CASE STUDY

abacode



ABACODE

LOCATION:
Tampa, FL

SPECIALTY:
Managed Security Service Provider (MSSP)

"We couldn't offer compliance as a service without the Apptega platform."

Toney Jennings, Abacode
Chief Revenue Officer

Apptega is One of the Keys to Abacode's Managed Cybersecurity & Compliance Provider (MCCP) Offering

Apptega is a core component of Abacode's MCCP, a holistic "stack" of cybersecurity & compliance services combined into one efficient managed program, enabling clients (and the internal Abacode team) to manage multiple compliance frameworks and related controls and sub-controls, and use that information to manage and maintain robust cybersecurity and compliance practices.

Case Study Highlights

- Abacode first used Apptega to manage and report cybersecurity compliance for their MSSP clients
- Building on early client success, Abacode expanded use of Apptega for their internal compliance with multiple frameworks
- Today Abacode is revolutionizing cybersecurity and compliance as a service with MCCP Core™
- Apptega is at the heart of the Compliance Portal in MCCP Core™ and also supports the security framework, risk assessment, and compliance management components

LEARN MORE

Visit **www.apptega.com** for additional info.

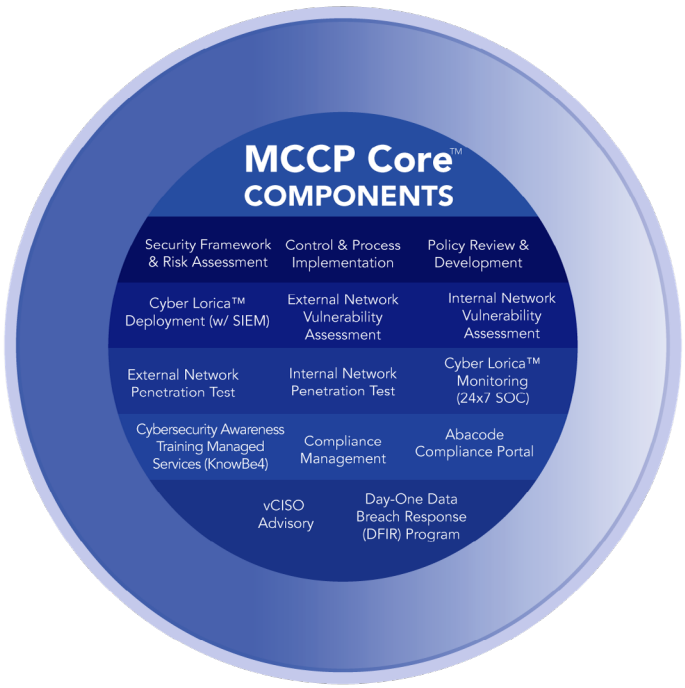
Apptega



About Abacode

Abacode is an innovative industry-leading Managed Security Service Provider (MSSP) based in Tampa, Florida.

With their Managed Cybersecurity & Compliance Program (MCCP) Core™ initiative, Abacode is pioneering the integration of compliance and cybersecurity as a single managed service, helping organizations implement a holistic, framework-based cybersecurity program that simultaneously facilitates continuous security and compliance.



Apptega is at the heart of the Compliance Portal within Abacode's MCCP Core™, as well as supporting the security framework, risk assessment, and compliance management components.



A Story of Evolution

While today, Apptega is an integral part of MCCP Core, the Apptega/Abacode partnership is a story of evolution and growth.

When the Abacode team first implemented Apptega's cybersecurity compliance management platform, they intended to use it only to manage client engagements. They soon realized Apptega supported additional use cases, such as helping Abacode demonstrate their own compliance with multiple cybersecurity and privacy frameworks.

Before using Apptega, Bryan Graf, Abacode's Senior Vice President of Business Development, recalls advocating for a compliance management platform. So much so that his colleagues nicknamed him "Portal."

"We can't do this without a portal," he would often say.

