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Sentek Global helps Navy recruiters find right technology

By ERIN BRIDGES

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Navy recruiters soon might have new technology to protect sensitive information and keep them connected to potential recruits in the virtual world.

About a year ago, **Sentek Global** was asked by the Navy to explore options for a mobile device that would meet the needs of the Navy. The requirements later changed to specifically target recruiters.

In August, the company submitted its report including recommendations for the type of technology and security measures they should use.

“(They wanted) some device that would operate both within the Navy’s protected network and also the unrestricted Internet on the same device,” said Rick Bell, director of Navy command and control systems and solutions for Sentek.

They needed something that would meet military security requirements, be small enough for easy transportation and protect the personal identification information collected by recruiters.

Sentek employees spent time learning about the daily life of the recruiting command and what they needed from a mobile device.

Scott Scheferman, information assurance analyst for Sentek, said they found that recruiters spend about 90 percent of their time on social networking sites and working outside of the secured network because that is where their potential recruits are spending their time.

“They ‘live’ on the Internet as opposed to primarily living on NMCI,” he said.

“A lot of this millennial generation prefers social networking ... over face-to-face or phone conversations. It’s a way for the recruiter to keep in touch with candidates.”

Scheferman said they looked at a wide range of devices from an iPhone or Blackberry to a clamshell laptop and everything in between.

Due to the nature of the work with the Navy and the status of the process toward integrating the new technology, Scheferman said he did not feel comfortable speaking to specific models ultimately selected.

He did say, however, that they recommended an ultra-mobile personal computing platform. UMPCs typically have a touch screen and a modified version of a standard laptop keyboard. Scheferman said it’s somewhere “between a laptop and a smartphone.”

From a security perspective, there were some technical challenges Sentek needed to address.

For example, they had to find a way to protect data at rest, provide for virtualization.

Scheferman said one way the Navy is looking at solving the data at rest problem is to encrypt every electronic bit on the device so that a password must be entered before the device even boots up.

In terms of virtualization, there are a few options available that will keep the environment in which recruiters are doing social networking and browsing the public domain separate from the Navy’s network in order to prevent malicious code from jumping from one area to the other, Scheferman said.

The Navy now will review the report and decide how to proceed. And Bell said Sentek hopes to be involved in future contracts to make the new technology available to recruiters.

It also gave them a chance to explore technologies the company can use in other products moving forward.

“It was absolutely excellent to work on this bleeding-edge technology for the Navy,” Scheferman said.

“It really is a showcase project, if you will, and something you don’t always get to work on as a consultant.”