AT&T Business

Birkey's Farm Store
protects its growing business with AT&T cybersecurity solutions

- **Business needs** - A way to stay ahead of cybercriminals' relentless attacks on business networks

- **Networking solution** - AT&T cybersecurity solutions safeguard Birkey's network, endpoints, and mobile devices

- **Business value** - Enhanced security and peace of mind, reduced complexity

- **Industry focus** - Agriculture and construction equipment dealer

- **Size** - 18 locations

About Birkey's

Birkey's Farm Store has served Illinois and Indiana since 1954. What was once an operation in one small shop is now a network of 17 retail stores and a corporate office employing more than 400. As the needs of its customers have changed over the years, Birkey's has added the resources required to serve them. This continued investment in people, infrastructure, technology, and tools has enabled Birkey's to become a leading dealer for Case IH Agriculture and Case Construction equipment. The company, headquartered in Champaign, Illinois, owns and operates a network of full-service Case equipment stores throughout Illinois and western Indiana.

The situation

As Birkey's has grown and its workforce has become more mobile, the company has worked hard to keep its network infrastructure and applications up to date and protect the company against threats from cybersecurity threats. Birkey's looked to upgrade its security to protect its network, endpoints, and mobile devices.

Solution

Birkey's chose an array of AT&T security solutions to safeguard their growing business. Birkey's uses SentinelOne® from AT&T to protect endpoints, AT&T Cybersecurity to detect and defuse threats, and MobileIron Blue from AT&T to protect mobile assets. The solutions deliver effective security, reduce complexity, and provide peace of mind for Birkey's IT professionals.

A constant focus on customers

Farming has changed significantly in the 60 years that Birkey's Farm Store has been in business. Back then, one farmer fed about 26 people. Today, one farmer feeds six times that many. The difference is precision agriculture, which optimizes farm processes and equipment to deliver better returns.

Birkey's supports precision agriculture with equipment that helps farmers plant, raise, and harvest their crops for the best possible return. The company has certified precision farming specialists at each of its 17 retail stores; these specialists help customers select advanced Case IH equipment for planting, tilling, mowing, and harvesting to improve the efficiency of every farmer's operation.

The company also sells Case Construction equipment, including backhoes, loaders, dozers, graders, and forklifts. "Our customers are farmers and construction contractors. Probably 80 percent of our business is in the agriculture market and probably 20 percent is construction," said Jay Scott, Birkey's Director of Business Intelligence. "Our focus is on our customers, making sure that they have what they need to be able to run their businesses."

Mitigating threats, minimizing complexity

The growth of precision farming has brought many changes to the market in the last 15 years. Supporting the sophisticated equipment that Birkey's sells requires specialized training. "Our employees have to have a lot of technical know-how," Scott said. "We added a whole division that deals with selling the precision farming equipment, troubleshooting it, and repairing it."

As Birkey's grew, so did the breadth and complexity of the networks that support the business. Company officials wanted to ensure that the networks were protected against the myriad of threats that have become commonplace today. "We have technology challenges with security, just keeping our company safe, and mitigating threats on the reporting side," Scott said.

It was also difficult to coordinate the interface of the many different software packages the company uses. "Getting reporting out of all of them and having interfaces to connect all of the data is a huge challenge," he said.

Eliminating vulnerabilities

David Aaron Fendley, Birkey's Network Security Administrator, said his top priority is making certain that people can perform their jobs safely. "In the 21st century, a lot of threats are automated and launched through bots, and artificial intelligence is taking off, which is going to make the problem even worse," he said.

Fendley also cited the challenge of scalability. "Investing in a new infrastructure, whether the

company's growing or technology is evolving, requires an increase of technological infrastructure to support," he said. "And any time you expand, there can be vulnerabilities in old software and in the new layers."

Attackers search for infrastructure gaps to exploit. "You have to maintain the networks to keep them up, but you have to plan for downtime while monitoring for threats," Fendley said. "So the biggest challenge is a combination of security around preexisting software and infrastructure while extending that and doing it in a way that is architectural rather than duct-taped together."

