

# Heffernan Insurance Brokers Ensures Network Security with Blue Hexagon

For over 30 years, independent insurance brokerage Heffernan Insurance Brokers has provided personal and business insurance, financial services and employee benefits to a diverse clientele. Today, in the highly competitive insurance business, Heffernan is a top 20 privately-held insurance firm.

As an industry, insurance has a reputation for being a little behind the technology adoption curve, but Heffernan dispels this perception. “My job is to make sure that our IT strategy helps the business meet its goals of profitability, growth and increasing shareholder value,” says John Peterson, Chief Information Officer for Heffernan. “Critical to meeting these objectives is being proactive to secure the data of our clients.”

The nature of Heffernan’s business creates some inherent challenges for Petersen’s team. “Our security concerns stem from handling a lot of business transactions and having sales teams on the road that require secure access to information from any device, anywhere,” says Petersen. “We need to know where data is at, who’s accessing it, where it’s going and protect it. It’s also imperative to secure our network and the information going back and forth securely with the companies with which we work.”

## NEW THREATS BYPASS OLD SECURITY

With new threats and hacker techniques seemingly appearing daily, Heffernan must remain vigilant. “Threats are constant, growing and everywhere and include phishing attacks and local and foreign hackers probing for vulnerabilities,” says Petersen.

Unfortunately, the current mix of traditional security tools are inadequate for identifying and stopping today’s real-time threats. “Antivirus signatures, firewalls and sandboxes aren’t good enough anymore,” says Petersen. “The threats we’re facing are starting to become very sophisticated, mutating, using obfuscation and taking on polymorphic abilities to bypass existing security defenses. You have to take additional steps to protect data on the network and get a better view of what’s happening.”

## VALIDATION BEYOND BELIEF

Heffernan started to seek more advanced ways to mitigate threats. “We looked at tools that provide network traffic monitoring and started testing them,” says Petersen. “Then, we heard about the Blue Hexagon’s network threat protection solution and added it to



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## CHALLENGES

- Keep pace with the evolving threat landscape
- Stop a variety of attacks
- Quickly identify and prevent threats in real-time

## SOLUTION

Blue Hexagon’s Deep Learning-powered Network Security Platform for real-time network perimeter threat detection that inspects the complete network flow for threats

## BENEFITS

- Immediately identified and stopped malicious Emotet virus
- Prevented attacks from getting through—in less than a second
- Attained complete threat categorization and kill chain visibility

**“The threat landscape is changing and has moved past current security systems, so you need a solution that can grow and change with it. Blue Hexagon’s real-time deep learning platform is critical to ensure that you stay ahead of threats, because if you suffer a data loss or a data breach, not only is your customer data in jeopardy, but your reputation as a company, and your ability to do business, can all be crippled.”**

**John Petersen** | CIO, Heffernan Insurance Brokers

our trial. One product found some threats while the second found others; only Blue Hexagon found all of the threats we tested the platform with.”

The Blue Hexagon deep learning models inspect the complete network flow – payloads, headers, malicious URLs, and C2 communications – and is able to deliver threat inference in less than a second. Threat prevention can then be enabled on firewalls, endpoint devices, and network proxies.

In the process of evaluating Blue Hexagon, Heffernan was alerted about an Emotet attack in progress. “Blue Hexagon alerted us that one of our servers had been infected with the Emotet virus,” says Petersen. “Emotet is a polymorphic threat that is extremely malicious. It can sit dormant, hide, work around antivirus protections, and encrypt data on your network.”

Originally designed as a banking trojan to steal sensitive and private information, Emotet has evolved to become a malware delivery service. Its highly malicious payloads can infect organizations with malware such as ransomware. Emotet is polymorphic and can constantly change itself to evade detection. Thus, it is extremely difficult to detect via traditional security methods like signatures and sandboxes.

Because Blue Hexagon identified the threat, Heffernan was able to disarm it. “We shut that server down and informed our cyber-insurance carrier, which asked us to check in with them in a couple of weeks because they were so concerned about the threat from Emotet. When we did and told them nothing else had happened on the network, they almost couldn’t believe that Blue Hexagon enabled us to identify this threat so quickly that we were able to shut it down completely.”

Blue Hexagon’s deep learning-based approach is proven in customer environments to detect known and unknown network threats, like Emotet, at first encounter—with speed, efficacy and coverage to set a new standard for cyber defense. In fact, in tests, the platform demonstrated nearly 100% detection rates against daily malware samples, including zero-day malware variants, automatically delivering a verdict and blocking threats in sub-seconds.

Blue Hexagon is a deep learning innovator focused on protecting organizations from cyberthreats. The company’s real-time deep learning platform is proven to detect known and unknown network threats with speed, efficacy, and coverage that set a new standard for cyber defense. Blue Hexagon is headquartered in Sunnyvale, CA, and backed by Benchmark and Altimeter Capital. For more information, visit <https://bluehexagon.ai> or follow @bluehexagonai.

## IDENTIFYING ‘EVERYTHING’ IN REAL-TIME

The Blue Hexagon Real-time Deep Learning Platform is delivering the results that Heffernan had hoped for, and more. “The impact of knowing exactly what’s going on to our network is huge, otherwise you can’t protect it and your data is at risk,” says Petersen. “Blue Hexagon gives us a real-time view of what’s happening with our email and web traffic. Their AI – or deep learning secret sauce – can inspect network traffic in real-time and determine if there’s a threat. If one is found, it alerts us, giving us detailed information about what the threat’s doing, and what payload it deployed. This allows us to take steps to stop the threat before it can cause any harm.”

Petersen has advice for companies considering whether to evaluate a Deep Learning AI security solution like Blue Hexagon. “I suggest they be prepared for Blue Hexagon to find more information about traffic and threats coming into their network than they ever knew,” he says. “This knowledge will make them more aware and better equipped to put controls in place that protect their data and company.”

Blue Hexagon is an integral security “partner” to Heffernan Insurance Brokers. “When disaster strikes, we’re there to help our clients,” says Petersen. “Blue Hexagon now gives us that type of insurance. When disaster tries to strike on our network, Blue Hexagon is there to make sure that we’re able to continue to do what we need to do for our clients.”

## ABOUT HEFFERNAN INSURANCE BROKERS

Headquartered in Walnut Creek, California, Heffernan Insurance Brokers has a nationwide presence, offering comprehensive business insurance, personal insurance, employee benefits, and financial services products to a wide range of businesses and individuals. Since its founding in 1988, the firm has remained employee-owned and has grown revenue to over \$100 million.

Heffernan is consistently ranked as one of the nation’s largest independent insurance brokerage firms, and has been recognized on the insurance industry’s “Best Places to Work” lists. The company has also been named a “Top Corporate Philanthropist” and, on average, donates over 10 percent of profits to charity each year.

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