

Optimizing Vulnerability Management to Prioritize Critical Issues and Reduce Risk

Company Overview

SmartCentres is a prominent public Canadian Real Estate Investment Trust with a significant development pipeline of shopping centers, residential properties (condos, apartments, townhomes and seniors housing), and self-storage facilities. With a shared vision, SmartCentres was instrumental in helping Walmart greatly expand its Canadian footprint after entering Canada in 1994 and today remains a key development partner with Walmart.

SmartCentres owns a significant portfolio of more than 35 million square feet of income-generating commercial retail, office, and self-storage collectively, in 193 prime locations across Canada, and has the potential to develop more than 3,500 acres of land within the portfolio it already owns. With locations embedded in major residential communities, SmartCentres provides a best-in-class retail experience transforming properties from shopping center into city centers.

Alex Edmond, senior director of technology, oversees the company's extensive IT infrastructure, acting as a key architect. SmartCentres utilizes various tools in its security ecosystem, including a vulnerability scanning tool.

Challenges

"My first priority when joining SmartCentres was to uncover and address a potentially large number of vulnerabilities," explains Edmond, "but the traditional approach of running vulnerability scans and creating pivot tables was going to take months, making it challenging to prioritize and address critical security issues promptly." Edmond's team voiced frustration with time wasted on manual processes and delays in applying patches.



PROFILE

Location

Vaughan, Ontario, Canada

Industry

Real Estate Investments, 1994

BACKGROUND

Zscaler Unified Vulnerability Management provides continuous risk management, giving large enterprises contextual insights into their top security issues and automated workflows to reduce cyber risk. Built on the patented Data Fabric for Security, the platform curates and correlates data from 100s of sources, in any format and scale, to aggregate risk factors, mitigating controls, and business context.

Because of the complexity of the company's data environment, Edmond realized he would need a solution that could collect data from a broad range of sources, including classic vulnerability-oriented feeds, but also from tools that identify both other security gaps and environmental information. Edmond wanted to look at CVEs as well as cloud security, app security, identity, and code repositories collectively, and he wanted to factor in mitigating controls.

Solutions

Some conversations with peers identified Avalor – which has since been acquired by Zscaler and renamed Zscaler Unified Vulnerability Management (UVM) – as a potential solution. He was drawn to the UVM focus on enabling continuous risk management. “The notion that we could have all our data in a single platform, and it would be dynamically updated, and we wouldn't need to work in Excel — we were really excited to see the UVM tech in action,” says Edmond.

The UVM platform is built on its Data Fabric for Security, which integrates and correlates customers' diverse data to provide a comprehensive understanding of risk. The SmartCentres team also appreciated that while the Zscaler UVM provides an out-of-the-box adjusted risk score, based on a pre-set list of risk factors and mitigating controls, the SmartCentres team could fully see the calculations that created this score and adjust them.

“We got out of building pivot tables,” notes Edmond. The platform automatically takes into account factors such as an asset's exposure to the Internet, whether a discovered CVE has known exploits, if an asset is deemed a “crown jewel,” and the presence of sensitive data.

The SmartCentres team also appreciates the highly tailored workflows. UVM automates ticket assignment and tracking, ensuring that the right teams address the most critical issues promptly and providing them with details on why a fix is critical and how to address the gap.

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—Alex Edmond
Sr. Director of Technology

Edmond and the team are also starting to leverage the dynamic reports and dashboards in the UVM platform. Every team is working off a common data set, and they can measure metrics that fit their particular KPIs and goals.

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Top Use Cases for SmartCentres



Efficient Vulnerability Prioritization

UVM streamlines the traditional, time-consuming process of building pivot tables to correlate security findings and adjust risk scores, allowing SmartCentres to rapidly identify and prioritize vulnerabilities.



Comprehensive Remediation

The platform automatically tracks the status of all remediation tickets, auto opening or closing tickets in response to fixes being applied.



Team and Executive Reporting

UVM automates the updating of critical reports and dashboards, so SmartCentres can tap the dynamic data set in the platform to better gauge its risk posture over time.

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About Zscaler

Zscaler (NASDAQ: ZS) accelerates digital transformation so that customers can be more agile, efficient, resilient, and secure. The Zscaler Zero Trust Exchange protects thousands of customers from cyberattacks and data loss by securely connecting users, devices, and applications in any location. Distributed across more than 150 data centers globally, the SASE-based Zero Trust Exchange is the world’s largest inline cloud security platform. Learn more at zscaler.com or follow us on Twitter @zscaler.

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