There's a common theme to the recent security breaches at Target, Home Depot, eBay, and Sony: each originated as a compromised employee or partner identity. The simple act of clicking on a phishing email led to the loss of a user ID and password, and from there the hackers got access to the PC's operating system. Soon they controlled the corporate network, distributing more malware across critical servers. This nightmare scenario is repeated far too often, but help is on the way.

One popular solution to better safeguard employee and partner access is to use one-time-password (OTP) to augment traditional credentials. Unfortunately, traditional discrete hardware OTP tokens cause added friction to the user experience of logging in, and hardware tokens are cumbersome or easily lost, and are notorious for generating costly help desk calls. They increase security, but at a cost.

Jim Ducharme, vice president of engineering and product management at noted security solutions provider RSA, the Security Division of EMC, believes the solution is to use 5th generation Intel® Core™ vPro™ processors with RSA's SecurID® Software Token. This combines the flexibility of an embedded soft token without forgoing the security of hardware. This solution goes around the operating system and brings much more strength to system passwords. “RSA's
solution and Intel Core vPro processors can talk to one another and exchange confidential information without engaging a potentially compromised desktop environment,” said Ducharme. “This is huge for our organizations; we’re establishing a hardware root of trust.”

Founded in 1985, RSA is a widely respected provider of intelligence-driven information security solutions. They are global in reach, spanning six continents, with over 30,000 customers. Their goal is to protect privileged administrators, help desks, and business owners that require elevated levels of access as part of their jobs. According to a 2014 Verizon data breach report, two-thirds of all security breaches were the result of a stolen or weak password. With the latest RSA SecurID Software Token (version 4.1.2 or later) now supporting integration with Intel vPro based systems via Intel® Identity Protection technology, IT teams will be better able to protect entry into their organization because soft tokens can’t be removed; they are bound to that particular PC.

Once the SecurID Software Token is installed on a supported Intel vPro system, the token seed file gets encrypted by a key that’s created and stored in the Intel processor, thereby binding it to that platform. With this kind of vigilance, machines are not as susceptible to outside attack because the only valid password resides in the CPU. Most users assume that the victims of security breaches didn’t have the right tools in place, didn’t have the right systems, or possibly the IT team hadn’t loaded the latest patches. The truth is that losing control of simple user ID and password combinations caused the most common breaches. This new partnership between Intel and RSA represents a possible paradigm shift, to think not in terms of an IT problem, but view it as a risk problem.

RSA started working with Intel early in the development of Intel® vPro™ technology so they would be able to fully optimize RSA SecurID. This optimized solution is of interest to any IT teams who are looking to update hardware and applications to provide more secure services to users. Oftentimes, IT has no visibility to risky events on the system until after the fact, when it’s too late. With intelligence-driven security software, each laptop, tablet, 2-in-1, or desktop tower will now boast greater protection. IT administrators who access multiple applications throughout the day can now rely on the security of RSA and Intel, which is a huge convenience. Because there are no discrete tokens to be lost or broken, this reduces token replacement costs and help desk tickets.

Innovative technologies powered by 5th generation Intel Core vPro processors are not only adding strength for RSA credentials, they’re enabling a better way to work.

Find out more about Intel® Identity Protection technology here.

To learn more about SecurID, go here.