Graf's call for the portal was based on years of experience in the compliance industry where he once worked as an auditor himself. And all those years in the auditing world taught him some important lessons:

1. The advantages and value of a compliance portal
2. A clear understanding that he didn't have the tools or resources to build a portal on his own

CHALLENGES

Abacode was facing increasing audits for itself and for its clients. The audits were also increasing in complexity, and they knew it wouldn't be long until mandates such as GDPR and privacy audits would come into play.



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Graf was busy managing all the requirements in static documents such as word processing files and then transferring critical information to spreadsheets for reports and tracking. At times, he felt like his primary job was just to review documents, move them into folders, copy, print out, read, re-read, and remap over and over again into spreadsheets.

To what end?

All that manual work was making it increasingly difficult to scale and grow the practice. Information often sat untouched and unread, until audit time again, when he pulled documents back out and started all over again.

And that was just to manage audits.

The company's objective was to evolve into providing continuous monitoring and updates for their clients. But Graf couldn't imagine the time and effort it would take to do all this manual work in a continuous, ongoing manner.

He knew there was a better way.

Graf needed a solution that would not only help him manage all necessary frameworks, but also provide insight into all controls and sub-controls, and serve as a repository for artifacts, documentation, and task responsibilities.

And it wasn't just for Abacode.

The company knew their clients needed these capabilities as well.

For example, one of their larger clients, an organization with some 30,000 employees was still managing their compliance and security program through spreadsheets. This was a company that had been undergoing audits for more than a decade and they had failed to evolve their processes.

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REQUIREMENTS

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"An amazing spreadsheet is great if it's 2003," Graf pointed out, "but that doesn't cut it anymore. There's no version control. There's no access control. It's wonderful but it can be broken tomorrow and you'd never know."

That's where Apptega entered the picture.

The team wanted a framework management platform that would enable them to store, access, and track artifacts and documents, as well as normalize controls and sub-controls across multiple frameworks.

Apptega did just that.

What is Abacode MCCP Core & What Does It Do?

The team at Abacode begins client engagements with a gap assessment compared to regulatory, compliance, or industry best-practices frameworks. This includes a remediation roadmap describing controls the organization needs to achieve their desired level of cybersecurity and compliance.

After receiving the roadmap, the organization can choose to tackle those controls, working with Abacode in partnership for implementation, or letting Abacode take the lead.

Once controls are established, Abacode manages the integrated cybersecurity and compliance program with continuous monitoring and management from its 24/7/365 Security Operations Center (SOC), complete with anytime access into current status through the Compliance Portal, powered by Apptega, and via routine reporting and feedback.

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Winning & Retaining Clients

Apptega is not only used to simplify day-to-day operations for Abacode, but it also gives the company a competitive edge for attracting new clients.

Demonstrating just how seriously it takes security and compliance, the company is certified to ISO 9001, self-attested to CIS, and is also compliant with HIPAA, PCI DSS, NIST 800-171, and SOC 2. The company now clearly and easily demonstrates internal compliance using the Apptega platform.

"We have to walk the walk to earn new business," Toney Jennings, Abacode's Chief Revenue Officer, explained. "The Apptega platform is integral to that, especially when we must demonstrate compliance with all the applicable standards."

And it's not just about proving compliance to clients. Abacode's clients must also prove their compliance for various frameworks and the portal, powered by Apptega, allows them to do just that. At any time, clients can log into the MCCP Core Compliance Portal and see how they're measuring up for cybersecurity and compliance, and they also receive routine status reports from the Abacode team.

This helps Abacode's clients not only improve their cybersecurity and compliance maturity, but also creates an additional value-add. Their clients can reach new levels of maturity without having to hire additional personnel or add on more tools to their technology stack. It also means those clients can now compete for a higher level of customers themselves by demonstrating compliance to a range of industry recognized standards.

Jennings calls this Minimal Viable Security (MVS), which looks at how much risk abatement is necessary for a client based on its geography, industry, supply chains, and other factors. The company's risk assessments show each client where they are now in their security and compliance journey and then makes recommendations on what they need to do to get to the next level.

APPTEGA BENEFITS

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Apptega Within Abacode

As we're seeing across most industries, there is a growing correlation between cybersecurity and compliance.

