

Grant Thornton Enables User-Centric Security and Supports Multiple Authentication Needs with Akamai Enterprise Application Access



“ We were impressed with the breadth of functionality in Enterprise Application Access. It supports auditing and logging, and multiple authentication methods, and works as a seamless part of our larger branded solution, which other solutions couldn't accommodate.” – Mike Harris, Partner, Digital Risk, Grant Thornton

The international business advisor dramatically reduced the number of VPNs and use of HTTPS via a seamless Akamai Integration.

Grant Thornton is a global professional services network of independent assurance, tax, and advisory firms. The company has a strong focus on quality and delivers insights to help organisations navigate today's volatile markets. Grant Thornton Ireland is the country's fastest-growing professional services firm. It has 53 partners and employs more than 1,450 people, with a global network of some 56,000 people who are part of independent accounting and consulting member firms in over 140 countries.

In recent years, this professional services organisation has evolved its service delivery model in response to changing client needs. This culminated in a program that helps clients create strategies around getting their employees back to work and assisting with enhanced digital processes. To that end, it calls upon more technology and cloud-based services – such as an electronic discovery (eDiscovery) platform – to support its services. As it has increased the number of technology solutions it offers, the firm has become more concerned about security and the clients' online experiences.

Challenges Enabling a Range of Secure Access Needs

As the largest eDiscovery provider in Ireland, Grant Thornton offers computer forensic and eDiscovery solutions to help clients address the challenges of managing the proliferation of electronic data in often complex investigation, litigation, and regulatory matters. The organisation helps clients drill down to the most critical information and determines the best approach for identifying, collecting, reviewing, and producing electronic data, using robust and repeatable processes that hold up to court scrutiny.

The organisation enables this eDiscovery with a Relativity application it hosts in its data centres in Ireland. When the need arose to move information out of the UK and hold it in Dublin for a sensitive legal case, Grant Thornton



COMPANY

Grant Thornton
Dublin, Ireland

www.grantthornton.ie

INDUSTRY

Professional Services

SOLUTION

- Enterprise Application Access

KEY IMPACTS

- Enhanced remote worker connectivity with substantially reduced IT support necessities
- Enhanced user access management
- Gained future-proof secure access solution

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realised it needed an easier and more secure way to grant legal teams and court officials access to the Relativity application.

According to Mike Harris, Partner, Digital Risk for Grant Thornton, "The technologies we use ensure our eDiscovery platform is at least as secure as a cloud solution. However, we faced challenges accommodating different access requirements for different cohorts. It was critical we address this with growing client concerns around GDPR."

At the time, the organisation was managing multiple VPNs and using HTTPS to enable different access requirements. However, it struggled to determine who could access what and to easily deprovision users. Moreover, its clients' staff members could be accessing the eDiscovery platform from various locations over different connection types – home broadband, shared library environments, and wireless, for example. For those situations, IP address allowlisting combined with username and password was the default access control method. However, this didn't work for mobile networks that tend to change IP addresses frequently.

As Grant Thornton took on more clients, it needed a way to reduce the management overhead of supporting a range of access needs while ensuring industry-leading security and a seamless client experience.

Calling Upon Third-Party Technology Expertise

Grant Thornton turned to CTI Global, an international IT services company and Akamai partner. Its key requirements were working with a single vendor that could provide a solution hosted in the Irish jurisdiction.

Working closely with Grant Thornton, CTI Global developed a full technology solution for application delivery. The solution encompassed private cloud infrastructure, servers, storage, firewalls, internet

connectivity, private connectivity from a Dublin data centre to Grant Thornton offices, and Akamai Enterprise Application Access.

"We are trying to anticipate client requirements around authentication and how they might want to interact with our eDiscovery system. Building this type of infrastructure is not our day job, so we rely on our partners to be responsive and proactive. We were impressed that CTI Global quickly came up with a future-proof solution that will support the various access and scale requirements of our clients – across all Grant Thornton locations that want to take advantage of this," says Harris.

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Enterprise Application Access is an easy-to-deploy service that delivers secure, high-performance access to applications, bypassing the need for network access while reducing application delivery risk, cost, and complexity. It provides secure identity, single sign-on, multi-factor authentication, and monitoring capabilities for applications across multiple locations.

"We are experts in security as we run our own cybersecurity consulting practice. We are well aware of Akamai as an industry leader and were impressed with the breadth of functionality in Enterprise Application Access. It supports auditing and logging, and multiple authentication methods, and works as a seamless part of our larger branded solution, which other solutions couldn't accommodate," continues Harris.

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Overcoming a High Dependency on VPNs

Grant Thornton has found the full solution easy to manage. While it still uses one VPN for access to back-end infrastructure, it dramatically reduced the number of VPNs it must manage. "We previously used point-to-point VPNs for client solutions, and the overhead of that has been eliminated. Now our team can focus completely on client issues and service delivery," says Harris.

Moreover, Grant Thornton has eliminated about one-third of the time it used to dedicate to managing and ensuring user access to its Relativity application for eDiscovery. "Much of our technology is used in court, so it must work without fail 100% of the time. We spent a disproportionate amount of time ensuring user access, such as when it was lost due to change of IP address. Our clients now enjoy a smoother experience, and we no longer get calls at all hours," says Harris.

While a big win for Grant Thornton and its clients, this solution represents another step in the organisation's evolution when it comes to security. "Our solution is increasingly being integrated into our clients' corporate environments, so we are moving in the direction of a Zero Trust model. We know Akamai can help us on that journey," concludes Harris.

Summary

When Grant Thornton needed to enable secure application access to a range of clients with different requirements, CTI Global came up with a future-proof solution incorporating Akamai Enterprise Application Access.



About Grant Thornton Ireland

Grant Thornton is Ireland's fastest-growing professional services firm. With over 1,450 people in seven offices across Ireland and 56,000 located in over 140 countries around the world, we bring you the local knowledge, national expertise, and global presence to help you and your business succeed – wherever you're located. We deliver solutions to all business challenges. Clients choose us because the breadth of financial and business services they need is available, delivered innovatively and always to the highest standards. At Grant Thornton, we are committed to long-term relationships.



Akamai secures and delivers digital experiences for the world's largest companies. Akamai's intelligent edge platform surrounds everything, from the enterprise to the cloud, so customers and their businesses can be fast, smart, and secure. Top brands globally rely on Akamai to help them realize competitive advantage through agile solutions that extend the power of their multi-cloud architectures. Akamai keeps decisions, apps, and experiences closer to users than anyone – and attacks and threats far away. Akamai's portfolio of edge security, web and mobile performance, enterprise access, and video delivery solutions is supported by unmatched customer service, analytics, and 24/7/365 monitoring. To learn why the world's top brands trust Akamai, visit www.akamai.com, blogs.akamai.com, or @Akamai on Twitter. You can find our global contact information at www.akamai.com/locations. Published 12/20.