

AXA IT



Overview

Industry

- Financial Services

Challenge

- High-profile target for advanced cyber-criminals
- Complex and sophisticated threat landscape
- Large volumes of sensitive, confidential customer data
- Challenging global regulatory system
- Limited visibility into complex digital infrastructure

Results

- Real-time detection of and response to in-progress attacks
- Flexible, self-learning AI that adapts to fast-evolving business
- Total network visibility in real time
- Sensitive customer data safeguarded
- 24/7 protection via autonomous response

Business Background

AXA is the largest insurer and the second largest financial services company in the world, with revenues of €100 billion and over €1.4 trillion worth of assets under management. Founded in 1985 and headquartered in Paris, the company is a crucial component of the global economic system, serving 105 million customers in 64 countries.

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We're not being attacked by human beings anymore. Computers are attacking us, software is attacking us, the only way forward is using artificial intelligence.

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Yorck Reuber, CTO North Europe, AXA IT

Challenge

Sophisticated threat actors target the financial services sector more than any other, and AXA – being one of the largest financial institutions in the world – is often subject to attack from novel and persistent threats. AXA is also an attractive target for politically motivated threat actors given its central role in global financial markets, as business interruption and broader risks to data integrity could have far-reaching consequences for financial stability worldwide.

Yorck Reuber, CTO North Europe, explains how it is critical to maintain clients' confidence in AXA's security: "We have to be secure because our biggest asset is trust and security. People give us their money and they expect us to protect them and their data in return."

One of AXA's key concerns was the ability to monitor its entire network and detect and contain emerging threats at an early stage. "We are a growing company, we buy companies, we sell companies, we don't always integrate them fully, so our infrastructure is really complex," commented Reuber. "It's extremely difficult to really see what's going on, to get a big picture of our networks and what devices are where."

Solution

AXA initially installed Darktrace's Enterprise Immune System in a limited area of the network during a four-week Proof of Value. Darktrace's AI immediately started learning the normal 'pattern of life' for every user, device, and all the complex relationships between them. This continuously evolving 'sense of self' allows the system to detect malicious activity before it has time to escalate into a crisis.

Darktrace's autonomous response solution, Darktrace Antigena, then takes surgical, measured action to contain in-progress threats, limiting damage and stopping their spread in real time. Antigena works by enforcing the normal 'pattern of life' for a given user or device, neutralizing malicious activity while sustaining normal operations. "No matter what the attacker does, Darktrace recognizes the threat and then shuts it off," stated Reuber.

Darktrace AI learns 'on the job', growing with AXA as it continues to expand. The Darktrace Threat Visualizer interface provides AXA with powerful insights into data flows across its entire digital infrastructure in real time, identifying threats as they unfold and visualizing every user and device in the network.

After deploying Darktrace's cyber AI, AXA's security team quickly saw that the self-learning technology could meaningfully secure their digital systems against advanced attacks. The team soon decided to extend Darktrace's real-time threat detection and autonomous response AI across its entire global infrastructure.

According to Reuber, "With Darktrace I now have a real ability to see what's going on in our network."

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Darktrace's artificial intelligence brings us huge benefits and helps us to be better than the market. ”

Yorck Reuber, CTO North Europe, AXA IT

Benefits

With Darktrace AI deployed across its entire digital enterprise, AXA now has 24/7 autonomous protection against a range of advanced cyber-threats, including zero-day exploits, insider attacks, and subtle 'low and slow' data exfiltration. Darktrace's cyber AI not only detects and contains these attacks, but it also filters each threat by its degree of criticality, enabling AXA's security team to optimize its resources.

"Darktrace can really support security teams in moving forward, prioritizing their work, and identifying security risks," remarked Reuber. "In the past, teams were always searching for what they thought was bad behavior, they had to recognize patterns and then code something. Now, with AI, this happens by itself."

By functioning as a force multiplier, Darktrace has given AXA's security team the time to focus on activities that mitigate risk and add value to the business, further modernizing its digital operations, pursuing efficiencies, and cutting costs.

"Artificial intelligence brings us huge benefits and helps us to be better than the market," explained Reuber.

The Threat Visualizer's intuitive interface has quickly become essential to the organization's cyber security strategy, helping to bridge the gap between technical specialists and the boardroom.

For Reuber, "Darktrace helps me highlight the important issues and convince partners what has to be done. It tells the security story – what we are seeing at the moment, where it is happening, and the effect that can have on our brand. That is something I can show the board."

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