In the past, compliance and cybersecurity were treated like third cousins, Jennings explained. They were related, but not necessarily connected. But today, this approach is evolving.

"You do one because of the other," he said, noting they're more like first cousins now with their essence interwoven.

Managing them separately is complex, time-consuming, and resource-laden, especially when it comes to compliance, and that's one of the reasons why the idea of security and compliance as a managed service is gaining ground with enterprises of all sizes today.

It's also a challenge for most organizations to manage on their own because, as with other areas of information technology, there is a significant lack of skilled cybersecurity professionals available in the industry and this talent shortage is only predicted to worsen going forward.

Abacode's MCCP Core is a holistic "stack" of cybersecurity and compliance services combined into a single, efficient managed program. Uniting these essential programs into a single managed service enables clients to realize substantial cost savings and reduced operational complexity.

The result for clients is savings, not just in terms of financial expenses, but also employee hours.

> Remember that scenario where Graf talked about managing all those word processing documents and spreadsheets before using Apptega? It's a similar situation for many organizations today, he says. Complexity, and commitment to manual tasks only increases as the team better understands what they're doing and applies compliance knowledge to their environments.

DID YOU KNOW?

The concept of security and compliance as a managed service is gaining ground with enterprises of all sizes today. But It's a challenge for most organizations to manage on their own because there is a significant lack of skilled cybersecurity professionals available.



Within an average-sized company, if you look at one person or a small team manually mapping control sets, you can estimate a time-savings of 30-40% moving those tasks into Apptega Graf explained.

Those efficiencies are among some of the many benefits Abacode sees from using Apptega, both internally and for their clients.

Apptega's capabilities are critical for streamlining program management, especially in areas where controls are redundant in multiple frameworks. Instead of manually duplicating tasks for the same control in each individual framework, Apptega provides automated mapping (crosswalking) through its Harmony capability, thereby reducing workloads and decreasing the likelihood of errors, while increasing efficiencies.

The software's multi-tenant dashboard also allows the Abacode team to see all of their clients in a single, secure view, and then take deeper dives into each client through for more granular analysis of each framework, control, sub-control, task, and responsibility.

"It's not super complicated what you have to do in terms of compliance management," Graf explained. "But it is a lot of standards and lots of documentation. It's a lot of cross-framework mapping, and it's also a lot of tracking and management of documents, inventory and task owners, all while trying to minimize duplication."

Having one platform like Apptega to manage all of that, is a game-changer.

And the team really likes the automatic alerts and notifications for tasks across multiple frameworks, helping to eliminate the likelihood that an important process might be overlooked.

"Having the ability to be alerted when someone must pay attention to something is very valuable," Jennings said.

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Senior Vice President
of Business Development



Using Apptega as a Knowledge Center for Cybersecurity & Compliance

The Abacode team uses the Apptega platform as the cybersecurity and compliance system of record, providing the single source of truth. It's at the center of Abacode's capability to deliver continuous compliance and cybersecurity services.

In a true risk-based approach to cybersecurity and compliance, organizations need to be able to gather the required inputs and outputs, analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the organization's assets, including owners and controls, and then continually analyze that information to make additional data-driven decisions and adjustments.

That's exactly what Apptega helps them do.

"We couldn't offer compliance as a service without the Apptega platform," Jennings said.

In the past, most organizations approached cybersecurity as "we'll deal with it if it happens". But today, it's no longer just large companies and government agencies targeted by attackers, but anyone who has a moderately healthy balance sheet. That means even small and mid-sized businesses (SMBs) are at risk, and attackers are counting on those organizations not having the personnel or tools to stop an attack.

Even for large organizations that might have mature cyber defenses, some executives still see compliance as a wish-list and not a must-have, meaning resource investments are often put off until something is discovered in an audit or a breach occurs.

