



A CISO GLOBAL CASE STUDY

T G L O B A L



# HOOD & ASSOCIATES

## Managing Someone Else's Money Is Serious Business



ASSETS	2,478,400.00
Current Assets	2,478,400.00
Non-Current Assets	0.00
LIABILITIES	2,478,400.00
Current Liabilities	2,478,400.00
Non-Current Liabilities	0.00

EQUITY	2,571,212.00
Current EQUITY	3,354,312.00
Non-Current EQUITY	5,332.00

### CASHFLOW STATEMENT

OPERATIONS	6,554,224.00
NOT SALES	3,420,563.00
Investment	6,764,984.00

EXPENSES	9,550,452.00
Development	8,337,886.00
Operating expenses	2,899,500.00
Marketing	500,799.00

NET INCOME	59,877,892.00
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## Managing Someone Else's Money is Serious Business

For more than 23 years, Hood and Associates has been helping individuals and businesses reach their financial goals, earning client trust by providing expert practical advice and, most of all, by protecting their money. But as the scale of its business grew, so did its security risks; Hood and Associates turned to CISO Global for guidance.

CISO suggested investments in application and network security that the firm made in 2018; these upgrades provided it with unanticipated benefits when dealing with COVID-19 related challenges in 2020.

### Oklahoma Grown

Hood and Associates is an accounting and financial services firm serving clients from five locations in northeastern Oklahoma. Founder Paul Hood started the business as a lone CPA in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, and has grown the company through expansion and acquisition. Hood is a fixture on local news outlets, regularly giving advice to the public on how to navigate financial challenges.

A portrait of Paul Hood, CPA, a middle-aged man with glasses, wearing a blue blazer over a pink and white striped shirt. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera.

“I’m really **passionate** about the work we do. Showing someone the **possibilities**, giving them the tools, and then seeing them realize their financial goals, it **inspires** me and all our associates.”

-Paul Hood, CPA

As a small accounting firm, Hood and Associates does not have a large application environment or huge data volumes. The firm uses Thompson Reuters for its main accounting solution and basic Microsoft office productivity applications. It originally hired a local IT contractor for basic break/fix issues. Though the firm had some security processes in place, it did not have a comprehensive ongoing security management and intrusion protection plan equal to the risk.

Hood and Associates also faced productivity issues with its application environment and management of users. The firm used Remote Desktop Server for the branch offices to log into the applications, but this caused conflicts that resulted in system crashes. All users would have to log off and log on regularly, losing work and wasting time. The firm employs temporary workers during tax season and had further plans to expand to new locations, but adding new users and managing them was a headache.

“We really think about the **entire business**, not just today, but for the **future**.”

-Scott Williamson, VP Information Services

As the company grew, it also became a more attractive target for bad actors looking for holes to exploit in these systems and the network. For Hood, his customers' data was too important to risk, and his hard-earned reputation was an asset worth protecting. “We ask our clients to trust us as experts and to call on us when they need help. We know investment strategies, business management, tax laws. We don't know IT,” he said. “When it came to securing our computers and our network, we had to find an expert too. That was where CISO came in.”

A core issue was Hood and Associates' lack of centralized management that covered users and their desktops. Their practices risked compromising data, deleting it

without backups, and potential data misuse. CISO advised that as a growing business, Hood and Associates move to the cloud to realize its benefits in cost, performance, and security. CISO put together a complete service package that placed applications in the cloud, eliminated old desktop hardware in favor of thin clients, and turned over maintenance and monitoring tasks to the CISO network operating center and security operations center (SOC).

The CISO team moved the accounting application into the cloud with Amazon Web Services, eliminating the Remote Management Server entirely. That meant users could log in to the application from virtually any machine, their work was backed up constantly, and users could work concurrently within the application without worrying about crashes and lost data. It also meant faster performance. CISO suggested that Hood and Associates acquire Microsoft Office 365, the cloud-based productivity application, which eliminated licensing and management issues.

CISO installed unified threat management appliances, firewalls, and network security monitoring tools that included MDR (Managed Detection and Response services delivered through CISO's U.S.-based SOC) at Hood and Associate's five locations,



allowing 24/7/365 monitoring of health and performance. The firm now has managed VPNs, giving employees secure and high-speed connections for their secured AWS thin clients when working outside the office.

As part of its monthly managed service, CISO provides Hood and Associates an engineer for IT admin activities, a technical account manager to keep the business and IT aligned, and a global service desk for typical help desk requests.

## Rising to the Challenge

As a result of its MDR and other managed services, Hood and Associates realized business continuity benefits on both a daily and long-term basis, including enhanced protection from malware, phishing, intrusion, and theft of financial data, and improved resiliency to help it deal with challenges that come with a growing business expanding to new markets and office locations.

Doing business in “tornado alley” has made Hood and Associates accustomed to dealing with weather-based challenges, including power failures and damages to municipal infrastructure.

But then came a completely unexpected challenge: the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020. In Oklahoma, businesses struggled with decisions about whether they could stay open

and how they could safely operate. Hood and Associates decided to close offices to the public and move to a work-from-home model. More than 60 employees were quickly set up in home offices, with the same full functionality they had in their usual office locations. What’s more, the firm accomplished this at the height of the tax season and with many of its clients applying for Small Business Administration/Paycheck Protection Program loans.

“CISO has the people and processes in place to **minimize risk** and let us get on with serving our clients.”

-Paul Hood, CPA

“If we had shut down, it would have been devastating to our clients,” Hood said. “I’m proud that we were there for them when there was so much uncertainty. I think it would have been scary with our old IT systems. That we had taken a proactive approach two years earlier to upgrade to highly secure, available, and accessible systems was one of our best decisions in retrospect.”

Post-pandemic, Hood and Associates is positioned to continue its strong trend of growth and confident management of its clients’ data and money. CISO’s role as its managed services provider has allowed it to focus on accounting; it doesn’t have to keep up with every security threat, virus outbreak, or system upgrade.

“The peace of mind I have, now that CISO is managing our security and network, is like money in the bank; I count on it being there when I need it. Otherwise I don’t need to think about it too much. We can go about doing what we do best,” Hood said. “CISO has the people and processes in place to minimize risk and let us get on with serving our clients.”



## About Us

A leader in cybersecurity and compliance services, CISO Global brings together expert practitioners and thought leaders to provide tailored solutions that drive cyber resilience. The company's top-tier talent spans geographies, specialties, industries, regulatory frameworks, and focus areas and includes auditors, compliance specialists, certified forensics experts, ethical hackers, security engineers, and around-the-clock analysts.

To learn more, visit [www.ciso.inc](http://www.ciso.inc).

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