S/MIME certificate distribution for a global market researcher

Automated distribution of trusted S/MIME certificates to all devices with the Secardeo TOPKI solution.

Our customer

Our customer, a global player in the field of market research, explores with its several thousand employees how people live, think and consume.

Challenge and objective

Our customer had recognized that the communication via e-mail involves high risks both with internal and external partners. On the one hand, fraudulent e-mails can lead to significant financial losses ("CEO-Fraud"). On the other hand, unauthorized persons could intercept e-mails and thus, confidential business data (industrial espionage) or personal data would get into wrong hands.

To significantly reduce these risks, e-mails from the sender should be digitally signed and encrypted for any recipient. Since many users also communicate mobile at our customer, these security mechanisms must also be available on mobile devices.

Conditions

For the head of IT who is responsible for the project, only end-to-end encryption of e-mails with S/MIME came into question. The solution should work on the Windows desktop with Outlook as well as on mobile devices with their native mail apps. This meant that so-called secure e-mail gateways had to be taken out of account as they always require a re-encryption and a digital signature cannot be deliberately generated by the user under its complete control.

Furthermore, it was important for our customer that the X.509 certificates used for encryption and digital signatures are also trustworthy for any external partners.

> „As we used Secardeo TOPKI platform as-a-Service, we were able to deploy the solution very quickly. Secardeo has been a great partner in securing our e-mail communication as well as our data in our company's digital transformation journey."
>
> *IT Manager*

In order to use S/MIME on the e-mail applications used by our customer, a solution had to be found, which provides the required keys and certificates of a publicly recognized CA (Certification Authority) on all devices of the users. The key distribution for the several thousand employees of our customer should be highly automated and, if possible, without user interaction.

The CA's presumption was that it should reside within Europe and thus meet a corresponding trust status.

Another important requirement of our customer was to outsource the implementation and operation of the solution so as not to have to build up internal resources and the necessary expertise in PKI.

The solution

Our customer quickly chose the Secardeo TOPKI platform as a software-as-a-service (SaaS) because it was the only solution on the market that comprehensively covered the requirements.

Secardeo TOPKI (Trusted Open PKI) is a platform for the automated distribution of X.509 certificates and private keys to all users and devices where they are needed.

The connection to the public CA of SwissSign was made by means of certEP (Certificate Enrollment Proxy), which performs an auto-enrollment of recognized

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S/MIME certificates for all users in the Active Directory domain of our customer. The distribution of the S/MIME keys to the mobile devices is automated via certPush and the MDM system from MobileIron. The exchange of certificates with external partners is carried out transparently using the Secardeo certBox.
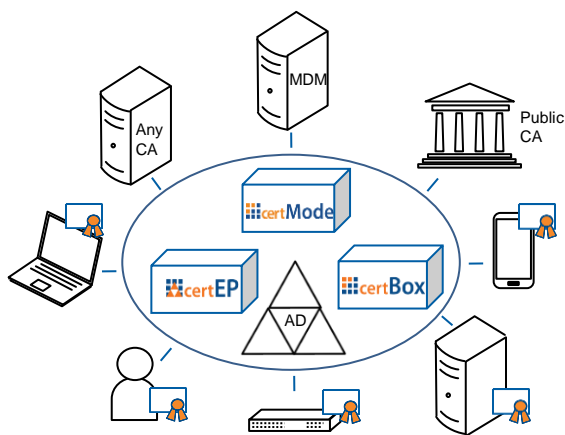
A further task was the distribution of the S/MIME keys on the different mobile devices of the users. The mobile devices are managed with a mobile device management system (MDM) from MobileIron.

An automated distribution of the private user keys is now to be carried out. Secardeo offers different solution components within the TOPKI platform. Our customer opted for Secardeo certPush MDM, which retrieves the user keys from the key archive and transfers them to the user profile on the MDM system via the MobileIron API on an encrypted channel.

The components of the TOPKI platform were installed and put into operation by Secardeo experts. In a proof-of-concept lasting a few weeks, the solution was successfully tested and the decision for the global rollout was made. The software is operated as SaaS by Secardeo.

In the meantime, all users of our customer can sign, encrypt and read encrypted e-mails on all their devices. From now on, the identified risks can be significantly reduced when exchanging e-mails using the Secardeo TOPKI solution.

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