

## County College, Regional High Schools & Municipal IT Services Provider in Norway Reduces Costs & Improves Security

*“Because the PA-4000 Series can see and match specific behavior to users via Active Directory, we’ve curtailed risky activities and dramatically lowered our infection rates. We are now far more confident in our security posture and application control.”*

– Olve Svéen, Security Advisor IKT Agder

### BACKGROUND

IKT Agder is a provider of IT project planning, procurement and consulting services based in Norway. The company’s services span the development of web portals, hardware and network management, as well as application and end-user support. Jointly owned by the municipalities of Arendal, Grimstad, Froland and Aust Agder County in Norway, IKT Agder was founded in 2002. Norway’s first inter-municipal company, IKT Agder employs 46 people. IKT Agder operates the shared service network, one of southern Norway’s largest. The network provides gigabit Internet connectivity to approximately 20,000 users in the surrounding counties, including the students of several College and High Schools

### MULTIPLE MISSIONS, ONE COMMON GOAL

IKT Agder provides technical shared services to several municipalities in southern Norway, including high-speed Internet service. The company oversees a very complex operating environment, which includes networking, software, hardware, security and helpdesk support.

As Internet usage among its student population grew, bandwidth consumption and cyber-threats mounted accordingly. The popularity of risky Peer-to-Peer (P2P) file sharing and social media usage heightened the school’s exposure to spyware and viruses. In addition, it was becoming increasingly difficult for the college to administer government exams to students digitally, because some students were able to use sophisticated proxy techniques to circumvent the college’s security systems. As a result, IKT Agder sought to reduce its exposure to threats, lower bandwidth consumption costs and elevate its security.

Bandwidth consuming streaming media applications like YouTube were causing the wireless networks to slow down, and business related applications did not get the proper bandwidth. By controlling applications using PAN QoS in combination with Microsoft AD User/Groups the Palo Alto Networks freed up the necessary bandwidth.

### CURRENT SOLUTIONS NOT MAKING THE GRADE

To address its problems, IKT Agder installed web filtering appliances from Barracuda Networks. “We tried Barracuda, but it didn’t work due to performance issues and application recognition,” says Olve Svéen, Security Advisor IKT Agder.

At the same time we had an IDP solution from Juniper Networks installed. After the Palo Alto Networks installation we did a comparison with the current IDP, and among other IPS issues the Juniper IDP solution did not recognize botnet infected clients.

### BACK TO SCHOOL: STUDYING FIREWALL SOLUTIONS

With its ability to safely and securely administer exams digitally in jeopardy, bandwidth consumption and associated costs spiraling out of control, and P2P file sharing and social media usage mounting, IKT Agder initiated a search for a firewall that could meet its numerous needs. It sought a comprehensive solution capable of using Active Directory to



### ORGANIZATION:

IKT Agder

### INDUSTRY:

Education, IT Services

### CHALLENGE:

Gain visibility into network to improve security and control and reduce bandwidth consumption related to streaming and social media.

### SOLUTION:

Replace legacy firewall with Palo Alto Networks PA Series next-generation firewall for granular visibility of threats and better control of Internet applications.

### RESULTS:

- Increased application visibility and control
- Improved security
- \$ 90,000 in reduced costs over a 5 year period
- One common security solution in a HA environment, replacing URL-filters, IDS/IDP-solutions and firewalls from three different vendors into one Palo Alto Networks solution

identify specific infected computers, and control and monitor application access by user. Another essential attribute in a solution included the ability to block unauthorized ports that were being used to access risky P2P applications.

## PA-4000 SERIES IS THE HEAD OF THE CLASS

The Palo Alto Networks next-generation firewall was initially replacing the Barracuda webfilter, but as time went by we added several other integrated security features. We looked at other vendors like Websense and M86 Security.

Svéen learned about Palo Alto Networks and the PA-4000 Series next-generation firewall for granular visibility of threats and better control of Internet applications. Palo Alto Networks' next-generation firewall isolates and protects data through security policies that are based on the user or group identity from within Active Directory. The user and group identity is then tied directly to a specific application, and the application can then be inspected for threats and unauthorized data transfer. This level of granular control is unmatched by any firewall solution on the market.

"We were very impressed with the PA-4000 Series, and the information we received from Palo Alto Networks about their firewall products," states Svéen. "We found it to be a dynamic organization with an industry-leading product." IKT Agder purchased the PA-4000 Series to control student access to applications and online behavior, and to monitor a cluster it had set up for students and employees in different virtual systems (VSYS). "We have been very pleased with the performance of the PA-4000 Series, as well as the support, training courses and seminars we've received from Palo Alto Networks," says Svéen.

## AN "A" FOR IMPROVED SECURITY AND REDUCED BANDWIDTH

IKT Agder has realized a variety of benefits from deploying the PA-4000 Series on its network. "We've significantly reduced our bandwidth usage, and because of that we can clearly see each user's behavior, and pinpoint infected computers," Olve Svéen explains. As a result, IKT Agder has dramatically lowered its infection rates. "I really like how the PA-Series' Active Directory integration capability allows us to target which computers are infected," adds Svéen. "Our infection rate has dropped dramatically, reduced by at least 50%, and now we can clearly see that we're blocking a lot of risky Botnet/'phone home' type of traffic."

Importantly, the PA-Series is only allowing students access to government websites when they take digital exams, and blocks them from visiting unauthorized sites during the examinations. "Palo Alto Networks has delivered everything we hoped for in a solution, and more," sums up Svéen. "The PA-4000 Series is an ideal, comprehensive, and effective solution for an IT services and educational organization such as ours. It has made us more secure and lowered our costs".

The PA-4000 Series has allowed IKT Agder to reduce and consolidate the number of devices on its network, enabling it to centrally manage its network and spend less time managing an array of disparate products. We have replaced two Barracuda web filter appliances, one hired IDS service, one in-house IDS/IDP appliance, one Juniper high-end firewall and a Checkpoint firewall cluster with a Palo Alto Networks HA solution currently running three VSYS. Now we have one common platform for all security services and combined with the appliance consolidation we now have reduced costs of management, subscription and licence fees.

Palo Alto Networks has also lowered the organization's bandwidth consumption and related costs, saving IKT Agder an estimated \$ 90,000 over 5 years.

"Until we found Palo Alto Networks, business applications did not get priority or enough bandwidth due to non-business related applications, especially in legacy wireless networks. Combined with one common security solution and reduced management costs we're more secure and spending less to protect our network", explains Olve Svéen.

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**– Olve Svéen, Security Advisor  
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