

CASE STUDY

NEC XON levels up their identity protection with full visibility into authentications and lateral movement prevention



BASED

Louwland, Midrand,
South Africa



INDUSTRY

IT services and
IT consulting



USERS

550+



ENVIRONMENT

On-prem Active Directory, SQL servers
Legacy applications
Privileged admin accounts



NEC XON Systems is a leading African integrator of ICT solutions and part of NEC, a global Japanese firm. The company has operated in Africa since 1963 and delivers communications, energy, safety, security, and digital solutions. It co-creates social value through innovation to help overcome serious societal challenges. The organisation operates in 54 African countries with a footprint in 16 of them. Regional headquarters are located in South, East, and West Africa.

THE CHALLENGE:

Implement access restrictions on all users

- Limited visibility into user authentication flows
- No MFA protection for homegrown apps
- No lateral movement protection

THE SOLUTION:

Real-time visibility into all access-related activity

- Complete visibility into all user authentication flows
- Implemented MFA protection for homegrown apps in a matter of weeks
- Block-only access policies to prevent lateral movement attacks

The challenge: Visibility into user authentication flow & protecting homegrown apps

NEC XON places a high priority on cyber security, with visibility being the key to their overall identity security posture management.

"Identity authentication flow process was a critical challenge for us. The greatest challenge we faced was the lack of insight into our users' access requests and authentications provided by Active Directory.

Due to this lack of visibility into our user authentication flows, just seeing which types of machines are in the network, where they are authenticated, and so on was extremely challenging for us," said Armand Kruger, Head of Cyber Security of NEC XON.

NEC XON homegrown business applications did not support modern security controls such as MFA protection. This resulted in NEC XON having a critical security gap across their environment and resources.

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— Armand Kruger,
Head of Cyber Security of NEC XON

"We have a few homegrown legacy applications such as the internal ordering service and payroll system. These applications were extremely challenging from a security perspective as they were not developed with security in mind. We lacked visibility into access activity; we didn't know the details of who was accessing them and we didn't have any protection applied to these applications, so we had a major challenge. While the applications were integrated with Active Directory, they were not built to accommodate MFA protection. This means that if a user is compromised and has access to one of these applications, they could gain access to our confidential data and move laterally across our network," stated Kruger.

Stopping lateral movement attacks

In line with most organizations, NEC XON is always considering how to avoid becoming the latest victim of lateral movement attacks.

"It was also critical for us to stop lateral movement attacks. We did not have the ability to actually disrupt incoming lateral movement attacks. Every attack begins with the compromise of user credentials and the utilization of these credentials to move laterally. To prevent identity-based attacks before they occur, we had to implement a proactive security approach that would emphasize the identity layer," Kruger added.

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With a clear understanding of the risks of identity-based attacks and how attackers are using compromised user credentials to conduct attacks, NEC XON sought a solution that could fit their identity protection needs.

"I knew exactly what I wanted, which was a solution that would provide identity-based insights, full visibility into our users' and resources' activity, and lateral movement protection. Silverfort was the only solution that met all of our requirements. Silverfort's key security capabilities answered all the challenges at the time, and we decided to deploy their solution," said Kruger.

The solution: Real-time visibility into authentication flow & MFA protection for resources

By deploying Silverfort, NEC XON was able to gain visibility into its authentication process within a short period of time.

"Once we deployed Silverfort, we quickly gained complete visibility across all our users. We have a complete inventory of all the different types of users, their activities, and their authentication requests. Additionally, Silverfort provided us with an insightful visual representation of every user activity within our Active Directory. In this way, we were able to see what was happening on the back end and make proactive decisions regarding how to protect them going forward," said Kruger.

Upon deploying Silverfort, NEC XON successfully implemented different MFA policies for each of its homegrown legacy applications.

"With Silverfort, we are currently securing our most critical homegrown apps with MFA protection which wasn't possible before. Silverfort is also giving us actionable threat detection insights into each authentication request. In addition, because there are no code changes required to these apps, Silverfort has been extremely cost-saving for us. I would estimate that the costs decreased by 300% compared to doing everything in-house," Kruger added.

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Complete lateral movement protection

During the deployment phase, NEC XON successfully implemented strategic access-based policies to strengthen its lateral movement protection.

"We have implemented 24 very strategic-based policies, of which seven are risk-based, to help us block all attack tactics commonly used by threat actors in lateral movement attacks. With these specific risk-based policies, where the chosen action to take is always block access, we are confident that our environment is protected against potential lateral movement attacks. Our ability to identify which identity has been compromised, neutralize it, and remove it from our environment has been extremely valuable in strengthening the security posture of our organization. It is this capability alone that has demonstrated the return on investment and why Silverfort was the right choice," Kruger said.

"With our Silverfort risk-based policies in place, we are confident that our environment is protected against potential lateral movement attacks."

— Armand Kruger,
Head of Cyber Security of NEC XON

Happy customer results in partnership

As a result of their continuous positive experience working with Silverfort, NEC XON not only endorsed the product passionately but also became a dedicated partner, eager to share the enhanced security benefits with their own clients.

"We partnered with Silverfort as we saw a massive gap in the identity market, and they were the only solution that we felt we aligned with to solve the identity protection challenges together.

From their MFA and service account capabilities to their lateral movement protection, Silverfort is the answer to the market's needs. Also, Silverfort's product architecture and identity-focused approach to threat detection align with how we see the future of identity protection. Hearing my customers' challenges,

I clearly understood the different pain points Silverfort was addressing, and I wanted to help my customers fill their identity protection gaps as quickly as possible by introducing them to Silverfort," Kruger added.

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Along with the different security benefits, NEC XON views Silverfort as the ideal identity partner.

"Despite most businesses being unaware of identity protection, Silverfort is addressing that issue. As a customer and channel partner, we want to be at the forefront of educating the market about security gaps and how Silverfort offers a solution. We will continue to have a fruitful partnership as we are aligned in supporting each other to provide complete identity protection," said Kruger.

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About Silverfort

Silverfort secures every dimension of identity. We deliver end-to-end identity security that is easy to deploy and won't disrupt business operations, resulting in better security outcomes with less work. Discover every identity, analyze exposures, and enforce protection inline to stop lateral movement, ransomware, and other identity threats.

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