Logic to organizations looking for cost effective threat management platform, incident response and expert services, for cloud or on-premises or in a hybrid environment.

SIMPLIFIED LOG MANAGEMENT

With Alert Logic automated log collection, aggregation, and normalization of logs across entire environments, organizations save time and money and reduce complexity. Along with simplified log management, Alert Logic provides scalable real-time log collection with 90-day and 1-year data retention to accommodate your growing and changing environment. With Alert Logic, organizations like Wilbur-Ellis do not have to focus on managing the storage, compute, and software required for ~~24x7~~ **24/7** availability.

MANAGED THREAT DETECTION

Alert Logic solutions combine advanced technology and security expertise to deliver the features, security content, and actionable intelligence that organizations need to uncover and remediate active threats that are affecting their environments.

MANAGED SECURITY

With managed security, Wilbur-Ellis gets expert recommendations from the Alert Logic Security Operations Center **24/7** ~~24x7~~. Alert Logic security analysts ensure they have the support they need to react to any incidents through Alert Logic Enterprise.

NATIVE PUBLIC CLOUD SECURITY

The Alert Logic SaaS delivery model makes it easy to get up and running quickly. All Alert Logic solutions are purpose-built to secure environments where they reside and protect cloud environments, unlike competing solutions that are retrofitted to work in AWS.

KNOWLEDGE-BASED SECURITY

With Alert Logic Enterprise Wilbur-Ellis now knows why the data that flows across their network is there and where it's going. "Before we had Alert Logic, all we would know is that people are logging in and doing things on our network. Alert Logic brings it all together for us to a single interface by analyzing and aggregating events for us. This knowledge-based security model allows us to prioritize what we work on when," said Cahoon.

This strengthened security position for Wilbur-Ellis demonstrates their unrelenting commitment to their customers. Even though their technology continues to develop and evolve, face-to-face interaction with their clients remains. The majority of their customers are family-run farming businesses throughout the US and Canada. Wilbur-Ellis is also a family-owned privately held company, and as a result, they are very focused on customer loyalty. With Alert Logic, Wilbur-Ellis can now layer in security controls precisely where they are needed to ensure they are following best practices in security and compliance.

When we asked Cahoon if he would recommend Alert Logic to colleagues, he stated, "Yes, wherever our people are standing is where we need protection. With Alert Logic we have that in place. If an organization wants what we do, a cost effective solution that provides the security intelligence you need to protect your environment, they need Alert Logic."