

Network Security Monitoring Leader Moves Enterprise Training to the Cloud

» Tenable Network Security is the de facto standard for vulnerability and compliance management solutions with over 15,000 customers worldwide. Tenable's real-time vulnerability and threat management technologies are used by the most demanding security professionals, compliance auditors, and executive risk managers to reduce the risk from mobile, cloud and virtual technologies.

Tenable selected Skytap to support the virtual labs it required to meet growing demands for its virtual instructor-led training and to offer self-paced training resources for users to access on demand. While the company considered an Amazon EC2 solution, it chose Skytap, and was impressed with Skytap provisioning automation, seamless integration, and overall ease of use.

Situation

Founded in 2002, Tenable Network Security developed its Unified Security Monitoring platform based on the company's award-winning Nessus scanner for securing enterprise networks worldwide. Nessus is the most widely distributed and utilized vulnerability scanner in the world.

The company makes Nessus available to the general public as a free download and provides updates for the research content/vulnerability checks via home use (HomeFeed™) for free, and for commercial use (ProfessionalFeed™) on a subscription model. Tenable's award-winning products are agentless, enterprise-class solutions that are designed for the continuous monitoring of vulnerabilities, configurations, data leakage, log management, and threat detection, and are used by thousands of organizations both large and small worldwide.

Tenable's customers span verticals in federal government, banking, financial services, education, and energy, which include organizations such as McKesson, Starwood Vacation Ownership, Clemson University, and the U.S. Department of Defense. The company provides training engagements to customers, educating them on best practices and ways to maximize their return on investment with Tenable. Tenable had been facilitating training labs for the instructor led courses with on-premise virtualized infrastructure that resided on a shared network. This approach required significant time from the trainer to manually configure the virtual machines before each session, and resulted in limited scalability for growing class sizes. The company needed to find a more efficient and scalable solution for providing technical training labs and courses for its growing customer base, partners, resellers, and internal employees.

» CHALLENGES

- Expanding capacity for instructor-led virtual training
- Adding capacity and functionality for on-demand, self-service virtual training
- Integrating with existing training lab infrastructure and resources
- Finding a simple pricing model for cloud-based infrastructure
- Required secure cloud-based resources

» SOLUTION

Tenable Network Security adopted Skytap to provide seamless and secure access to cloud-based resources that could scale to meet its growing needs for instructor-led virtual training and on-demand, self-paced virtual training classes.

» BENEFITS

- Better experience for self-service and virtual instructor-led training customers
- Total elasticity for lab environments to keep pace with growth
- Simple and clear pricing model
- Easy integration with existing assets and configurable security

» CUSTOMER HIGHLIGHT

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David Poynter, Director of Training,
Tenable Network Security

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Challenges

As demand for Tenable's highly respected security solutions has soared, the company has also seen a corresponding rise in requests for its training programs from its customer base, partners, resellers, and internal employees. The increased demand for training included traditional virtual instructor-led classes, as well as on-demand resources that users could access on their own. This posed a challenge for Tenable as the company was limited in how many students could access instructor-led classes with internally managed infrastructure. In addition, the company didn't have the infrastructure to support the addition of on-demand delivery for virtual self-paced training.

Tenable found that building out a scalable solution for the self-service on-demand classes would have been extremely difficult and costly to accomplish using internal IT resources. While the company required the true elasticity of virtual environments for on-demand training, it determined it would need to achieve this by incorporating cloud-based resources as a secure extension to their existing on-premise resources.

Similar constraints were found for the on-premise virtual environments provided for the instructor-led training. David Poynter, Director of Training at Tenable Network Security, would provision the resources as needed for instructor-led events. "At the time, our internal virtualized environments were not sufficiently robust and required manual provisioning," Poynter says. "In addition, our shared environments for training had one large network and all students and instructors had to live on that network."

As the training demand grew rapidly, IT could no longer effectively service the Training Organization at Tenable, and Poynter needed to look for alternatives.

Solution

After exploring its options, Tenable chose to support its training classes using Skytap. The result is that students and instructors now enjoy their own pre-defined virtual private network with their own dedicated IT resources, operating systems, and applications. Tenable has also gained the elasticity it requires to scale, and is able to provide a combination of synchronous and asynchronous training environments.

The on-demand, self-paced virtual training classes are fully automated for the end user from purchase and realization to enrollment and completion. The student watches a series of videos, takes online quizzes, then pushes a button to launch a fully automated virtual lab environment in Skytap. Behind the scenes, this seamless workflow is enabled through use of Skytap API.

For instructor-led training programs, the instructor generates and provides published URLs to students in Skytap virtual lab. Students are then assigned exercises and the instructor has full access to student environments, including an over-the-shoulder view for hands-on interaction.

Benefits

Since taking advantage of Skytap, Tenable Network Security has been able to provide a better training experience, expand their lab environments, a simple and clear pricing model, easy systems integration and security, as well as increased revenue.

Better Training Experience

Always customer-focused, Tenable is delighted with the robust and flexible foundation it has for supporting customer training. "With our previous on-site only options, we were limited to classes of only 10 students," Poynter says. "With Skytap, we can scale our instructor-led and our self-paced training resources to meet whatever demand we may see. We've already scaled to providing training for hundreds of students at a time and we know we can scale to beyond that if needed."

Total Elasticity for Lab Environments

Skytap gives Tenable the ability to automatically spin up pre-configured infrastructure it needs to support lab environments for instructor-led and self-paced, on-demand virtual training.

"We have a very good technical IT department and have plenty of resources internally," Poynter says. "However, the elasticity was what drove our thinking to moving some of these environments—specifically our training labs—to the cloud. The pace at which our training demand was accelerating forced IT to tell us to look for alternatives to on-premise, virtualized training environments, and we've found all that we need with Skytap."

Simple-to-Understand Pricing

Tenable appreciated Skytap's easy-to-understand pricing, especially when compared to the other options it considered.

"I understood how cloud computing worked, but initially I did not know whether it would be cost-effective," Poynter says. "We looked at Amazon Web Services EC2 as an option but the pricing was just too difficult to understand. We greatly preferred the simplified cost model of Skytap."

Easy Integration and Hybrid Cloud Security

Using Skytap APIs, Tenable was able to easily integrate its existing corporate infrastructure, applications, and data with its new Skytap resources, including support for on-demand student access. "We were also impressed with Skytap's provisioning automation and overall ease of use," Poynter says.

With its foundational focus on security, Tenable was also impressed with the ease and integrity with which its Skytap resources could be protected.

"When it comes to security, our training labs are controlled environments and typically do not contain sensitive data," Poynter says. "However, in some specific areas we did have security concerns, but were easily able to address those with Skytap features that enabled us to configure the environments to meet our needs while achieving the design goals of the system."

Increased Revenue

The efficiency of its operations, including its on-demand, self-paced training offerings, is not just helping the company keep up with training demands, it is also providing a growing and consistent revenue stream for the organization. "Skytap has proven itself," Poynter says. "We are looking for even more ways to make use of Skytap to enhance our global training efforts."

» CUSTOMER HIGHLIGHT

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GETTING STARTED

To learn how Skytap can deliver value to your organization, contact a cloud computing expert at sales@skytap.com or call us at 1-888-759-8278

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