Global Emancipation Network Turns Data Into Action in the Fight to Eliminate Human Trafficking

Key Challenges

Human trafficking impacts an estimated 45 million people per year, but the data needed to trace perpetrators of this crime is poorly defined, siloed and hard to access.

Key Results

GEN and Splunk® teamed up to develop Minerva, an analytics platform that takes unstructured, siloed data from hundreds of sources to uncover the living heartbeats behind global human trafficking operations.

GLOBAL EMANCIPATION NETWORK

Industry: Nonprofit

Solutions: IT Operations

Data Driven Outcomes

- Acts as a force for change in sharing data and driving anti-trafficking legislation

- Turns data into action by saving victims and bringing criminals to justice

- Cuts mass data processing and analysis time from years to days

While you are reading this, around 80 people in the world will become victims of human trafficking.

These innocent people will have their hopes and dreams broken by a life of forced labor or sex slavery. When Sherrie Caltagirone saw the suffering and injustice of human trafficking, it became her life's mission to act. She founded GEN, a nonprofit organization of volunteers dedicated to using the power of data to help the up to 45 million annual victims of human trafficking.

"Trafficking is a human tragedy. But it's also an illicit economy, where someone buys a product to meet a demand like sex and domestic servitude," says Caltagirone. "That transaction often has a digital footprint. So human trafficking is a data problem; 99.9% of our daily battles are about accessing data to stop trafficking."

Splunk as the Engine of GEN

The challenge for GEN was to bring historically siloed, dispersed data together to find victims, prosecute perpetrators and stop trafficking in its tracks. When looking for a technology partner to corral and analyze vast amounts of data, the organization evaluated several solutions, yet none could deliver — until Splunk.

GEN selected Splunk as its data platform when it was founded, and Splunk has been the bedrock of its mission ever since, supplying the organization with access to software licenses, training, support and education through the Splunk for Good program.

"GEN would not be where it is today without Splunk," says Caltagirone. "The support has been fantastic; the product is wonderful. Splunk helps us correlate data and connect dots to identify the living heartbeats behind the data. We've found a true, full-hearted, all-in partner. Splunk has been as much a stakeholder in the success of GEN as we have ourselves."

Together, GEN and Splunk developed Minerva, a multi-tenant data analytics platform that enables secure, individualized data sharing and intelligent analytics. This powerful platform uses Splunk to take messy, unstructured and siloed data from hundreds of sources to make connections between usernames, email addresses, phone numbers, text and images that would be difficult or impossible manually. Through GEN and Splunk for Good, Minerva is available free to national and international government and law enforcement agencies, NGOs, academia and the private sector to help identify and stop human trafficking.

Saving Lives Across the Globe

GEN is having a huge impact on countering human trafficking around the world — from proactively preventing crimes to driving change in overlooked industries. For example, when a large, legitimate U.S. massage chain received negative publicity around sexual misconduct and human trafficking, the organization approached GEN to help identify potential risks. GEN analyzed data related to employee screenings and monitored customers looking for sexual services, which has helped the chain close screening gaps and reduce misconduct. GEN then used Splunk to analyze millions of data points from over 22,000 massage businesses, helping curb the illicit massage industry on a larger scale.

For a preventive approach, GEN launched a program called Artemis with partner Accenture, which helps other massage businesses and hotels identify risk and vulnerabilities before a crime is committed. GEN is also working with recruitment companies, advertisers, private mailbox providers, landlords and training organizations to show how criminals hijack their services for trafficking.

Yet another example of GEN's impact is in the United Kingdom, where law enforcement agencies gather large numbers of child abuse images — sometimes 20 per week — that often show a child in school uniform. But with more than 55,000 schools across Northern Ireland, England and Wales, matching a uniform to a school is very difficult. Using Splunk, GEN has provided agencies with a suite of tools that accelerates investigations by pinpointing which school is represented in an image within minutes.

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A Force for Change

Perhaps one of GEN's greatest achievements is becoming a global force for change. The organization has broken down resistance to sharing data across stakeholders and has helped develop several anti-trafficking laws, such as Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA) and Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA).

But GEN's work isn't done. For starters, the organization has a new version of Minerva in the works and plans to expand the Artemis program to industries like finance and aviation. GEN also hopes to expand the school uniform program, in addition to launching a global tool to protect children from potential predators. While many milestones still lie ahead, one thing's for certain: With Splunk at the hub and Caltagirone at the helm, GEN is nearing a future that's brighter, safer and free of human trafficking.

Download Splunk for free or get started with the free cloud trial. Whether cloud, on-premises, or for large or small teams, Splunk has a deployment model that will fit your needs.

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