Sophos MSP Leverages Synchronized Security and Sophos Wireless for Underserved Clients in Mountain States.

In business for 26 years, Pine Cove Consulting is a technology solutions provider and Sophos Platinum Partner working with largely underserved organizations in the Rocky Mountain states. The company’s comprehensive portfolio of Sophos security products includes security solutions for the network, Wi-Fi, endpoints, email, and more. This Sophos Managed Service Provider (MSP) is highly attuned to the technology and security needs of clients in both the public and private sectors, from healthcare to government to construction – in short, any organization that is concerned about protecting its sensitive data.

Pine Cove Consulting
Bozeman, Montana

Website
www.pinecc.com

Number of Users
150+ clients

Sophos Solutions
Sophos Central Wireless
Sophos XG Firewall
Sophos Synchronized Security
Sophos Intercept X Advanced with EDR
Sophos Managed Threat Response
Pine Cove Consulting also has a long and successful history as a trusted advisor to rural K-12 school districts, which constitutes approximately 50% of its business. K-12 customers are easy targets for attackers because they typically lack all the necessary protections and experienced IT staff to keep today’s threats at bay.

It’s little wonder that serving the K-12 market comes naturally. As Vice President Brandon Vancleeve says, “My family has education in our blood.” Before starting the IT services firm, Vancleeve’s parents were in education in both Montana and Wyoming. They saw firsthand that K-12 institutions needed help with their IT challenges and decided to launch the company to offer them the technical support and assistance they so desperately needed and lacked in rural areas. Vancleeve, who is about to take the helm as his parents transition to retirement, also has a degree in education and has worked at Pine Cove Consulting for more than 15 years.

How does a Sophos Partner and MSP keep up with rapidly evolving technology and security challenges?

Over nearly two decades, Vancleeve has seen dramatic transformations in technology and the threat landscape. Pine Cove Consulting has continually evolved its business and its Sophos portfolio to help its clients stay on top of these new developments. About 20 years ago, Sophos was the consulting group’s go-to vendor for antivirus. Since then, Sophos has become the core of Pine Cove Consulting’s business, enabling the organization to cover all things security related, from network firewall and secure Wi-Fi to email protection and encryption.

“It’s nice to be able to go back to a vendor like Sophos that values our partnership, is loyal to us, and empowers us to be better. It’s been a great partnership from day one. We continue to offer more and more Sophos solutions because we trust the product, we trust the partnership, and we can do good things together,” affirms Vancleeve.

How does Sophos Central help customers do more with less?

Vancleeve describes Sophos Central as “the lifeblood of how we service and sell to our customers.” Given that customers have varying environments and needs, the MSP can customize how it delivers security through Sophos Central.

“There’s no cookie cutter solution for us when it comes to services for our customers,” observes Vancleeve. “For some, we manage everything they do inside of Sophos Central, while for others, we install the system for them and give them the keys so they can run their own instances. In addition to the deployment flexibility, I am especially excited about all the resources Sophos is pouring into developing new capabilities that leverage Sophos Central.”

Vancleeve emphasizes that Pine Cove Consulting’s customers want solutions that are consolidated, with fewer vendors to deal with and fewer management consoles to juggle.

“Sophos answers that need with the simple, single-pane-of-glass Sophos Central management console. Having all the solutions under one umbrella is a big plus for us and all our customers. We are always trying to help them do more with fewer resources, and Sophos has been instrumental in that effort,” says Vancleeve.

How does Sophos Synchronized Security connect the dots between the firewall and endpoint protection?

Apart from Sophos Central, another major focal point of the conversations Vancleeve has been having with his
customers revolves around Sophos XG Firewall and Sophos Synchronized Security. He believes that this powerful combination provides customers with big-picture visibility into and control over endpoint and network activity – something most of them need but are lacking.

The latest version of Sophos XG Firewall – rated among the best for security effectiveness, performance, and value by NSS Labs – provides deep insights into applications, users, and risks. It offers a suite of technologies that work together to protect against ransomware and other advanced threats, which identifies malware exploits and ransomware before they hit the network. Other technologies, such as intrusion prevention system (IPS), advanced threat protection, sandboxing, dual antivirus, web and application control, and anti-phishing, make for a comprehensive arsenal of network defenses that covers all the bases.

Sophos Synchronized Security boosts the power of Sophos XG Firewall. Synchronized Security identifies the user and source of an infection on the network and responds by automatically limiting access to other network resources. This is accomplished through the Sophos Security Heartbeat™, which shares threat intelligence and security health status between endpoints and the firewall.

Recently, Pine Cove Consulting worked with a large banking institution that was looking to update its endpoint security but was unaware of the value of having visibility across the entire computing infrastructure. Vancleeve took the opportunity to explain the benefits of marrying firewall and endpoint protection through Synchronized Security. He informed the bank’s IT leaders about how these technologies collaborate to automatically and instantly identify and isolate compromised systems on the network and stop threats from spreading. In addition, he stressed the importance of synchronized app control, which it uses intelligence from the endpoint to identify all apps, including those where no signature exists, and additionally allowing firewall policies to be created for them. The bank was convinced and decided to adopt not only Sophos endpoint protection, but Sophos XG Firewall with Synchronized Security as well.

What are the unique advantages of Sophos Wireless when compared to traditional Wi-Fi solutions?

