MBX Builds Rapid7's Hardware Program into Global Powerhouse

Long-Term Partnership Evolves Appliance Strategy to Support Sales in 120+ Countries

MBX Benefits
- Guidance for evolving hardware strategy
- Platform changes to support growth
- Optimization of each platform configuration
- Platform standardization for all SKUs
- Transition to HPE OEM program for cost-effective global coverage
- One-stop imaging, inventory, logistics & RMAs
- Export management for international shipments
- Individual end user configuration

Like many enterprise software companies that offer their applications on a turnkey appliance, IT security software provider Rapid7 has seen its hardware needs change dramatically over the years. Product line diversification, business growth and global expansion have required ongoing adjustments in both platform selection and hardware management, leaving the company's initial white-box solutions and in-house system integration far behind.

Guiding Rapid7 on its hardware journey has been MBX Systems, a value-added provider of custom server hardware engineering, manufacturing and support services.

MBX has helped the company plan and execute new hardware strategy since 2007, driving a series of transitions that have gradually moved the program from custom rackmount servers imaged at Rapid7 offices to base HPE OEM platforms that are inventoried, pre-loaded with Rapid7's InsightVM or Nexpose vulnerability management software, and shipped to end customers in more than 120 countries by MBX.

"This is a strong partnership that has enabled us to cost-effectively scale our appliance program," said Kevin Gawthorpe, Platform Delivery Manager for Rapid7. "MBX not only provides the technical expertise and quality manufacturing services we need to deliver reliable hardware solutions to our customers, but also supplies critical support in areas ranging from evaluating new hardware options to troubleshooting global documentation and customs issues. It's a consultative relationship that has helped us grow the hardware deployment side of our business both domestically and internationally."

Ramping Up

InsightVM, Rapid7's cloud-based vulnerability solution, and Nexpose, Rapid7's on-premise vulnerability management solution, monitor exposures in real time and

adapt to new threats with fresh data enabling users to respond immediately. Rapid7's vulnerability management solutions provide a live 24/7 view of risk, prioritize vulnerabilities with a 1-1000 risk score that helps administrators determine which potential attack vectors to mitigate first, and provide both 'liveboards' and remediation tracking tools for monitoring and managing the mitigation process.

The physical appliances provided by MBX are one of several deployment options, along with software product, virtual appliance, private cloud and managed service models.

Rapid7 first engaged MBX in 2007 to design custom faceplates for servers they were purchasing from a small manufacturer and imaging in-house. By 2011, the company had shifted its entry-level appliances to a 1U Supermicro platform that was configured by a contract manufacturer, and added mid-tier and enterprise SKUs delivered on higher-end, off-the-shelf, 2U HP hardware. All sourcing, integration, inventory management, deployment and RMA responsibilities were still handled internally.

That in-house approach to hardware management as well as the dual platform strategy began to change in 2012 with a decision to purchase both Supermicro and HP Gen8 systems from MBX rather than through two separate vendors. While all hardware was initially drop-shipped to Rapid7's California offices for imaging and Rapid7 continued to manage the rest of the program, the agreement led to a close collaboration with MBX's engineering, global logistics and support teams that has both simplified and globalized Rapid7's hardware fulfillment.

Moving to HPE OEM

The turning point came in 2014, when MBX invoked its HP OEM-Integrator status to enroll Rapid7 in the HP OEM (now HPE OEM) program.

The short-term goal was to consolidate all appliance SKUs on HP platforms for easier management. The longer-term mission was to help build Rapid7's international presence through the OEM program's built-in compliance with global certification standards, global warranty on HP equipment that travels with the finished system, and 180-country technical support.

At the time, the Supermicro platform that Rapid7 was using for its entry-level vulnerability management appliance was approaching end-of-life (EOL). Migrating that product to the HP environment would avoid the five-figure price tag required to recertify multiple appliance configurations on new Supermicro hardware. It would also eliminate the need to support hardware systems from two different manufacturers.

"Standardizing on HP meant that every generation of every platform would be certified for different country regulations out of the box," Gawthorpe noted. "The time and

expense of recertifying Supermicro-based appliances for every refresh would simply disappear."

With Rapid7's buy-in on the HP OEM strategy, MBX engineers went to work to identify an HP configuration that would replace the soon-to-be-EOLed Supermicro platform. The new system they recommended not only replicated the old specs but also added failover capabilities with two hard drives and RAID technology. The upgrade eliminated the #1 failure with Rapid7's entry-level hardware, yielding a significant improvement in the customer experience.

Outsourcing to MBX

The platform consolidation was completed in 2015 in conjunction with the release of HPE Gen9. Rapid7 simultaneously decided to outsource imaging and all other appliance-related operations to MBX in order to take advantage of MBX's full-time focus on server appliance services.

Today, as a result, HPE systems pre-assembled with the processors, hard drive and memory required for each SKU are shipped directly to MBX on demand and held in inventory until an order is received. MBX then loads the InsightVM or Nexpose software image for either the console appliance or the engine edition needed for remote offices, using its proprietary Forge automated imaging and testing environment; fulfills customer-specific configuration needs based on Rapid7's hardware build requests; and typically ships the finished appliance directly to the customer location within 2-3 business days.

Rapid7 also relies on MBX to manage all global logistics needs, from meeting regulatory requirements for documentation, duties and taxes to running interference in the event an order gets stuck in customs. "Our expertise is in software, not in international shipping," said Amy Yeung, Order Management Specialist at Rapid7. "MBX knows exactly what we need, whether it's a document or a tax ID number, and that has helped us streamline operations so that we're better able to meet our lead times for both domestic and international orders."

In addition, MBX handles RMA and cross-shipping responsibilities in the U.S., facilitates HPE warranty transfer paperwork for global customers, and helps Rapid7 meet special customer needs ranging from customized power supplies to custom configurations required for unusual data center environments.

As of this writing, MBX is helping Rapid7 examine its options for the upcoming transition to HPE Gen10. It's just one more way that a close partnership with MBX is helping Rapid7 evolve its hardware program to both fuel and support ongoing growth.