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“  
Sigma has excellent  
expertise, not just  
technically but also  
in the practical  
application of the  
technology to  
our requirements.”



## Sigma Solutions helps the Texas Facilities Commission get the most bang for its buck through sound advice and expert professional services.

The Texas Facilities Commission (TFC) manages more than 28 million square feet of office, warehouse and parking facilities in 288 cities throughout Texas, and is responsible for minor construction, maintenance and repairs, building automation and energy management. The Commission also has oversight of new construction and major renovations of state facilities, including planning and design. These efforts support the needs of more than 100 state agencies and more than 60,000 state employees.

A robust technology infrastructure is critical to day-to-day operations, but the agency was struggling with outdated network equipment. In its Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2013-2017, the TFC discussed the need for an infrastructure upgrade to replace those components and improve network security. Because the agency's budget did not support such a project, additional funds were needed.

“TFC received about \$150,000 from the legislature for security and network improvements,” said Glenn Garvey, Network Operations Manager, Texas Facilities Commission. “We realized that in the grand scheme of things that's not a huge sum of money, so we wanted to make it go as far as possible. One of the first things we needed was someone with expertise in the latest networking and security technologies to take a look at our environment and make suggestions as to how we should spend that money.”

TFC found that partner in Sigma Solutions. The Sigma team performed a thorough assessment of the agency's administrative network and recommended a series of improvements.

“We had contacted a different network integrator but they never got back to us. Sigma came in and immediately engaged with us and provided what we needed,” Garvey said. “We took every one of their recommendations and contracted with them to install and configure the equipment and train us in its use.”

## End-to-End Solution

The primary goal of the project was to upgrade TFC's core network infrastructure. The Sigma team identified equipment that needed replacement and designed a solution that would meet the agency's needs now and in the future.

"They said, 'Most of your equipment is out of service with Cisco and so you are due to upgrade just about every switch.' So they spec'd out switches and architected the environment," said Garvey. "It wasn't a cookie-cutter approach. They helped make sure that we could fully leverage the solution they were providing. They asked about our future plans and recommended things we might want to look at down the road."

With a new core infrastructure in place, TFC looked to upgrade its security environment. Sigma deployed and configured new firewalls and helped the agency begin implementing virtual private network (VPN) capabilities to its remote sites. The Sigma team also recommended the Cisco IronPort email and Web security gateway.

"The IronPort product enables us to monitor the Web traffic on our network and direct that traffic as necessary to ensure that it isn't outside the scope of our business," Garvey said. "In particular it lets us block any connections to malware sites."

Next, Sigma helped TFC implement a Cisco wireless architecture. The solution supports agency staff who want to use their mobile devices to access network services.

"There's been internal demand for wireless and we wanted to accommodate that in a safe fashion. We didn't want to say no to those folks but we didn't want to start putting in consumer-grade routers. And because we have a small staff, we needed the ability to manage wireless networks in our remote sites from our headquarters," said Garvey.

"When we initially contacted Sigma, we had a list of priorities. Wireless wasn't our top priority but we wanted to implement a solution if we could afford it. Sigma was able to provide that for us."

## Great Work

Throughout the project, the Sigma team worked around the erratic schedules of TFC's small IT staff. They also completed



a knowledge transfer to ensure that the agency's in-house staff could support the network going forward.

"We don't have a huge staff, so our schedules tend to change at the last minute. We never heard a complaint about that," Garvey said. "Some of the hardware and software that Sigma put into place was new to us, and they took the time to bring us up to speed. They not only showed us how it works but how we might best make use of it."

"It was a pleasure working with the Sigma technicians. They were very professional and very accommodating to our particular needs. They came in, saw what we were doing, saw our level of expertise, and worked to our level of expertise. They really went above and beyond."

Based upon the success of the network infrastructure upgrade, TFC asked Sigma to assist with its building controls network. The agency also hopes to work with Sigma again on future projects.

"The Texas Facilities Commission has about 150 buildings in the state of which the Building Controls Network (BCN) has some degree of control. Some buildings we own, some we lease, some we manage. Building controls include HVAC, fire, security, energy and overall automation. That's what I manage and maintain for the various buildings," said William (Butch) Grote, Jr., Operations Manager, Texas Facilities Commission. "Sigma completed a building control network assessment for us and did a great job."

"I've enjoyed working with both the architect and the folks who came in and did the implementation," said Garvey. "I thought that they had excellent expertise, not just technically but also in the practical application of the technology to our requirements. Sigma is definitely at the top of our list of network integrators for any future TFC projects."