Case Study: A Multinational Produce Grower & Distributor

NexusTek assisted this customer to modernize its infrastructure, creating anywhere access to collaboration applications and their mission-critical ERP, all secured with a multi-layered cybersecurity defense that allows employees to work securely from any location.

Overview

Location: Eastern Canada

Company Size: 70+ employees

Type: Privately Held

Industry: Agriculture & Produce

Customer Profile:

This customer is a vertically integrated produce company that serves retail and food service customers in both Canada and the United States.

Solution Benefits:

- Created reliable, anywhere access to mission-critical ERP by hosting in NexusTek Cloud

- Provided employees remote or onsite access to workstations using NexusTek Virtual Desktops

- Facilitated employee communication and collaboration from any location, with Microsoft 365

- Strengthened security posture with MFA, email filter, instituting password requirements

- As-needed IT projects to establish new site infrastructure, update hardware and software

Business Need

As a vertically integrated produce company, this customer has employees working across two countries in work environments that range from seed development labs to farms to packing facilities. To keep their complex business activities coordinated, they needed their employees to be able to communicate easily in real time and access the same information from any work location. To accomplish this goal, they needed help migrating their on-premises workloads to the cloud, and they specifically needed a technology partner that was proficient with Famous, an enterprise resource planning (ERP) platform tailored to the agriculture industry.

Additionally, the customer needed ongoing IT support as well as project services for their on-premises infrastructure, as they did not maintain an internal IT staff. For example, when they opened a new state-of-the-art packing facility in Atlanta in 2019, they needed assistance to set up new on-premises infrastructure. Furthermore, the company wanted their employees to have ready access to IT support, so that issues with their equipment or software would not impact their productivity. Finally, the company had a limited cybersecurity program that they wanted to strengthen against growing cyber threats.

Solution

NexusTek migrated the customer's existing data and applications from on-premises servers to the NexusTek Cloud, including their mission-critical Famous ERP and data. NexusTek's Desktop-as-a-Service (later updated to NexusTek Virtual Desktops) was deployed for employees, along with Microsoft 365 for communication and collaboration. For ongoing IT support, NexusTek also provides 24/7/365 help desk services. For intermittent IT projects, NexusTek account managers and engineers provide consultation and implementation services as the customer needs to maintain and grow their infrastructure to meet new business needs.

To support the customer with cybersecurity, NexusTek has assisted them to implement a Barracuda email protection solution, to adopt multi-factor authentication (MFA), and to institute password complexity requirements for employees. NexusTek has also supported the company's security posture by conducting server and firewall updates as needed, and by providing updated hardware such as laptops and thin clients before they become outdated.

Results

With their business-critical data and Famous ERP hosted in the NexusTek Cloud, the customer gained both convenient data access and the peace of mind knowing that their data would always be safely backed up and protected from loss or destruction. Employees gained the freedom to work from anywhere using NexusTek Virtual Desktops, which is important in a business with a produce growing area that spans Canada as well as 20 states in the U.S. From processing plant workers to field employees to office staff, all of the customer's employees were enabled to connect to the same network and data, keeping their operations efficient and productive.

The deployment of Microsoft 365, within the Windows-based NexusTek Virtual Desktop, gives the company's employees all the tools they need to stay in communication with one another anywhere, any time. Employees can communicate through instant messaging, audio and video calls, and email though Microsoft 365 applications. This helps them to stay on top of the dynamic conditions associated with produce farming, harvest, packaging, and distribution.

The produce business is not only dynamic but also fast-moving, with a narrow market period. Because the customer grows their produce in natural conditions, their harvest and sales season is only a few months long, and very busy. This makes IT uptime of the utmost importance, as even short periods of downtime can cost the company a large proportion of its total sales for the year. Their partnership with NexusTek supports them in this area in two ways.

For one, the NexusTek Cloud has 99.9% uptime, performing at the highest of levels among cloud service providers. Secondly, NexusTek provides the customer 24/7/365 help desk services, which means that any time an employee has an issue with their technology, be it a forgotten password, application failure, or system lockout, they can get the help they need to fix the issue and get back to work without losing too much of their valuable time.

To protect their proprietary seed breeding data and other sensitive information, the customer has partnered with NexusTek for a multi-pronged security strategy. One aspect of this strategy is keeping infrastructure up to date, which is important because outdated software and hardware are more vulnerable to cyberattacks. NexusTek has assisted the company with updates to items such as firewalls and servers that were approaching end-of-life. Another piece of their security strategy NexusTek implemented is an email filter, which scans for potentially malicious emails and flags them as such, alerting employees in the process.

To strengthen identity and access management (IAM), NexusTek implemented MFA, which requires employees to submit at least two forms of verification (e.g., a password and a code texted to their phone) to gain access to their virtual desktops and the customer's network. NexusTek also assisted the company to institute password complexity rules for employees, which effectively prevents employees from using passwords that can be easily guessed or cracked by threat actors. These measures together drastically reduced their vulnerability to attack vectors like password spraying or credential theft, two common ways that threat actors gain access to networks.

Finally, over the 10 years since the partnership began, NexusTek has assisted the customer with a variety of project services that support their growth and progress as an organization. When the company wanted to begin using Salesforce software, for example, NexusTek completed a SharePoint configuration to integrate it into their employees' suite of applications. In a larger project, NexusTek set up the customer's IT at the new 100,000+ square foot packing plant and distribution center they opened recently. This included creating and deploying a wholly new network, along with computers and communication equipment for employees. With NexusTek at the ready, the customer has the project services team it needs to build and restructure its infrastructure as the company continues to grow.