

Using Biometrics to Build an Efficient Team and Better Member Experiences

Entrant: Hughes Federal Credit Union

Category: Technology Infrastructure and Security

Project: Implementing Verifast™: Palm Authentication for Employees

Background and Strategic Challenge:

We've all stared blankly at our computer trying to remember our login credentials. The difference of a few seconds can be frustrating and even more frustrating for a member sitting on the other side of a desk waiting for their loan application to clear.

Like many credit unions, the team at Hughes Federal Credit Union in Tucson, Arizona spends a great deal of its time navigating and managing applications and portals – more than 60 in all – each requiring in its own set of log-in credentials.

This multi-faceted ecosystem means staff members collectively spend more than a few minutes each day logging in and out of different systems, slowing down processes and adding extra work for those overseeing IT administration and security. Sixty-plus systems means a lot of password reset and account unlock requests.

Most importantly, this environment also affected member experience. With numerous logins and systems required for many workflows, at times members had to wait longer for front line staff to access the information they needed to serve members.

The Solution and Business Case:

Hughes leadership and IT administration had determined that internal operational efficiencies were an important strategic driver from both a member, revenue and HR standpoint.

To address the complex application login complexities previously outlined, these leaders decided to take a hot industry concept that makes consumers' lives faster and easier, and adapt it to build efficiencies at the credit union. Hughes IT administrators had seen the speed and efficiency of biometric authentication on phones and other devices, and decided to introduce biometrics to leverage those efficiencies at its branches and headquarters.

Hughes collaborated with Fiserv and introduced a biometric authentication system for employees called Verifast. The system uses palm-vein technology that recognizes the live, vascular signature beneath an individual's palm via an infrared scanner embedded into a USB mouse or standalone hardware scanner.



Example of Verifast palm scanning mouse hardware.

Once the employee scans their palm, they are automatically logged into the desired application portals and other systems without even touching the hardware.

Palm vein authentication is a highly accurate and secure way to authenticate. Palm vein patterns – which contain more than 5 million reference points – are inherently unique, do not change over time, and are nearly impossible to steal or use fraudulently, as they require blood to be flowing in order to be read.

This highly secure system stores all of the previously disparate usernames and passwords. When a user scans their palm, his or her credentials are presented to the application they are logging onto.

In user experience terms, your palm becomes your password.

Initiative Goals

Employee authentication at the branch and in the back office had been a cumbersome, time-consuming process that added additional work to IT administrators' plates. In introducing Verifast, key goals were to:

1. Enhance employee satisfaction and workflows by negating cumbersome authentication processes.
2. Enhance member satisfaction by reducing wait time for certain services, such as initial account setup, while also boosting member perception of Hughes as a technology leader.
3. Reduce workload on IT administrators relating to password resets and other authentication management issues.
4. Increase accuracy and ease of internal workflows and processes, as well as security enhancements for tellers and branch staff logging into banking systems – ensuring that only authorized users gain access and preventing the use of shared credentials.

Implementation

In August 2016, Hughes introduced Verifast hardware and software. Verifast was successfully paired with numerous Hughes systems, from its account processing platform (Fiserv XP2) to its loan origination, teller, and other portals.

Hughes was the pilot credit union for the employee application of the technology, and initial implementation took place over four days, including hardware, software and profile creation. Additional adjustments were made to facilitate specific Hughes requirements – such as staff being able to log into specific branches.

The setup now serves a number of Hughes back-office and front-line staff, with credit-union-wide implementation scheduled to be completed by October 2017. Staff were thoroughly trained upfront, and have been receptive to the time savings and efficiency the system provides.

Results:

Qualitative metrics and results from the implementation of palm-vein technology are positive. In particular:

1. **A great staff and member experience.** Staff quickly embraced the system. Praise for it has been nearly universal, starting on day one, and members who have seen the system are intrigued and engaged by it
2. **Reduce IT burdens.** IT administrators have not had to perform a password reset for anyone who is using biometric authentication – in large part because the system allows users to manage their own passwords as needed
3. **More time for staff.** Anecdotally, member service representatives save approximately 15 minutes a day in login-related time – collectively, this amounts to around 40 workhours saved daily
4. **Efficient processes.** Numerous other workflow and personnel efficiencies. For example, tellers and member service representatives, who work at multiple locations, are presented with a drop down list of branches they are authorized to login to without having to remember separate operator IDs. This significantly minimizes the chance of a representative logging into the wrong branch

Hughes Federal Credit Union has more than 113,000 members and \$1.1 billion in assets.

Video

For additional context, please view this video, featuring Rich Griesser, Vice President of Information Technology at Hughes FCU discussing the credit union's use of palm vein authentication:

<https://fisv.co/2wMla9B>.