

A U.S. electric utility

Protecting the power grid with policy-based identity and access management

Overview

The need

After separating its grid operations from its corporate network, IT staff at a U.S. electric utility needed to centrally manage user access across both networks and rapidly onboard contractors.

The solution

PathMaker Group helped the utility implement identity and access management solutions from IBM that help staff easily administer, manage and monitor user access across its complex environment.

The benefit

This centralized, automated solution reduces the time to onboard new users, protects sensitive assets, decreases the cost of compliance efforts, and helps staff track compliance in near-real time.

This U.S. electric utility serves more than half a million customers in its region.

Protecting the power grid

As a utility company, one of this electric utility's security challenges is preventing unauthorized access to its power grid. To help protect its grid, IT staff sought to divide its operations network, which runs the power grid, from its corporate network, which supports general business activities. As the organization worked with IBM Business Partner PathMaker Group to separate the networks, it needed the ability to centrally manage user access and rapidly onboard contractors across the environment. "We wanted to onboard users with the right access as close to day one as possible," says the electric utility's IT security systems manager.

Confirming the right access to the right systems

PathMaker Group recommended IBM identity and access management solutions for their ability to safeguard user access and handle the complexities of the electric utility's environment. "IBM solutions help the electric utility confirm that users are who they say they are and that they have the right privileges for their jobs," says Chris Fields, vice president, Security Strategy, PathMaker Group. "These tools are at the forefront of the industry."

As part of its work, PathMaker Group developed and integrated a contractor management application with IBM identity management software. "This integration helps us ensure that when contractors leave, they no longer have access to our systems," says the IT security systems manager for a U.S. electric utility.



Provisioning and deprovisioning of user identities is automated based on business policies, user roles, and contract service dates so that users are automatically removed from the system once they leave the company. Managers are notified prior to contract end dates in case recertification is needed. Compliance alerts help IT staff confirm adherence to industry guidelines. “We can track compliance in near-real time rather than waiting for audits to catch issues,” says the electric utility’s IT security systems manager.

Reducing the time and cost of compliance efforts

With the IBM solution, the time needed to provision and deprovision accounts has decreased substantially. “Accounts are setup long before users even show up for the first day of work and deprovisioning is handled automatically,” says the electric utility’s IT security systems manager.

In addition, compliance reporting for internal audits as well as external guidelines, such as the North American Electric Reliability Corporation Critical Infrastructure Protection (NERC CIP) standards, is also much faster. “We’ve reduced the time and effort that we spend producing reports for audits, thus reducing the cost for our audit and compliance efforts,” says the organization’s IT security systems manager.

Solution components

Software

- IBM® Security Access Manager for Mobile
- IBM Security Access Manager for Web
- IBM Security Identity Manager
- IBM Federated Identity Manager

IBM Business Partner

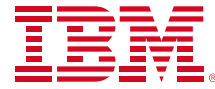
- PathMaker Group

Take the next step

To learn more about IBM Security software, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website: ibm.com/security

For more information about PathMaker Group, visit: www.pathmaker-group.com

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