

CASE STUDY

IT Contractor PSI Pax Goes from Failed Gap Assessment to CMMC Certification on the First Try



SENTINELBLUE

CASE STUDY QUICK FACTS



CLIENT TYPE/INDUSTRY

IT & Financial Services

LOCATION

California, Maryland, U.S.

SERVICES

CMMC Level 2 readiness and
assessment preparation

GCC High migration

365 SOC-as-a-Service

Documentation and evidence support

Ongoing cyber advisory

Enterprise Compliance Needs, Small Business Resources

PSI Pax, a women-owned IT and financial services business based in Maryland, was seeing the signs with CMMC early. Serving customers in the Department of Defense as well as civilian and state agencies, PSI Pax provides systems modernization and integration, program and financial management, data analytics and business intelligence, and other IT services. Staying compliant wasn't just going to be a regulatory checkbox for them; it was central to their ability to keep doing business with their core customers.

But despite years of preparation, a gap assessment in late 2024 made it painfully clear that PSI Pax wasn't where it needed to be for CMMC Level 2. Outside of administrative controls, which the team passed with flying colors, the assessment exposed serious gaps in network security that the company's small internal IT team didn't have the resources to close. The on-premises environment had accumulated years of technical debt and lacked the network boundaries CMMC required, but rebuilding it would have been prohibitively expensive.



In a small business, you just don't have a lot of resources. We couldn't afford to hire an eight-person team, which by my calculation was what we needed to accomplish everything that CMMC was dictating. We needed a partner."

– Debra Hill-Cherry, Chief Information Officer, PSI Pax



A prior MSSP engagement had already taken PSI Pax through a GCC High migration, but a last-minute architectural change (adding reachback to the on-prem environment) compromised the compliant playbook offered by that MSSP. PSI Pax would have needed to resolve the compliance gap the change would introduce.

The Solution: A True Partnership, Not Another Vendor

Simplifying the Path Forward

Where other providers had made CMMC feel like sinking into quicksand, Sentinel Blue was able to provide clarity. When Hill-Cherry brought her CEO into conversations with Sentinel Blue, the difference was immediate. The complexity that had been plaguing their CMMC preparation was reframed as a solvable problem with a clear path forward, making leadership feel confident enough to commit.



Sentinel Blue has a way of de-complicating things. Everybody else was making it so complicated and arduous. But after talking to Andy, it was easy for my CEO to make the decisions. He brought a way to simplify things and make it seem like we could actually do this.”

– **Debra Hill-Cherry**, Chief Information Officer, PSI Pax

Cleaning Up the Environment and Returning to the Cloud

Part of Sentinel Blue’s initial engagement included undoing the reachback to the on-prem environment from the previous MSSP. PSI Pax returned to a 100% cloud-based GCC High enclave, with nothing reaching back to the on-premises environment except printers. To close even that potential gap, Sentinel Blue also configured an encrypted print solution that avoided compliance risk and guided PSI Pax’s team through the migration back to a clean, compliant architecture.

Sentinel Blue also conducted a thorough assessment of the PSI Pax environment, reviewing devices, user accounts, and software to understand what was compliant, what needed remediation, and what needed to go. Where hardware fell short, Sentinel Blue provided recommendations for replacements and upgrades. This cleanup process was a critical step in CMMC readiness, since unmanaged devices, stale user accounts, and outdated software all expand the compliance scope and introduce unnecessary risk.



Enterprise-Grade Security and Compliance Tailored to a Small Team

For a three-person IT department trying to meet the demands of CMMC, building and maintaining a full enterprise security stack internally wasn't a realistic option. Sentinel Blue's managed services offering gave PSI Pax access to the full range of capabilities a modern defense contractor requires. Delivered by a U.S.-based team with deep defense industry expertise, the engagement included holistic protection and support scaled to the realities of a small business.

On the security side, that meant continuous monitoring, threat detection, and incident response through Sentinel Blue's SOC-as-a-Service for around-the-clock visibility. Endpoint protection, incident response, identity and authentication management, MFA administration, vulnerability scanning, and other ongoing services rounded out the day-to-day security posture.

On the compliance side, Sentinel Blue handled everything from SSP development and POA&M management to the risk register, pre-assessment evidence package, and other documentation needs. Combined with access to experienced engineers for architecture guidance and technical escalations, these offerings added up to a comprehensive, fully managed CMMC program.

Certified on the First Try. Stronger for the Long Term

CMMC Certification on the First Try

After years of internal preparation, a failed gap assessment, and a painful MSSP transition, PSI Pax passed their CMMC Level 2 assessment within a single day. The company was also among the first 1,000 contractors in the country to achieve CMMC Level 2 certification. Sentinel Blue handled the heavy lifting from the start, joining the preliminary scoping call with assessors and fielding the technical questions so PSI Pax's leadership could focus on what they know best: their business.

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This was something I'd been sweating about for three years. When assessment week came, I thought it was going to take all week. We were done on the first day.”

– **Debra Hill-Cherry**, Chief Information Officer, PSI Pax



Stronger Security Posture and Cleaner Processes

The move to a clean, fully cloud-based GCC High enclave eliminated the technical debt and the complexities of aging on-prem infrastructure that had caused PSI Pax to stumble in previous assessments. With clearly defined network boundaries, encrypted print workflows, and a managed security stack covering everything from endpoint protection to continuous monitoring, PSI Pax now operates from a security posture that is compliant and built to stay that way.

A Force Multiplier for a Three-Person IT Team

For a small IT department carrying the weight of enterprise-level compliance requirements, the ongoing partnership with Sentinel Blue has been transformative. Hill-Cherry now has a team behind her for everything from hardware procurement to day-to-day technical questions. Whether it's spec'ing out new equipment, navigating whether a new tool will meet CMMC requirements, or thinking through the road ahead, Sentinel Blue is a constant resource.



It's been a huge weight lifted to feel like I'm not by myself, I'm not in this alone. I can say, 'hey, I've been thinking about this idea, what are your thoughts, please advise?' And I get support. When I have questions about whether something new will comply with CMMC or how I should navigate it, the team is right there. I'm recommending Sentinel Blue to everyone I know that's in this space and having similar challenges."

– **Debra Hill-Cherry**, Chief Information Officer, PSI Pax



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