



Case Study: Securing Insurance Connections at American Century Casualty Co.

Although rate competition often helps differentiate carriers, the insurance business is fundamentally a service industry, and providing prompt and accurate customer service is essential to success. At American Century Casualty Company, Neo Accel's SSL VPN solution is speeding customer claims processing by giving employees secure access to customer records from anywhere.

Headquartered in Houston, Texas, American Century Casualty Company (ACCC) provides auto insurance to drivers in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. As with any insurance company, part of the business involves settling claims and estimating damages on insured property – and the sooner the better. Claims managers and estimators in the field must write up reports, upload photos of vehicles, download policies or processing forms, and perform other tasks that involve accessing the company's data centers in Houston and Atlanta. Traditionally, ACCC has required employees to access policy records from one of its remote branches, but with its growing business, some employees are spending more time away from the office than in it.

“A lot of our employees have been starting to use laptops at remote sites or work from home, so we wanted to find the most secure way to give them access to our network,” says Stephen Gentilozzi, IT manager at ACCC. “With people connecting from their home machines in particular, our concern was that their machines would be infected with viruses, spambots, and other problems that we didn't want brought onto our network.”

Gentilozzi and his team had been reluctant to allow remote connections via a legacy IPsec-based VPN product because a broad rollout would require laborious and expensive client distribution and configuration. In addition, these solutions granted access without evaluating the host computer's status regarding virus protection or other malware. “Endpoint security and clientless access were high on our list of requirements,” he says. Ease of administration and granular user access were also important.

After narrowing the search to SSL VPN products based on their clientless operation, the ACCC team selected NeoAccel's SSL VPN-Plus appliance and deployed it in early 2007. “The SGX-1200 gateway was the only product that met all of our needs,” says Gentilozzi. “It uses a clientless installation so we don't have to worry about which machine users are on, or how we can get them set up on a new machine. It also enforces access policies that make sure the employees have virus protection, security patches, and other required updates on their PCs. Those are all the security checks we would do in-house anyway, and once we could enable them for remote users, so no longer had a problem with letting them on the network.”

Granular access was another key reason why ACCC chose the NeoAccel solution. “We wanted to give very limited access to users, and the SGX-1200 allows us to lock things down to the point where individual users can only access specific areas without a lot of crazy configurations,” he says. For example, his team can set policies that give a particular user access only to a specific website – underwriting or claims, for example.

The solution took less than two hours to deploy, and ACCC first rolled it out to claims managers and adjusters. Users immediately liked the ease of installation, and some noticed better network response time than they had gotten with the old IPsec VPN solution.

Along with a good user experience, SSL VPN-Plus also provides a far easier and less costly management experience through its close integration with Microsoft Active Directory. “That's a huge advantage for us,” says Gentilozzi, “because we don't have to worry about managing another policy database. When a user leaves or



changes his status, all we have to do is update Active Directory and we're done. We couldn't find that feature in any other product."

With a successful rollout to claims managers and underwriting managers complete, Gentilozzi will soon add the appraisers who take photos and handle estimates with body shops. "The appraisers need to upload photos and estimates to our system, and right now they have to wait until they got back to the office to do that," says Gentilozzi. "With this system in place, the appraiser can log in right from the field using the body shop's computer."

By providing anytime, anywhere access from the field or employees' homes, NeoAccel's SSL VPN-Plus solution streamlines the flow of information at ACCC and that translates to better customer service. "Our goal is to respond to claims and settle them more quickly," says Gentilozzi, "and with NeoAccel, our users can get issues resolved hours or even days sooner than they would have before. For us, that's a big competitive advantage."