APPTEGA BENEFITS

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Bryan Graf, Abacode,
Senior Vice President
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Using Apptega as part of its MCCP Core enables Abacode to offer a wide range of managed cybersecurity and compliance services for organizations of all sizes. Instead of paying one vendor to do risk assessments, another to do vulnerability assessments, another to evaluate compliance, and so on, everything is managed centrally with Abacode, thereby easing complexities and ensuring cybersecurity and compliance teams speak the same language and work together toward common goals.

When you explain those benefits for an organization, more often than not a lightbulb goes on, demonstrating how much more costly and burdensome it would be to manually tackle these tasks on your own or manage them separately through a range of vendors, something that could easily cost two or three times more than using an MCCP.

Apptega helps Abacode tie its compliance and cybersecurity components together, enabling continuous monitoring, so their clients don't need to hire more people to work around the clock and monitor your systems 24/7.

"Apptega provides the menu for everything you need to do security and compliance," Graf said.

Apptega also helps Abacode demonstrate to its clients exactly what their industry expects of them regarding standards and controls.

"It takes the onus off of us," Graf said. "It guides us based on the industry requirements of each of our clients. We're here to help each client do what they already told their customers they're going to do. Apptega is part of that. There is no way to start it without it."

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Supporting Future Growth

Jennings added that Apptega is foundational for compliance as a service, the same way enterprise data management (EDM) and security information and event management (SIEM) are foundational for a SOC.

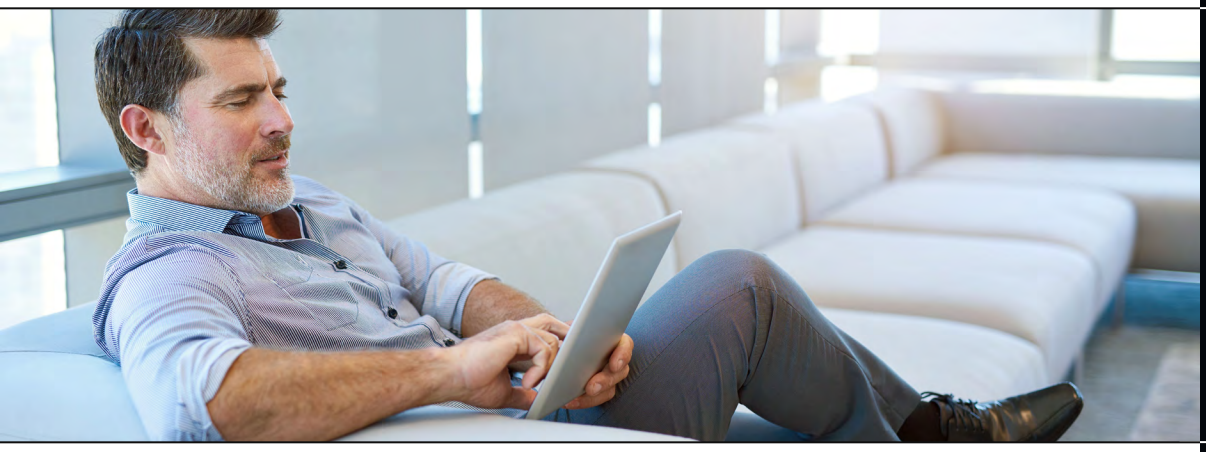
The Abacode team sees Apptega continuing to play a role as the company scales and evolves its services in the future.

"We will continue to improve and evolve," he said. "We consider ourselves a pioneer in the MCCP space. This is version 1.0 for us. Version 2 will happen next."

Apptega is ready to be part of that next phase of their journey.

APPTEGA BENEFITS

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Cybersecurity Management Simplified

Companies of all sizes are using Apptega to simplify the management and reporting of their cybersecurity and compliance programs.

Watch this Video Demo to see how Apptega is used to:

- ✔ Simplify your cyber program and ensure you are always audit-ready
- ✔ Manage workflow capabilities to assign tasks and send notifications
- ✔ Share templates, policies, and other documents for your program
- ✔ Monitor the status of tasks and receive verification updates when tasks are complete
- ✔ Monitor program compliance, including compliance scoring and scoring trends



WATCH DEMO >

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GET IN TOUCH

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