



How Varonis Automation Engine is Helping a Large U.S. College Automatically Remediate Nearly 700,000 Folders

CASE STUDY



“The best thing about Automation Engine is that I can set it and forget it. No more guessing or waiting—I know our baseline permissions are set and our files are secure.”



ABOUT THIS CASE STUDY:

Our client is a prominent community college in the United States. We have happily accommodated their request to anonymize all names & places.

HIGHLIGHTS

CHALLENGES

- Needed to fix file permissions for hundreds of thousands of files
- One person manually fixing permissions would take >1.5 years
- Needed a solution that could expedite and automate the remediation process

SOLUTION

The most robust data security platform:

- **DatAdvantage for Windows** gives more visibility into file shares & permissions
- **Data Classification Engine** finds & classifies sensitive data on-premises and in the cloud
- **Automation Engine** to maintain a least privilege model & automatically fix folders with global group access

RESULTS

- Permission remediation for nearly 700,000 folders (including 9,800 sensitive files)
- Data security for 4 servers and 2,500 end users in different departments
- More time to focus on other tasks, like cleaning up stale data

Challenges

FIXING FILE PERMISSIONS FOR 700,000 FOLDERS

Manually fixing file permissions is tedious and time-consuming. Fixing just a few folders with open access can take hours. Remediating all folders can take months—or even years.

That was the challenge faced by server engineers for a prominent community college in the United States. With nearly 700,000 folders in need of remediation, the amount of labor required was staggering.

As one server engineer explains:

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“Our IT is decentralized and we’ve had some staff turnover, so a lot of our network shares have become a mess over the years. There was a need to start locking down shares and figuring out who had access to what information.”

“I tried doing it myself. I would change permissions one-by-one based on who needed access. Then I realized that even if I continued doing this manually every day for the next year and a half, I still wouldn’t be finished.”

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They knew Varonis could help expedite this process, so they decided to try it out. The first Varonis product they did a proof of concept for was **DatAdvantage for Windows**, which gave them more visibility into their files, including access history and permissions.

But it wasn't until they did a proof of concept for the **Data Classification Engine** a few months later that they realized just how badly they needed permission remediation. They identified **over 9,800 sensitive files open to everyone**.

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“Talk about an eye-opener. Our assistant director fell out of their chair when they learned how much sensitive data was exposed.”

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“I tried doing it myself. I would change permissions one-by-one based on who needed access. Then I realized that even if I continued doing this manually every day for the next year and a half, I still wouldn't be finished.”

Solution

AUTOMATING FILE PERMISSION REMEDIATION

Seeing just how much sensitive data was exposed spurred senior leadership into immediate action and prompted them to invest in the **Varonis Automation Engine**.

Automation Engine cuts down on the time-consuming process of repairing and maintaining file systems by automatically discovering and fixing folders with global group access.

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“I was in shock at how easy Varonis made the whole process. It took maybe an hour to set up multiple steps in Automation Engine, and then I could just let the program run.”

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By implementing a **least privilege model**, server engineers were able to ensure that individual users only have access to the resources they need to do their work. Automation Engine enforces and maintains a least privilege model, which helps mitigate the risk of a data breach.

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“The best thing about Automation Engine is that I can set it and forget it. No more guessing or waiting—I know our baseline permissions are set and our files are secure.”

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Their dedicated contact at Varonis is always on hand to answer questions and help with the file remediation.

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“I LOVE the support we get from Varonis. My direct reps are so honest, personable, and direct. They helped make every proof of concept we’ve done a success. They even offer free training sessions—and those are amazing too.”

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And they love that Varonis continues innovating. Recent quality of life improvements have made a big impact on their efficiency and reporting capabilities.

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“The latest software update is amazing. The GUI is much faster, data is updated in almost real-time, and there are so many reports you can generate.”

“My bosses love that they can go in there and quickly generate a top-level report, and my team loves that we can do deeper dives into the same information if we need to.”

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“I was in shock at how easy Varonis made the whole process. It took maybe an hour to set up multiple steps in Automation Engine, and then I could just let the program run.”

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Results

18 MONTHS WORTH OF PERMISSION CHANGES, FINISHED IN A FRACTION OF THE TIME

Manually remediating permissions for almost 700,000 folders would have taken server engineers over a year and a half to complete. With Automation Engine, it took two months.

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“It only took us two months from start to finish. Even though we were remediating hundreds of thousands of folders in a complicated environment, the process was so smooth.”

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At the start of the project, those 700,000 folders, including 9,800 sensitive files, were open to everyone. They now have strict permissions in place to protect the data of their 2,500 end users and facilitate regulatory compliance.

Plus, with Automation Engine continuously finding and fixing new folders that might mistakenly be created with global group access, they're confident Varonis will help them avoid a repeat of the problem.

Now, the college is using Varonis to protect four different file servers:

- ① One server houses personal data for faculty and staff members, including syllabi and teaching information.
- ① One server houses a group drive for each department.
- ① A campus police server.
- ① And a server for proprietary student information, such as social security numbers and birthdays.

With Varonis, they've been able to lock down file shares and ensure that only select people have access to certain data.

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“Now our sensitive data—especially our student data—is secure. I love that I can plug an end user's name into Varonis and see a list of every folder they have access to.”

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With their permissions locked down, the campus's server engineers are able to spend their time and energy cleaning up stale data and misplaced sensitive data.

To that end, they're now doing a proof of concept for **Varonis Data Transport Engine**, which would help them automate the process of moving, archiving, quarantining, and deleting data.

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“Just do the proof of concept. You'll learn so much and it's free. And when you do it, I can almost guarantee you'll get the product—the time savings alone make it money well spent.”

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“It only took us two months from start to finish. Even though we were remediating hundreds of thousands of folders in a complicated environment, the process was so smooth.”



Want to spend less time and effort getting more file security?

Varonis Automation Engine automatically repairs and maintains file systems, so you're less vulnerable to attack and more compliant.

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