Case Study

SMS Masterminds Enhances Security, Improves System Functionality With Splunk Light Cloud Service

Executive Summary

SMS Masterminds, publicly traded as SpendSmart Networks, Inc. (OTC: SSPC), is an emerging company focusing on digital loyalty and text message marketing. With over five million subscribers in its marketing database and thousands of retail customers, the company needed to proactively monitor a variety of systems. Since signing up for Splunk Light as a cloud service, Masterminds has seen benefits including:

- Enhanced protection from potential brute force attacks
- Reduced operational costs
- Faster resolution for errors that could impact revenue

Challenges
- Needed to address and mitigate security events and exploits
- Seeking real-time security analytics platform
- Lack of budget for costly on-premises solution
- Wanted visibility into features and functionality

Business Impact
- Enhanced security posture
- Full protection from potential exploits and brute force attacks
- Savings of tens of thousands of dollars in operating costs
- Preventing costly errors that could significantly reduce conversion rates and revenue

Data Sources
- System logs
- MySQL slow query logs
- Apache access logs
- Symphony error logs
- PHP error logs
- Passenger log files

Why Splunk

VP of Product Louis Camassa was familiar with Splunk from his previous role at TechXpress, where the team had used Splunk software for security on the company’s e-commerce platform. When TechXpress was acquired by Masterminds, Camassa and his team transitioned over to the new organization, and wanted to keep using Splunk products.

In order to avoid adding costly on-premises technology, Masterminds chose Splunk Light as a cloud service. Camassa says, “Splunk Enterprise is a great product, but it wasn’t economical for us to invest in the full enterprise solution. Splunk Light is exactly what we’ve been waiting for—it is easy to use and manage, not to mention affordable.”
Preventative monitoring keeps systems secure

The Masterminds team is using Splunk Light for preventative security monitoring. When an issue arises, the team gets an email alert so that they can respond proactively for a speedy resolution. Camassa says, “Splunk Light gives us the ability to quickly go in and analyze the specifics of a security event, without having to manually search through a thousand terabyte log file. I think of Splunk Light as a back-up insurance policy. We’re using it to block a variety of attacks and for preventative measures against exploits. I sleep easier at night knowing we have our finger on the pulse of our business!” By using Splunk Light to collect real-time data on potential exploits, Masterminds has recovered tens of thousands of dollars in operating costs.

Developing new precautionary security features

Masterminds is also using Splunk Light to gain insight into how customers are accessing certain parts of the system. According to Camassa, “We’ve developed great Splunk queries that a layman can run. Collecting and reporting on this data gives us clarity to our business operations and allows us to respond proactively. These reports provide transparency that empowers us to quickly improve code or block intrusions. This greatly improved visibility has led us to develop new technology and precautionary features.”

DevOps collaboration to improve functionality

Masterminds has also found a use for Splunk Light to streamline the QA process with respect to system outages. Camassa says, “We discovered one our e-commerce sites was experiencing a significant loading delay. In a typical month, we might process over seven figures in transactions, so a simple loading delay of one second could substantially reduce conversion rate and subsequently impact revenue.” Masterminds resolved the delay and used Splunk Light to generate a query to verify no other sites had the error, ultimately improving user experience on the site.