

A day in the Managed Services nerve centre

Vistorm's Secure Operations Centre, the SOC, is the nerve centre that looks after all of Vistorm's Managed Services Security and Infrastructure customers. There are at least two people on duty here 24 hours a day, every single day of the year, with a manager and deputy manager on call for customers who need help. To find out what it's like to work in the SOC, we caught up with the managers who run the SOC – Stephen Ralston (Security) and Graham Turner (Infrastructure).

'Everyone assumes that it's quiet at night, but with contracts worldwide it is sometimes busier than during the day,' said Graham.

In the SOC during the day there are four teams of security experts, infrastructure experts and product specialists monitoring the large screens that show global alerts across customers' equipment. 'It's a busy place and we often correct problems on a customer's site before they even know there's a problem,' said Steve.

The SOC team are very skilled and they really enjoy the technical challenges that real-time threats, attacks and outages can throw at them. They cope with a rolling four-day on, four day-off shift pattern throughout the year, with only three weekends off in every eight.

The SOC must continually keep on top of their game as they monitor worldwide multi-vendor devices that span the security spectrum (firewalls, intrusion detection devices, VPN Gateway devices, content control appliances, routers and third party services). As Vistorm develops new services and adds new platforms and vendors, the buck stops in the SOC when it comes to supporting and managing the platforms. 'Because Vistorm is expanding its portfolio of products, there's always something new to learn,' said Graham.

Graham and Steve have been working hard for the past four months to harmonise activities and processes across the security and infrastructure services. This is important because a security alert will often affect a customer's infrastructure as well. Although there is still more to do, they are beginning to share processes and that improves the service to the customer and enhances Vistorm's customer satisfaction.

'We've just launched the Managed Services Dashboard, which offers customers a real-time view of their Managed Service, which is similar but less complex than the one we can see in the SOC,' said Steve. This service is unique in the industry and delivers to company IT executives a real time view of the performance, availability, health and status of all managed devices worldwide in a graphical window and Vistorm is offering it to managed service customers at no extra charge. This is another example of how the

company is adding value to the customer, and demonstrates confidence in the support team and their ability to respond and maintain the services.

Major new systems are being developed that will help to improve the service level too. More than 600 hours of software development time has gone into the development of what is being called ViTaL (Vistorm Ticketing and Alerting), a new SOC helpdesk. Created entirely in-house, it will record every interaction with the customer. The whole process, which is entirely manual at the moment, will be automated, allowing more information to be captured and used by the support person during the call. Alongside this, a new call management system will begin deployment in June that provides enhanced call handling to drive more intelligent interaction with the customer. The improvements will leave more time for the SOC team to carry out technical investigations into the customer's problem.

Just as important is to ensure the Vistorm SOC can maintain customer services whatever happens. In March, the SOC team completed their latest full disaster recovery test when they enacted a total failure of the primary SOC. Customers will be relieved to know that the back-up SOC, situated in a different part of the country, seamlessly took full control of all customer services without hiccup.

This is another example of the behind-the-scenes activity the SOC team performs to ensure that whatever is thrown at them, our customers are unaffected. The SOC is the nerve centre of Vistorm Managed Services, and enables companies to confidently outsource their security and infrastructure environments with confidence to personnel who are experienced, knowledgeable, and always available.



Stephen Ralston and Graham Turner, managers of the SOC