



WTW uses Mend to reduce MTTR

About WTW

WTW (NASDAQ: WTW) formerly Willis Towers Watson, is a leading global insurance advisor and financial services consulting company. WTW serves 140 countries and markets, and its mission is to help organizations sharpen their financial strategy, enhance organizational resilience, motivate their workforce, and maximize performance in their various industries.

The Challenge

When WTW began to investigate SCA tools in 2018, its challenges revolved around open source licensing for its enterprise products designed for the insurance industry. Licenses that imposed an obligation to share any code that used the open source package represented an area of particular concern for WTW's legal teams, because a breach of terms for these licenses could result in demands for free distribution of proprietary code.

"We recognized that there was a gap in our knowledge," said Andrei Ungureanu, security architect for WTW. "What it meant was that while we were selling products to our clients, we weren't aware of all of our dependencies."

WTW also needed a solution that would adapt to an evolving world of application development and delivery. "When we started, our products were in-house, installable applications. If there was a vulnerable library, what was the risk? Really, it was insider threats only," said Vivek Johri, WTW's director of security architecture. "Since then, our delivery approach has shifted to being more online, including SaaS and API-based applications. This makes vulnerabilities more significant – the risk of a breach is greater."

A sense of urgency emerged as Google, Microsoft, Apple, and others experienced breaches due to dependency confusion attacks conducted as part of a series of security tests in February 2021. "The dependency confusion issue made supply chain security very real and tangible for a lot of people," said Mr. Ungureanu. "It became an actual problem, not just theoretical. Big companies have fallen into that trap, which is not something we can afford to do, so we had to put more emphasis on security."

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Key Solution Requirements:

- **CI/CD Integration:** In order to be broadly adopted by developers, WTW focused on tools that would integrate easily and directly with their CI/CD pipeline, allowing developers to remain in their IDEs while using the tool.
- **Intuitive reporting:** In order to report licensing usage and security information to executives, WTW's security champions needed a "single pane of glass" view that could easily and effectively convey a large amount of information about risk and remediation metrics.
- **Scalability:** With many projects spread across multiple business units – some of which were very data-intensive – WTW needed a solution that would scale to accommodate the entire business, without price increases based on the quantity of data being scanned.
- **Quality results:** WTW tested multiple SCA solutions to determine which had the highest quality results, including prioritization of the most risky vulnerabilities and a minimal number of false positives.



The Mend Solution

After reviewing multiple market leading solutions, WTW chose Mend SCA to mitigate its open source licensing risk. "Licensing was more of a legal requirement," said Mr. Johri. "However, over time, due to all of the work that Andrei has done, we have pivoted from a use case that was primarily about licensing to a very, very deep focus on security."

WTW's security teams initiated a significant shift in risk posture as application delivery evolved toward strategies that created a larger attack surface with a greater risk of breaches from outside the organization. As WTW delivered SaaS and web-based applications with internet-facing interfaces potentially exposed to attackers, it faced a new landscape of threat prioritization that led to a new emphasis on remediation.

"We wanted to make sure that all of our developers use best practices," said Mr. Ungureanu. "With the way that Mend works, we can do centralized templating that all the teams use, which lets us standardize how security is done in our developers' pipeline."

As WTW's needs changed, so did its approach to using Mend SCA. "Success – with any tool – starts with having the right ownership, with the right stakeholders," said Mr. Johri. "When we started, everyone was making their best effort and no one was assigned to manage the tool itself. Over the last two years, we have taken ownership, and Andrei has focused on optimizing the Mend offering. This has improved adoption in our organization significantly."

“*One of our most indicative KPIs is the amount of time for us to remediate vulnerabilities and also the amount of time developers spend fixing vulnerabilities in our code base, which has reduced significantly. We're talking about at least 80% reduction in time.*” Mr. Ungureanu

Solution Value & Benefits

For WTW, the value of Mend started with meeting all necessary licensing requirements for any open source libraries used by its developers. "Today, we have a greater confidence that we are not in breach of any license agreements," said Mr. Ungureanu. "Previously, it wasn't exactly guesswork, but our confidence level was low that we were using the right licenses. Now, our confidence level is way higher."

Mend SCA has also helped WTW to spend significantly less time on licensing and related tasks, freeing up resources for high-value projects and business needs. Using Mend SCA's reporting tools, WTW teams can get a bird's eye overview of license use and potential sources of risk.

WTW has gradually increased the number of contributing developers using Mend SCA by 15 percent, with growth enabled by a positive relationship with Mend's customer success teams. "Any time we've had a situation, like when we had an issue with updates to our SSO that locked us out, we could rely on Mend's customer success to hop on a call and get us back on track quickly," said Mr. Johri. "Our customer success rep has taken a lot of time to explain things we didn't know about and developing our relationship."

For developers at WTW, Mend SCA has created an opportunity to take control over a previously chaotic process. "Before Mend, people didn't know where their dependencies came from, and they would have to go and find them," said Mr. Ungureanu. "As people learned how to use the tool, their knowledge grew a lot – and our remediation time has gone down considerably. It's been a massive improvement."

About Mend

Mend, formerly known as WhiteSource, effortlessly secures what developers create. Mend uniquely removes the burden of application security, allowing development teams to deliver quality, secure code, faster. With a proven track record of successfully meeting complex and large-scale application security needs, the world's most demanding software developers rely on Mend. The company has more than 1,000 customers, including 25 percent of the Fortune 100, and manages Renovate, the open-source automated dependency update project.

For more information, visit www.mend.io, the Mend blog, and Mend on LinkedIn and Twitter.