



Michigan Puts Secure Information Into Action

Novell identity-driven portal links Michigan law enforcement with vital data.

Efficiency in police work can mean the difference between catching a criminal and dealing with another crime scene. As data sources and applications continue to advance, law enforcement agencies demand more efficient and secure data access.

Most agencies use mainframe systems to store and track data. Many are trying to modernize their systems without purchasing expensive new infrastructure.

Several years ago, information systems used by the Michigan State Police were struggling to meet the demands of modern policing. Officers needed quick access to criminal histories and other crime-fighting data. And, of course, the solution had to fit the realities of a lean public-sector budget. Shortly thereafter the FBI mandated that law enforcement agencies require unique user identities in place of shared user names and passwords to access the National Crime Information Center.

After evaluating a number of products, the Michigan State Police selected Novell's solution. The goal was to integrate multiple—sometimes incompatible—criminal justice records and applications, and deliver them to State Police officers and staff through a secure Web portal. They wanted to provide users with a personalized page with links to the criminal justice applications they are authorized to access based on their identity and role within the organization.

Novell® portal, identity and access management solutions fit the bill. Novell helped the State Police streamline data access while

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Tom Miller, Lt. Col.,
Michigan state police



continuing to use existing hardware components. The Novell solution created a single sign-on interface for multiple information systems, which delivers convenient yet secure Web-based data access from any location.

MULTIPLE GOALS

"We had a couple of different issues," said Lt. Col. Tom Miller, noting that the State Police needed to simplify its existing ID and password system. The portal also needed to provide security that's strong enough to meet federal mandates

The Novell solution met those requirements, and it provided a platform to tackle another key issue. "We saw an opportunity to take a look at open architecture," Miller said. "We were interested in standards and trying to move to a more standards-based approach with our architecture."

Deploying an architecture that would function on the agency's existing hardware was critical. The State Police also needed to reduce the overall costs of operating the present systems. In that regard, issue number one was implementing a solution that would reduce costs and time related to managing user passwords and identities. It was important to implement a system that would support distributing and delegating the user identity administration to the trusted county and city jurisdictions that access the Michigan system.

Thinking toward the future, scalability was another key concern. Envisioning the ever-increasing amount of

data that will be shared among public-safety agencies, Miller said, "We took a look at trying to build an architecture that would support and scale out for statewide use. This is because we have state, local and federal agencies utilizing a number of our applications. We wanted an architecture that would support this."

Repurposing existing State Police mainframe systems to deliver Web-based information access would reduce operating costs. In addition, the Novell solution would allow users, such as officers on patrol, to access data from their patrol cars. This critical improvement would save countless hours of information requests and searches, while at the same time giving officers access to mission critical data.

ADVANCED SOLUTIONS

Novell teamed with the State Police and the Michigan Department of Information Technology to build the portal, using the company's portal, identity and access management solutions.

Revamping how the State Police disseminates law enforcement data threatened to alienate users of the existing system, who were accustomed to the old processes. So ease of use was of paramount importance. Novell exteNd™ portal technology provided a user-friendly, single access point for multiple systems.

"The exteNd technology can present the data back to the user, from older homegrown mainframe systems to

Case Study:

leading edge criminal justice applications, through a unified web portal," said Greg Dooley, Novell's project manager for the deployment.

Novell eDirectory™ technology delivers single sign-on and identity management capabilities that enable the State Police to provide convenient information access — but only to authorized users. And Novell iChain® allows authorized users to securely access law enforcement databases through the Internet.

When the State Police evaluated options for its information solution, some companies said the agency would need to rip out much of its existing hardware and commit to substantial software rewriting. The Novell solution circumvented those costly, time-consuming processes.

"We wanted what I refer to as "plug and play" type components," said Miller. "We wanted components that were standards-based and supported an open architecture. We didn't want to be locked into one solution or one vendor. So, in looking at it, Novell's solution provided that standards-based approach and allowed us to do this relatively cost-effectively."

The Novell portal solution also positions the Michigan State Police to meet upcoming challenges.

"It allows us to access critical homeland security applications," said Miller. "We're also moving our records management system into the portal."

In addition, the portal will offer access to Michigan's "E-Team" application, which is part of the state's emergency management system. E-Team allows users to track public safety and emergency management resources in any kind of emergency.

"Once the system is in place, each county emergency management team in the state of Michigan will be utilizing the same records system as the state," Miller said.

Perhaps the most important information resource available through the portal is Michigan's Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN). LEIN stores data such as criminal history records, warrants, wants, gun registration and

vehicle registration. Use of LEIN extends beyond the Michigan State Police to clerks, prosecutors and local law enforcement agencies.

"LEIN can be accessed via a wireless Internet connection in a patrol car. It can be accessed remotely or it can be accessed from a fixed site," Miller said. "So if you're not tied to the state network you can still securely access data via the Internet. It [the Novell portal] provides that ability."

FAST ACCESS

In the past, patrol officers needing data typically had two options. They could radio in a request and wait for dispatch to search a database and report back. Or they could physically go to a police station and gather the information there.

"The nice thing about this system," explained Dooley, "is that it can easily provide direct access to people who need it."

With data such as criminal histories, secure access is extremely important. Upping the ante was the challenge for Novell to create an extraordinarily secure wireless access portal. For users accessing this sensitive data via wireless Internet, the process of verifying security credentials must function flawlessly.

"We deployed a solution that requires an advanced form of authentication, meaning more than just user ID and pass-

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word. The State Police asked Novell to integrate RSA's SecurID Token into the solution," said Dooley. "SecurID token is a device a little smaller than a matchbook which displays a six-digit random number every thirty seconds."

"When a user tries to access the portal from an unsecure network, the user is required to enter their ID, password and the number displayed on the RSA device," explained Dooley. "The added security meets the requirements of both Michigan and federal policy boards."

END RESULT

The State Police portal gives authorized personnel quick access to vital law enforcement data without compromising security. In addition, the system plays an important role in saving the state money.

Lt. Col. Miller explained how the solution lowers administrative costs.

"The reduction comes in a couple of different ways," he said. "Number one, it's a reduction in terms of management of the IDs and passwords. It really centralizes the user identity information and makes it easier to manage. Plus, the fact that it's scalable means we can have more users without having to invest in more infrastructure."

Greg Dooley added that personnel changes can be managed rapidly, which reduces costs and improves security.

"An account can be created and authorized in a matter of seconds, giving a user quick access to the systems required to complete their job," he said. "On the other side of that, if you have someone who leaves the force or is no longer allowed to have access, their rights can be removed instantly. It's what we refer to as 'zero day start', but when managing identity and security in law enforcement, sometimes the more critical aspect is 'zero day stop'."

Furthermore, the identity and access management solution implemented by Michigan State Police dovetails with centralization and consolidation efforts underway throughout Michigan, and it may become the standard for the entire state.

"This fits the strategy that the Michigan Department of Information Technology is moving forward with," Miller said.

Perhaps most importantly, the Novell portal solution helps keep the men and women of Michigan law enforcement a step ahead of criminals. ❁

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