

CASE STUDY
Financial Services

Nelnet, Inc.

Stays Ahead of Cyber Attackers with RiskSense

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Nelnet, Inc. (NYSE: NII), headquartered in Lincoln, Nebraska, is a diverse company with a focus on delivering education-related products and services and student loan asset management.

The largest operating business engaged in student loan servicing, tuition payment processing, and school information systems, as well as communications. A significant portion of the company's revenue is net interest income earned on a portfolio of federally insured student loans. The company also makes investments to further diversify the company both within and outside of its historical core education-related businesses, including, but not limited to, investments in real estate and start-up ventures. Nelnet employs more than 2,250 associates, who serve customers throughout the education life cycle. In this context, protecting the integrity of its customers' information has high importance for Nelnet.

"RiskSense easily sets the important information in front of the resources needed to remediate."

– Ryan Regnier,
IT Director,
Nelnet.net, USA



THE CHALLENGE

The security team at Nelnet realized they had more data than their internal resources could consume. They decided they needed to find a solution that could help them better understand their vulnerability data. With the help of RiskSense, Nelnet has been able to improve the consumption of their security information, easily see where their biggest threats are, and begin prioritizing remediation.

The biggest challenge Nelnet was facing was the large amount of vulnerability data the company was consuming. The security team was at a point where they were unable to make sense of all the data that was coming in. When they would start to chip away at some of it, a new scan would come in with a whole new set of information, and any progress that was being made was diminished.

The security team was frustrated because internal resources could not handle all of the data on its own. They attempted to build something internally to help them consume and process the large amount of information but there were shortcomings that prevented them from being successful.

Additionally, Nelnet was facing challenges when it came to compliance. They were required to adhere to not only PCI Compliance, but they were also highly regulated by the Federal Government. Multiple compliance requirements demanded different types of reporting, and Nelnet had no easy way to address these different reporting needs easily and within the timeframes required.

Finally, Nelnet struggled with where their information was coming from. The company's regular process was based off of a single scanner, but occasionally, auditors would bring in a different scanner. This would cause the issue of having to manage data from different sources coming in at different times. At the same time, the security team was still trying to review more information than their resources could handle.

THE SOLUTION

Nelnet needed a solution that could consume all of the data they were receiving and not only sort through it all but also display the information in a way that made it easy to understand. Additional resources were required to assist the security team in pinpointing vulnerabilities in their system that needed to be fixed. Since

“When going through the selection process, there were aspects to the RiskSense Platform that we didn’t know we needed – and now can’t live without.”

– Ryan Regnier,
IT Director,
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regulation came from both PCI Compliance and the Federal Government, Nelnet needed to make sense of the data so they could present a complete picture instead of a small sampling.

The RiskSense Platform provides a great dashboard that allows Nelnet to pinpoint their biggest vulnerabilities, track changes, and report to others in the company. This dashboard feature has become very valuable to Nelnet. The security team has also been able to use the information in the dashboard to secure additional resources needed. They are able to reveal trends to management and explain how applying certain additional resources will help shift those trends. The RiskSense Platform has helped the company show the strength of the security program.

Additionally, the RiskSense dashboard has assisted in illustrating to executives and others in the company the current state of their security and what threats need to be addressed. The RiskSense Security Score, or RS³, has provided the team with an easier way to demonstrate to the others what is happening. The RS³ score accounts for internal security findings, external threats, and business criticality and is presented like a credit score. Since Nelnet is a financial company, everyone can relate the “credit score” idea, and they are comfortable that the lower the number, the worse the score. This score has made security conversations a lot more productive because executives have a better understanding of what the security team is showing them. They were able to move away from tech lingo and have conversations in a more universal business language. The security team could now clearly demonstrate and discuss with the executives “are we winning or are we losing”.

THE RESULTS

Since implementing the RiskSense Platform, Nelnet’s security team has been able to see noticeable differences. The transition to using the Platform was simple and intuitive for new users. Nelnet support technicians found that the workflows, reporting, and drill-down features made their jobs easier.

To begin, the team relies on the RiskSense RS³ score to easily see their overall vulnerability posture. They monitor the RS³ score trend on a weekly and monthly basis and heavily rely on the scoring to monitor and measure their progress. Additionally, the team tracks the age of their highest vulnerability score, which has consistently been declining.

Nelnet’s biggest challenge initially was dealing with the large amount of data they had. The RiskSense Platform has made it easier for them to not only consume all of that information but also make sense of it. They are able to visually see where their most critical vulnerabilities are and address them faster based on the priority.

NEXT STEPS

Looking forward, Nelnet has plans to expand their usage of the RiskSense Platform. As of March 2017, they have already doubled the amount of assets in the RiskSense Platform. Additionally, Nelnet has expanded coverage across all of their workstations on top of the existing servers and network nodes. The implementation of RiskSense has allowed the security team to drive change within the company, focusing on metrics to measure progress. Nelnet’s team wants to drive more transparency within the company and the value that brings to the organization overall.

WHY RISKSENSE

Determine whether any of your business critical assets are at risk.

Gain insight on how your cyber adversaries operate based on RiskSense Platform threat intelligence and Proof of Compromise.

Synchronous delivery of findings in near-real time.

Get comprehensive recommendations for remediation actions.

Minimize your attack surface and cyber risk exposure.



Contact Us Today to Learn More About RiskSense

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