

Columbia County Sheriff



The Columbia County Sheriff's Office has evolved its approach to protecting information by verifying the identities of everyone who accesses the network or the Agency's computers. To boost its cyber security, the Sheriff's Office partnered with a provider best known for physical access credentials, but now with a comprehensive digital identity portfolio: HID Global, a worldwide leader in trusted identity solutions. The result will prevent the theft and fraudulent use of Agency personnel digital identities.

Challenges

To comply with the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) security policy, law enforcement officials are now required to incorporate advanced authentication into the process of accessing criminal background information. Just like the thousands of sheriff's offices across the United States that need to meet the requirements, the Columbia County Sheriff's Office in Florida had to come into compliance.

Wanting to take a balanced approach, the Columbia County Sheriff's Office intended to meet the FBI's authentication requirements to verify the identity of those who access criminal information, yet do it in a relatively simple way and without adding an extra burden to the law enforcement officers.

The Sheriff's Office had relied for years on the use of username and password for officers to access online information. When an officer entered his/her car, he/she logged into their laptop, for example, in the typical way of typing in his/her username and password on the screen. But with a slew of digital security breaches proving in recent years that the combination of username and password is vulnerable, the need for another layer of security to protect digital information, including details about criminals, suspects and other police officers, has heightened.

If a thief steals a laptop from a Sheriff's Office vehicle, the threat of hacking into the computer can become a life-or-death situation. Locking down the computers of Sheriff's Offices with something more secure - more trusted for managing identities - has become imperative.

Solution

The Columbia County Sheriff's Office turned to HID Global for a "smart" solution to their challenges to comply with the FBI mandate, increase security and improve the officers' user experience. The sheriff's office replaced username and password with the use of smart cards. Now, officers can use a smart card (the HID Crescendo card), along with a PIN number, to achieve the two-factor authentication that complies with the FBI's mandate for advanced authentication of users' identities.

To maintain control of digital access rights of the more than 180 people on the network, the sheriff's office uses the HID ActivID® Credential Management System (CMS), which allows IT staff to manage the smart cards and digital certificates.

This is the same solution as what the US federal agencies deploy to protect federal employees and contractors, but packaged and configured to make it easy to deploy for small organizations while retaining a high level of security.

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**Solution:**

- ActivID Credential Management Solution

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When an officer needs to log into their computer or access the network, he/she uses a smart card with the computer, providing a better experience. Officers no longer have to remember username and password.

Benefits

Because of its deployment of HID’s smart cards for PC and network log-on, the Columbia County Sheriff’s Office has added a whole layer of security and eliminated the burden of username and password --- all while complying with the FBI’s CJIS requirements. Benefits include:

- Higher security
- Greater trust in who is accessing online resources
- Compliance
- Ease of deployment and ease of use
- Increased efficiency
- Future-proofing

“The nice thing about using HID technology for digital identity is that it’s a natural extension from HID’s physical access technology and we can use the same technology in the future for other applications, while making life easier,” said Craig, the IT director. “We will have the opportunity to expand down the road because we have built on a scalable and flexible platform for trusted identities. The CMS software is a primary reason we went with HID, which does much more than just Proximity cards and readers for physical access.”

An added benefit is that the personalization of the HID smart cards for logical access was so high quality that the sheriff’s office now uses them as its personnel’s official ID cards.

“Thanks to HID Global, we are able to facilitate law enforcement and be compliant with the evolving requirements for identity and access management without adding additional burdens to our officers,” added Craig. “The day we implemented HID’s smart cards, software and digital certificates was a bad day for hackers and cyber criminals.”