Encryption vendor PKWARE adds data redaction to address PCI requirements

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Introduction

In our last report on PKWARE, we chronicled the vendor's addition of data discovery features to its flagship Smartcrypt encryption offering. Its most recent update is the addition of sensitive-data-redaction functionality to address PCI compliance use cases, specifically for credit card issuers and payment processors looking to prevent leaking of credit card numbers into unstructured data like emails, Word and Excel files, etc.

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From a technology perspective, data discovery and redaction are fairly straightforward, although PKWARE possesses two differentiating features: the ability to automatically scan data in real time, which greatly reduces the amount of time to complete a scan, and the combination of data discovery and redaction in a single offering. However, its greatest impact may be from a go-to-market perspective, with the potential for tangible ROI for both existing and new customers looking to reduce security exposures and the scope of PCI audits, and to thereby obtain savings on audits and remediation efforts.

Details

PKWARE's new offering is officially titled PKWARE Data Redaction. The product is agent-based, and is an add-on to the company's existing Smartcrypt agent software, although it can also be purchased as a stand-alone offering. PKWARE's aim is to help card issuers and payment processors deal with a thus-far intractable problem – sensitive credit card data leaking into unstructured data and thereby violating PCI-DSS requirements, in the process incurring substantial costs for remediation. Current controls consist mainly of alerting, but PKWARE enables real-time remediation with fully automated redaction of sensitive data.

Functionally, as soon as a file is saved to a user's hard drive, PKWARE's discovery engine will scan the file, redact any credit card data and save the file as a redacted file. PKWARE will only redact the middle six digits of a credit card that contains account information, and will leave the first six and last four digits, allowing users to perform their intended tasks, unlike offerings that replace a file with a 'stub' file or move the file to another location. PKWARE claims it can redact credit card numbers in 20 file types, and that the entire process takes nanoseconds, compared with some discovery scanning tools that can take days or even months for very large firms with large data sets.

The advantage of redaction versus encryption and tokenization is that it is impossible to reverse redacted files, which can take endpoint devices out of scope for PCI audits. From a go-to-market perspective, PKWARE will initially target the roughly 200 card issuers and payment processors in the US with a minimum of 2,000 end users, and later expand to EMEA and potentially new verticals like healthcare and retail.