Pine Cove Consulting has also been investing a great deal of effort in providing secure and reliable wireless for larger customers with complex physical environments and roaming mobile users who depend on safe, uninterrupted internet connectivity to do their jobs. In high-density environments like corporate campuses, hospitals, or large municipal governments, Pine Cove Consulting has successfully deployed Sophos Wireless APX series access points, in addition to XG Firewall, which provide high performance and increased throughput load. “One of the many reasons that our customers add Sophos Central Wireless as well as their firewall is because they want a flexible, cloud-managed solution that will grow with them over time, especially as threats become even more sophisticated,” adds Vancleeve.

In fact, Pine Cove Consulting is responsible for the three largest Sophos Wireless APX deployments in North
America today and, not surprisingly, is particularly strong in the K-12 market. Their very first K-12 implementation with Sophos Central Wireless has 92 access points in a single environment. And in one of the most recent projects at Sheridan County School District #1 in Ranchester, Wyoming, Vancleeve and his team have installed 150 access points in a multi-campus scenario. He is confident that this implementation will greatly improve connectivity speeds and the user experience for students, teachers, and staff.

He expressed, “It’s critical that we fill in the gaps for our customers. Central Wireless allows us to do just that—now Sheridan has high performing Wi-Fi with increased security. In a unique environment like this, we see this as a win-win.”

Sophos Wireless APX access points support the latest high-speed, high-capacity 802.11ac Wave 2 wireless standards, which can handle a large population of mobile devices. Sophos Wireless APX has all the right ingredients: attractive price points, easy manageability from Sophos Central, flexibility, and unique security features that can’t be found in competing products.

Vancleeve believes Sophos Wireless APX is a disruptive technology that will displace traditional vendors like Aruba and Cisco. For example, the integration of Sophos Central with Sophos Wireless is a perfect option for customers with a more dynamic environment—particularly for those who are unable to manage Wi-Fi from their firewall or are currently using an on-premises hardware-based controller.

“With Sophos Wireless, we know we are providing the right solutions for our clients. Central Wireless will serve them well now and well into the future,” discloses Vancleeve.

When it comes to wireless security, as Vancleeve points out, Sophos addresses threats from many different angles. “We are consistently impressed by the way Central Wireless can help to tackle threats,” asserts Van Cleeve. By combining the power of the Sophos Central platform and the Security Heartbeat functionality, Sophos Wireless monitors and acts on the health status of connected endpoint and mobile clients to reduce the risk to trusted Wi-Fi networks. Additionally, the combination of Sophos Wireless and Sophos Mobile offers functionality similar to some cloud-based network access control (NAC) solutions to automatically and instantly block or restrict Wi-Fi access if a device is not compliant. Working in concert with Sophos Endpoint Protection and Sophos Intercept X, Sophos Wireless enables automatic and accelerated response to devices infected with malware and can stop an attempted connection to a command and control server until the cleanup is complete.

“The release of the new Sophos Wireless APX line is revolutionary for us. With the combination of the feature set and the price point, along with the integration into Sophos Central and overall Synchronized Security message, we believe our portfolio and value to our customers is now stronger than ever,” he states.

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Brandon Vancleeve
Vice President
Pine Cove Consulting
CUSTOMER CASE STUDY  PINE COVE CONSULTING

How has the Sophos Connect supported Pine Cove Consulting’s managed services business?

As a Sophos Connect MSP and longtime partner, Pine Cove Consulting has been able to tailor its solutions to its clientele, whether they are small MSPs, schools and other public sector organizations, or businesses.

“Getting involved in the Sophos MSP program has allowed us to offer a consumable, subscription-based service that aligns with our regular service offering. We can spin services at a monthly, per-user rate. It’s flexible, so as the number of users changes, we can adjust that. This has really made it easier for us to adopt that model as an MSP practice, and that has resulted in high growth on the managed services side of our business,” declares Vancleeve.

The Sophos Connect Flex MSP dashboard has been a big boon to Pine Cove Consulting’s business in terms of efficiency, productivity, and profitability. From the centralized intuitive Sophos Central partner console, Vancleeve’s team can quickly and easily manage their entire client base, prioritizing alerts, taking action, and uncovering gaps in their customers’ protection. This 360-degree visibility also enables Pine Cove Consulting to identify potential cross-sell opportunities.

How can EDR and MTR help Pine Cove Consulting and its customers improve protection while making better use of their resources?

As Vancleeve prepares to take over management of the business, he is looking forward to providing additional value for his under-resourced clients. Endpoint detection and response (EDR), which is packaged with Sophos Intercept X Advanced, will be a big focus in the near term. Powered by machine learning and enhanced with curated intelligence from SophosLabs, EDR automates detection and prioritizes threats to enable his team and his clients to gain efficiency and effectiveness by focusing on the security incidents that matter most.

Vancleeve is also excited about the addition of Sophos Managed Threat Response (MTR), a fully managed threat hunting, detection, and response service. The service provides organizations with a dedicated 24/7 security team to investigate and neutralize the most sophisticated and complex threats.

Sophos MTR is customizable with different service tiers and response modes to meet the unique and evolving needs of organizations of all sizes and maturity levels. Unlike many MDR services that focus on monitoring and threat notification, Sophos MTR rapidly escalates and takes action against threats based on an organization’s preferences.

Vancleeve believes that Sophos MTR will help sustain rapid growth and enable Pine Cove Consulting to maximize its existing resources, with even greater benefits to Pine Cove clients. “Sophos MTR is a game changer for MSPs – even those who already offer similar services. It’s simply more cost- and resource-effective to supplement portions of the workload,” adds Vancleeve. At the end of the day, what’s most important to the Pine Cove team is their clients. “We are constantly looking for new ways to expand our security expertise and better protect our customers against the latest threats. With Sophos and the addition of MTR, we know we are doing exactly that,” concludes Vancleeve.