



**VIRGIN TRAINS:
TRAVELLING TOWARDS
PCI COMPLIANCE.**

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HOW IRM SUPPORTED VIRGIN TRAINS ON THEIR PCI JOURNEY



What Virgin Trains were looking for

The Head Of Information Security at Virgin Trains wanted to transform the business' approach to PCI, making it a cross-business activity that approached the standard as a business-as-usual (BAU) process, as opposed to a 'tick-box' activity.

With a risk-based approach and expert industry knowledge, IRM have been Virgin Trains' Information Security Partner for over four years. In that time, the company has benefited from a dedicated and expert Qualified Security Assessor (QSA) working part-time in their IT department, supported by IRM's wider Risk Team. Before engaging with IRM, Virgin Trains did not have a defined Information Security posture and only addressed the function in a piecemeal fashion. The role and purpose of Information Security awareness was ill-defined from Board-level all the way through to the staff working on the trains and in the stations.





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Digital trust

Virgin Trains' core business and revenue come from its website transactions. Therefore, the business is reluctant to adversely impact the streamlined, user-friendly and customer-centric online experience, lest it lose the loyalty of customers. This consideration is further compounded by the absence of any exclusivity available to sell tickets in the rail industry.

This requirement means that Virgin Trains relies heavily on a large number of loyal customers who regularly purchase tickets from the company's website. If the business were to notably alter their ticket purchasing process with any security-related measures, they would lose market share extremely quickly in light of the fast-paced and transient nature of online sales.

Virgin had previous experience of a number of QSA companies with little to no knowledge of their industry and was looking to avoid what they had found to be a time-consuming process, educating people on what was and was not possible within the constraints of their business.

The business appointed IRM as their QSA, safe in the knowledge that any actions taken from an Information Security / Risk Management perspective would align with business / digital objectives and the security practices maintained by the wider rail industry. Virgin Trains shares a set of centralised industry systems with all UK railway operators, and the company's ability to be PCI compliant is reliant on the level of maturity maintained by the entire industry.

“IRM’s reputation and sector specific knowledge made them a natural choice as our information security partner. In order to safeguard our reputation and align security and risk management with the business’ more strategic objectives, it was important that Virgin Trains chose a QSA company that understood the rail industry. IRM has this understanding in spades after working for some of the major players.”

MORE THAN JUST AN 'IT PROJECT'...

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What Virgins Trains did next

Information security became a Board-level priority to Virgin Trains after the business was approached by its acquiring bank, HSBC. The bank mandated that the business begin working towards PCI compliance.

Virgin Trains' Chief Executive Officer recognised that the business had to partner with a company that were able to work across the business, mitigate payment risk and improve the digital trust placed in Virgin by its customers.

In order to ensure PCI DSS was a cross-business activity, the PCI project was led by the Finance Department and managed by the Head of Information Security, who reports to the Head of IT.

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Trusted advisor

IRM's expert consultants worked closely with the Information Security, IT and Finance teams enabling them to achieve proportionate risk reduction and education on their PCI DSS journey.

IRM's QSA understands exactly what the business is seeking to achieve and provided actionable, honest and independent advice. Virgin Trains realises the significant value in IRM's service delivery due to the company's unique position working with stakeholders across the rail industry. IRM's QSA always ensured appropriate industry knowledge, trends and benchmarking information is shared with Virgin Trains.

The Head of Information Security was unwaveringly confident that responses to his queries were received in a timely manner and that work will always be completed promptly. This confidence gave him considerable flexibility. Whilst Virgin Trains did not want the overhead of a QSA resource every day of the week; he was still able to receive reliable and valuable advice when required.



**Think cyber.
Think security.
Think data.**

For more information on our
cybersecurity services please contact:
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**SECURE CYBER
UNLOCK OPPORTUNITY.**