

Delivering Compliance And Data Security For Energy Regulator Ofgem

Ofgem is the UK Office of Gas and Electricity Markets, a non-ministerial government department and an independent National Regulatory Authority, whose principal objective is to protect the interests of existing and future electricity and gas consumers.

The Challenge

As a government department, Ofgem are required to comply with Cabinet Office standards intended to protect the data of consumers from loss or leakage. All UK government & public sector organisations are required to apply security classifications to government information assets, in accordance with the latest Government Security Classifications scheme introduced in April 2014. This requires three levels of classification for information assets, Official, Secret and Top Secret. Protective marks are composed of classifications and descriptors, but may also include caveats and code words. These marks indicate security requirements and responsibilities for anyone handling the data.

To meet this requirement and the intention of enhancing Ofgem's data protection measures, the Security team were searching for an application to replace their current classification tool, which was unable to support multiple platforms. They had experienced issues with the previous system whilst using in VDI and differing operating system versions, primarily due to the lack of central policy configuration functionality. They needed an easy-to-use and administer data classification tool which could work within Microsoft SharePoint and other Office applications to apply relevant visual marks and labels to documents, messages and files. These labels could then be embedded into metadata for use by other downstream security tools,

such as Proofpoint, which is used for monitoring data transmission to and from Ofgem and as a mail gateway. They also needed a solution which would be flexible enough to offer customisable messages and the versatility to apply separate policies to internal and external emails, and crucially were looking for a vendor who could offer their own UK-based customer and technical support.

We were most impressed with the level of service provided by Boldon James as well as the availability of various product options packs, such as SharePoint. One of our main reasons for selecting Boldon James was due to the provision of UK support.

Bob Mann, CSO



The Ofgem Security team tested and evaluated three potential data classification products in conjunction with their IT Operations team, including their existing solution, Janus Seal (from JanusNet), against their list of requirements. While most of the products appeared to offer broadly similar functionality at varying costs, Ofgem found that Boldon James Classifier was the best fit, meeting all of their requirements and offering a broad range of product options and bolt-ons which could be purchased separately, such as SharePoint Classifier, to extend the classification solution. Ofgem were also impressed with the level of service provided by Boldon James, as well as the in-house support.

The Solution

The team ran a pilot for two weeks before deciding to proceed. They chose Boldon James Email, Office, File and SharePoint Classifier to provide the coverage across the wide range of applications, file types and messages that they required, rolling out to 1000 users.

Since deployment, the team have received positive feedback from users on how simple the solution is to use, especially the ability to upgrade email classification automatically when new attachments are added to emails. Ofgem have since added a further level of security, with all emails and documents now being marked as Internal Only by default, forcing users to change the classification in order to send externally and further lowering the chance of accidental loss of data to external parties. They also report that Classifier has already assisted in stopping several potentially damaging data leaks.

I would recommend Boldon James Classifier, the entire process from purchasing to implementation has been very good, particularly our Sales experience and support. Having the UK support is a huge benefit!

Since deployment, we have received positive feedback from users on how simple the solution is to use and Classifier has assisted in stopping potential data leakage issues.

Bob Mann, CSO

Conclusion

Following the successful implementation of the Classifier Foundation suite, Ofgem are now considering other Classifier modules, such as Mobile Classifier. Mobile Classifier extends message classification to handheld devices such as smartphones and tablets and, by separating personal and business data, it will enable Ofgem to prevent email mishandling and further reduce the likelihood of data leakage.