Birkey's wanted to add multiple layers of security to its networks. "The threat from the bad actors has really taken off the last 10 or 15 years and we needed to step up our game to make sure we keep Birkey's safe," Scott said.

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> **Jay Scott**
> Business Intelligence,
> Birkey's Farm Store, Inc.

Stepping up security

AT&T recommended SentinelOne® from AT&T to protect the company's endpoints, AT&T Cybersecurity

to detect and defuse threats, and MobileIron Blue from AT&T to protect the company's mobile assets. Birkey's IT team saw an immediate difference.

SentinelOne upgraded the protection, detection response, and control of Birkey's laptops and other devices. "We used another product for 12 months and were not that thrilled with it at all," Scott said. "SentinelOne has been a big step up for sure, and the support we get has been outstanding."

Fendley, who has worked as a software developer and network engineer, said he looks at new software with a critical eye. "SentinelOne has really impressed me. I'm quite the fan," he said. "People (helping us) have been very easy to work with; they're very to the point and invested in getting us to our goals."

He also appreciates the dashboard design. "And the deployment has been super easy. We were able to deploy it automatically to 400 computers."

Improved threat visibility, precise control

Birkey's IT executives are impressed with AT&T Cybersecurity, which helps safeguard the company's digital assets and simplifies network management. "It's given us visibility to threats across our entire network. We are able to see things that we have not been able to see before," Scott said. "And it's nice to have the logs from all of our security systems coming into one place to be analyzed."

Fendley appreciates the reporting and ability to generate the views his team needs to review information, set up alerts, and even suppress certain

information. "I particularly like the rule set, the sophistication to be able create those conditions for what we want to see or what we don't want to see."

He also likes being able to use AT&T Cybersecurity as a syslog drain or as a login point that supports globalized reporting from all company devices. "That has been really, really useful."

Scott said MobileIron Blue from AT&T gives Birkey's precise control over its mobile devices as it includes both Unified Endpoint Management for iOS and Android devices as well as a threat defense product that protects against unknown actors. "It was critical that we have control of what could be installed on these mobile devices," he said. "We also wanted some visibility of the apps they have on them and to be able to implement security software to all these devices."

Fendley finds the mobile device management capabilities MobileIron provides to be very useful. "We can either lock things down or deploy things that are particularly needed by our employees for security purposes," he said.

Confidence and peace of mind

Scott and Fendley agree that Birkey's has profited from the AT&T solutions it has deployed. "The biggest benefit from my point of view is peace of mind," Scott said. "I have confidence that our networks are thoroughly protected, and if we do have an intrusion

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> **David Aaron Fendley**
> Administrator, Network Security,
> Birkey's Farm Store, Inc.

that we will be able to catch it when it happens."

"It's been a huge weight off my shoulders to have in place critical security pieces that help protect us," he said.

Fendley agreed, adding that his team's business processes have been simplified. "AT&T has decreased the effort it takes to maintain the security of systems and increased our ability to react. AT&T gives us the insight to be proactive. The solutions allow us to see things that we might want to react to or improve. But it also allows us to respond to anything suspicious," he said.

Birkey's now has clear insight into any applications that are installed on machines. "This has greatly reduced effort, time, and manpower, while giving us confidence and peace of mind," he said. "And it's nice to know that if we do have a device compromised at 2:00 a.m. that SentinelOne will respond and take care of the issue for us automatically."

Superior products, top-notch support

Like most IT professionals, the Birkey's team works to stay abreast of innovations that could further improve operations. "We're always evaluating our software packages," Scott said. "And we're going to be re-doing some data circuits and looking at internet and phone service options, probably over the next year or two."

Fendley said the company constantly looks to optimize its network to eliminate latency. "We'll continue to evaluate protocols that we don't need any more or for which there are superior implementations," he said.

AT&T is always part of the conversation because of the superiority of its product offerings and the responsiveness of the account team that serves Birkey's. "The gentleman on our staff who handles mobile devices is grateful that his AT&T account rep responds quickly to his requests and resolves problems," Scott said.

He said he doesn't hesitate to recommend AT&T Business to peers. "They're top-notch and the support has been wonderful," he said. "The software we have gotten from AT&T has definitely enhanced our security."