

Securing the future for Reed Managed Services

“Achieving ISO 27001 allows us to demonstrate to our clients, employees and temporaries that we take IT data seriously and manage it using international best practice. To the best of our knowledge, we are the only recruitment company to achieve this certification and that gives us a competitive edge when speaking to our clients.”

Sean Whetstone,
Head of IT Services,
Reed Managed Services

Background

Recruitment has become more of a science than an instinctive art.

Technology has allowed the process of search and selection to become highly sophisticated, while stripping out much of the risk. For Reed, the UK's leading specialist recruitment and human resources service provider, IT has a key role to play, both in the operation of the business and in the provision of the company's services to some of the world's best-known organisations.

The systems that deliver Reed's solutions to its customers are developed and maintained by Reed Managed Services.

The Challenge

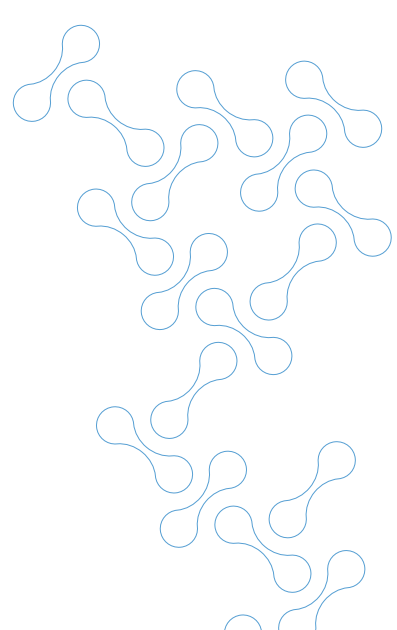
Information security is a critical issue in any industry, but when your business is concerned with personal employment records, and may involve making discreet approaches to senior executives, it is of paramount importance.

To add to the demands on today's IT-dependent companies, corporate governance regulations and data protection legislation have introduced new imperatives for information security. It is no longer enough to have effective security in place – you have to be able to prove it.

The new standard for information security is ISO 27001, the information security management system published in 2005. Companies that comply with the standard must be rigorous in applying it, particularly when dealing with third party organisations who may not have completed the certification process themselves.

For Reed Managed Services, achieving ISO 27001 rapidly became a critical strategic goal. Without it, the company could have placed precious customer relationships at risk, and limited its opportunities to win new business.

But achieving the standard is a complex and time consuming process, that can distract key people from their main operational roles. Rather than direct resources away from its core business, Reed Managed Services turned to LAN2LAN for help.



The Solution

Information security is one of the core capabilities of LAN2LAN, which has brought the company's team into close involvement with the ISO 27001 certification process. Account Manager Neil Denham has successfully helped a number of LAN2LAN customers to achieve ISO 27001, and was assigned to the Reed Managed Services project.

"The need was urgent," he said, "and the Reed team also wanted to complete the process as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible. We devised a tailor-made plan for them, with the aim of achieving certification within six months."

Reed's existing information security policy provided a strong foundation for the project. Neil Denham devised a staged approach for the process, that began with a comprehensive audit of the operational environment.

"The first stage involves a combination of analysis with specific toolsets, and talking to the key people in each department," he says. "For all its formality, the ISO 27001 standard recognises one of the golden rules of data security – the people are usually the most fragile element of the solution."

A risk assessment highlighting the weak points within the network, and the mitigating factors that serve to reduce the risk, is produced. This is used as the basis of a detailed, end-to-end gap analysis that defines each vulnerability, and the steps that can be taken to address them. The risk assessment takes into account the economics of the situation, allowing the customers to prioritise investment where it is most needed.

"There are 130 controls available to help develop an ISO 27001-compliant information security management system," says Neil Denham. "Our gap analysis aligns the right controls with the specific needs, so that a full security policy can be developed, documented and put in place, without unnecessary and inefficient expenditure."

For the final stage, a team of LAN2LAN and Reed Managed Services personnel was formed to steer the project, with clear lines of responsibility for each task involved in the process. A formal schedule of meetings and action points was agreed to keep the process moving swiftly and efficiently to its goal.

"Compliance is all about proof," says Neil Denham. "A key role within the project team is managing the documentation, so that the standards organisation can see that you have completed every stage of the process correctly. For Reed, the approving authority was the British Standards Institute (BSI) and we had to satisfy them that the process was being implemented correctly at every stage.

"They inspect at least once a year," he adds, "so you have to have a management system that is sustainable and continually supported by hard evidence."

The Benefits

In Reed's case, the primary business benefit delivered by ISO 27001 certification is, quite simply, the ability to win and keep customers who demand the standard as part of the minimum requirement for their partners of choice.

The other crucial benefit of working with LAN2LAN is the speed and efficiency of the service; Reed Managed Services achieved its certification within six months of starting the process.

Sean Whetstone, Head of IT Services at Reed Managed Services, commented: "Achieving ISO 27001 allows us to demonstrate to our clients, employees and temporaries that we take IT data seriously and manage it using international best practice.

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