

Firstwave rides Telstra security push

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Telstra is flexing its cybersecurity muscle with the launch of its security centre in Sydney and a pitch to the market that could be the ticket for an ASX-listed security outfit that started life inside the telco's original research facilities.

ASX-listed Firstwave Cloud Technology provides the muscle for Telstra's security offering as white-label wholesale suppliers of the telco's cloud-based security-as-a-service products. The arrangement means that when any large organisation buys cloud-based email filtering, web security or firewall services from Telstra, it's Firstwave's technology that comes into play

It's a relationship that CTO Simon Ryan is hoping will deliver more goods for Firstwave as the telco looks to grab a larger share of the security services market.

"We came out of the Telstra Research Lab (TRL) and have grown up alongside them and do the technology behind some of their security services," Mr Ryan said. "Telstra sells our services so the research we do adds value to it."

Conversely, the Telstra deal means Firstwave is now playing a part in securing some of Australia's biggest companies, including three of the big four banks, Qantas, Origin and Australia Post.

Having landed at the ASX last year, via a reverse listing, Firstwave is now looking to grab the attention of overseas telcos and is in talks with France's Orange and India's Bharti Airtel.

"As we built the platform, we realised that telcos were our natural customers and working alongside Telstra we have managed to remedy a number of pain points that the telcos don't always have the capacity or willingness to tackle," Mr Ryan said.

Firstwave works with Cisco, Palo Alto Networks and Fortinet and Mr Ryan said the company was also increasingly finding a seat in the boardroom of many security vendors.

“The vendors see us as a strong channel to the telcos and are involving us in a lot of their internal strategy discussions.”

Telcos aren't the only ones scrambling to adjust to the changing cybersecurity environment with cybersecurity vendors still coming to grips with everything moving to the cloud.

“It's not an easy transition and everything is in a state of flux, and brand names mean a lot less now,” Mr Ryan said.

With organisations looking for telcos and security vendors to do the heavy lifting on security, he said while Telstra was using the best technology in the market, it would continue to invest in developing in-house capabilities.

It's a task for which the telco has had to play catch up. The TRL was shut down by former Telstra boss Sol Trujillo in 2006 and in a way the telco has had to come full circle on recognising the value of research.

“You have to stay a step ahead of the market and you can't do that without innovative research, you can't just rely on security vendors,” Mr Ryan said.

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