CRM giant Salesforce has acquired a mobile two-factor authentication developer that leverages location-awareness as part of its secret sauce. The company just snapped up Toopher for an undisclosed amount.

Toopher describes itself as “the only solution that lets you automate that second step from safe locations like your home or office, so now you're only bothered when a login is out of the ordinary -- like when you're in a new location or being hacked.”

John Alexander and Evan Grim, founders of Toopher, announced the acquisition on the home page of the company's Web site, noting the firm would no longer sell its current products and celebrating its entry into the Salesforce family.

“We can’t imagine a better team, technology and set of values with which to align,” they wrote. “We've been delighted to better secure you without all of the normal unpleasantries associated with multi-factor authentication. Even though we will no longer sell our current product, our commitment to your security remains steadfast (as does our love for breakfast tacos).”

A $1.6 Billion Market

The multi-factor authentication market is big business in an age where cybercriminals are making headlines almost daily. Market intelligence firm ABI Research estimates the global mobile multi-factor authentication software and service market will be worth $1.6 billion by the end of 2015.
Usernames and passwords have been widely used to authenticate users' identities but fail to provide adequate authentication, ABI noted. Meanwhile, authentication-based attacks continue to plague organizations of all sizes with the majority of breaches attributed to weak or non-existent authentication. That has created a market demand for mobile user authentication technologies that can be used to provide additional factors of authentication thus adding extra layers of security.

“Other methods used to provide the second authentication factor include smart cards, security certificates, OTPs (One-time passwords), and biometric scanning,” Sen said. "A comprehensive solution will allow organizations to effectively enforce the appropriate method of authentication across applications, endpoints, and environments (on-premise and cloud) without burdening end users.”

A Geocentric Approach

We asked Charles King, principal analyst at Pund-IT, for his take on the acquisition. He told us Salesforce's Toopher purchase aims to strengthen the security solutions and framework the company offers its business customers.

“Toopher has developed what might be called a geocentric approach to two-factor authentication, where end users can specify ‘safe’ locations for online transactions,” King said. “When users make purchases from those locations, they can use simple sign-in credentials.”

King explained that if customers attempt to make transactions from other locations, Toopher alerts the device owners to allow or deny the transactions.

“This approach would be particularly valuable for security-minded companies leveraging mobile business and purchasing processes,” King said. “So far as I'm aware, Toopher is the only vendor making a solution of this sort, meaning that Salesforce now has a unique offering that should greatly interest many of its business customers.”

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