



West Bend Mutual Insurance Has Segmentation in the Cloud Covered with Illumio

Overcoming cloud migration challenges
by implementing Illumio Core for
consistent, reliable workload security

Customer Overview & Challenge

West Bend Mutual Insurance (WBMI) provides broad insurance coverage to home and auto owners and businesses in the Midwest and beyond. For over 125 years, the company has helped its members “find the silver lining” in challenging situations, as its motto goes.

When it comes to cybersecurity, WBMI is equally committed to making sure its business is prepared and members are protected. The IT team has a resilience-focused, “not if but when” mindset about breaches. And the principle of least privilege underpins its approach to security.

To that end, recognizing its existing traditional perimeter firewalls would not sufficiently protect the internal network, WBMI decided to implement micro-segmentation. According to Assistant Vice President of IT, Security, and Technology, Ryan Dove, “Micro-segmentation is a key control to protect company assets and limit the blast radius of a breach or ransomware attacks. We knew it would put the business in a much better place from a risk perspective.”

The team opted for a hypervisor-driven solution from a trusted vendor. But a couple of years later, WBMI extended its IT footprint and began to migrate workloads to Azure, requiring an upgraded version of its micro-segmentation product – and complexity ensued.

The product modified the network on the virtual machine, resulting in major production outages and long time to resolution, ultimately putting a hold on the migration progress. “We weren’t allowed to move workloads until we could guarantee the same security position in the cloud as we had on-premises,” said Mike Laak, Senior Infrastructure Engineer at the time. “We needed a solution that provided a centralized platform for policy management and had inherent support for cloud environments and our legacy operating systems.”

Overview

Industry: Insurance

Environment: Hybrid infrastructure

Challenge: Completing a secure cloud migration with a segmentation solution that delivers seamless protection for Azure and on-premises

Solution: Illumio Core for consistent, reliable workload security and visibility

Benefits: Improved stability and reliability; comprehensive visibility; easy to deploy and maintain; simplified segmentation

The segmentation features native to Azure also had limitations. WBMI had multiple Azure subscriptions to separate its environments across different regions, each with its own Virtual Network. It was impossible to enforce centralized policies across regions and VNets, thus requiring distinct solutions for each subscription.

Finding a solution with built-in visibility was another must. Its existing micro-segmentation solution had a separate product for visibility – at an estimated \$300,000 despite its shortcomings, including the lack of integration with policy creation workflows.

Illumio Solution

WBMI found a silver lining in its cloud migration challenges: The lessons learned led the company to Illumio.

The team evaluated other products, but Illumio Core was the clear choice. “Beyond meeting our requirements for seamless security and visibility on-premises and in the cloud, it’s SaaS hosted, supports multiple operating systems, and is less complex than similar solutions,” said Mike.

WBMI initially rolled out Illumio Core over its existing solution with no issue since Illumio doesn’t interfere with the actual network interface on the virtual machines. For about a month, the team used Illumio’s real-time map in “visibility mode” to ensure they understood traffic flows before rewriting rules. The map provides a dynamic application-centric view across environments. WBMI could see the impact of draft policies and cleared out “potentially blocked” traffic for which a rule didn’t exist. Integrated visualization and policy creation workflow ensures safe and efficient enforcement – a capability WBMI did not have previously.

WBMI also found tremendous relief in Illumio’s simple labeling method compared to the tag sprawl headache of its first micro-segmentation solution. Streamlined labels made it easier for the team to properly scope policies, eliminating the chance of errors and resulting in far fewer labels to manage.

After monitoring and thoroughly testing Illumio Core, the team had the confidence to execute a big-bang cutover – in just 10 minutes, with no disruptions or downtime.

For IT Architecture Manager Perry Whelan, an urgent initiative resulted in a multifaceted win.

“Illumio enables us to rapidly migrate virtual machines from data centers into our cloud environment while maintaining security controls based on least privilege. We were in a precarious situation until we got Illumio working, giving us security, velocity, and stability.”

Illumio Core has been invaluable across the organization since. Continuous visibility and a historical view of traffic flows via the product’s Explorer feature have accelerated WBMI’s troubleshooting time by 30 percent. “It’s a significant amount of time saved if you don’t have a network engineer spending an hour proving why something did or did not talk to the network,” said Mike. “We love Explorer and call it our network DVR. It allows us to easily query for traffic information and get instant answers.”

Application owners and auditors alike have also benefited from Illumio Core’s visual feedback. WBMI application owners can easily see flows into and from their applications, participating and gaining insights in a way they never had before. During an audit, WBMI was able to quickly demonstrate security controls through the map, making the auditor’s job easier.

While the company continues to reap many benefits, the team enjoys peace of mind at the end of the day knowing that it is now more resilient against breaches. “Illumio can go largely unnoticed in a good way. It has never adversely impacted my day. Support is always helpful, and all promises that were made were kept – the product does exactly what it is supposed to do,” shared Mike.

Customer Benefits

Improved stability and reliability

The migration was a quiet affair, with no outage events or disruptions, and WBMI continues to rely on Illumio Core for unified visibility and security for on-premises and cloud workloads.

Easy to deploy, easy to maintain

Security doesn't depend on the underlying infrastructure and policy creation is streamlined by label-based rules, making it easier to deploy and maintain in any data center or cloud.

Visibility that increases efficiency

Armed with a real-time map and a historical view of its application environment, WBMI has reduced time spent troubleshooting issues and simplified audits and segmentation efforts.



Illumio enables us to rapidly migrate virtual machines from data centers into our cloud environment while maintaining security controls based on least privilege. We were in a precarious situation until we got Illumio working, delivering security, velocity, and stability.

Perry Whelan, IT Architecture Manager



Illumio, the pioneer and market leader of Zero Trust Segmentation, stops breaches from becoming cyber disasters. Illumio Core and Illumio Edge automate policy enforcement to stop cyberattacks and ransomware from spreading across applications, containers, clouds, data centers, and endpoints. By combining intelligent visibility to detect threats with security enforcement achieved in minutes, Illumio enables the world's leading organizations to strengthen their cyber resiliency and reduce risk.



See what customers have to say about Illumio.

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