Singapore Nonprofit PPIS Secures Centers with Help from BlackBerry and Partner ACE Pacific Group

PPIS

Industry:
Nonprofit Social Welfare Agency

Location:
Singapore

Product:
CylancePROTECT®

Deployment:
200 endpoints

Website:
https://ppis.sg/

Author's Note: The CylancePROTECT solution was formerly known as BlackBerry Protect.

The Republic of Singapore traces its roots back to the third century, when it was first described in a Chinese account as Pulau Ujong, the "island at the end of a peninsula"[1]. The "little red dot"[2] was one of the world's most successful nations in curbing the initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, earning plaudits as the gold standard for epidemiological surveillance and contact tracing, and garnering recognition as the model to emulate[3] in mobilizing its world-class medical and public health system. However, on April 3, 2020, a spike in new cases prompted Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to announce a nationwide partial lockdown or "circuit breaker" that closed non-essential workplaces, transitioned schools to home-based learning, and restricted restaurants to take-out, drive-through, and food deliveries only.[4]

Throughout the circuit breaker and its aftermath, the Singapore Muslim Women's Association[5] (PPIS) has remained open for business, providing essential services at 16 centers dispersed across the city. PPIS Family Services provides casework and counseling for clients contending with marital issues, family violence, and childcare and parenting concerns. PPIS Early Childhood Education Centers provide quality infant care, kindergarten, and preschool education. PPIS Student Care Centers support working parents by providing before- and after-school programs for children aged 7 to 14. One alumnus of the latter program is PPIS Information Technology Manager Thariq Aziz Abdul Hamid.

PPIS has responded to the COVID-19 crisis with several key initiatives. In June 2020, the organization began offering three months of free student care services[6] at two of its centers to enable unemployed parents to search for jobs knowing that their children are safe, and their homework is being supervised. PPIS social workers have increased the frequency of their video calls to low-income families to assess the heightened risks to young children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. The nonprofit has also launched a Women in Need (WIN) Fund that provides seed money for women who have lost their jobs to start home or online businesses.

"It's essential for our teachers, counselors, and social workers to provide uninterrupted service to Singaporeans without sacrificing the privacy and confidentiality of our clients' data," says Thariq. "This begins with protecting our networks and Microsoft 365® applications from being compromised by a cyber attack. We rely on [CylancePROTECT®] to prevent that from happening."

Looking Back

A year before the circuit breaker, and months before he first learned about CylancePROTECT, Thariq had difficulties with the nonprofit's legacy AV. "We experienced a series of phishing attacks that convinced me our legacy AV was no longer effective at protecting us from modern malware," says Thariq. "I was concerned, because a breach of our clients' data could have seriously damaged our reputation and potentially exposed us to severe financial penalties for violating Singapore's Personal Data Protection Act."

Thariq was also eager to eliminate the administrative burden of having to manage a seemingly endless stream of signature updates. "We were spending far too much time and effort downloading, installing, and auditing signature files," he says. "We needed to streamline endpoint management so we could focus on projects that help PPIS meet its strategic goals for digital transformation."

In October 2019, Thariq reached out to BlackBerry value-added distributor partner ACE Pacific Group for a solution.

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PPIS Comes Up Aces

ACE Pacific Group is a leading value-added distributor of cutting-edge cybersecurity and analytic solutions that help organizations reduce their cyber risk exposure and increase their productivity. Based in Singapore, ACE also has offices in Malaysia, Australia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, and The Philippines.

"The timing of Thariq's request was fortuitous," says Mark Ang, ACE Regional Managing Director. "We're always surveying the market for security solutions that are operationally sound and technically sophisticated. We had recently become a BlackBerry partner and conducted extensive tests of [CylancePROTECT]. After confirming its capabilities for proactive prevention, we deployed [CylancePROTECT] at every ACE location. The implementation was simple and straightforward, so we felt confident recommending [CylancePROTECT] to PPIS."

Between October and December 2019, Thariq met with ACE representatives for a series of demonstrations and technical briefings. "I was impressed by [CylancePROTECT] artificial intelligence technology and its ability to prevent the execution of ransomware and zero-day threats," says Thariq. "I could also see how the UES console would make it easy for us to spot security problems at our centers and monitor compliance with our security policies. My team would no longer have to manage signatures or contend with network bottlenecks when pushing out signature files across our VPN. The process of scanning the environment before enabling security controls made intuitive sense to me, so I was confident we'd be able to implement [CylancePROTECT] on our own. And since it ran efficiently on our Windows 10 machines, we would no longer have to contend with the performance problems caused by our legacy AV. In every respect, I found [CylancePROTECT] to be a perfect fit for our endpoint security needs."

In January 2020, PPIS officially signed on as a CylancePROTECT customer.

Flushed With Success

Thariq and his team completed the CylancePROTECT implementation in March, with the security controls for malware prevention, memory exploit protection, and script control all fully-enabled. "[CylancePROTECT] is performing exactly as we'd hoped," says Thariq. "Our endpoints are secure, our users are happy, and we have time to work on new projects. Later this year, for example, we plan to start looking into adding [CylanceOPTICS®] to our endpoint security stack so we can leverage its capabilities for automated detection and response."

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ACE too has promising new projects in the works, thanks to the May 19, 2020 release of BlackBerry Spark® Suites. "We were excited when we heard the news," says Jerry Yeo, ACE Pacific Group product manager. "We immediately began educating ourselves and developing a go-to-market strategy. We've already notified ACE partners throughout the region that we're now offering customers a complete solution that encompasses both endpoint security and endpoint management. We see great opportunities in the months to come."

For more information, visit, Cylance Endpoint Security from BlackBerry

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About BlackBerry

BlackBerry (NYSE: BB; TSX: BB) provides intelligent security software and services to enterprises and governments around the world. The company secures more than 500M endpoints including 150M cars on the road today. Based in Waterloo, Ontario, the company leverages AI and machine learning to deliver innovative solutions in the areas of cybersecurity, safety and data privacy solutions, and is a leader in the areas of endpoint security management, encryption, and embedded systems. BlackBerry's vision is clear — to secure a connected future you can trust.

For more information, visit BlackBerry.com and follow @BlackBerry.

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