When it comes to data protection, everybody is talking about the next step.

The data theft reported in January of 20 million Koreans made vulnerable the personal information, including identification numbers, addresses and credit card numbers, of 40 percent of Korea’s population. Clients of KB Kookmin Card, Lotte Card and Nonghyup Card were most affected in what was Korea’s largest private security breach ever.

Last year, cyber attacks suspected of having been launched by North Korea paralyzed three major Korean banks and two large broadcasters.

And it’s not just in Korea. The breach of data security is a growing problem worldwide in an Internet-of-Things age in which not only desktops and servers, but everything from your car to your refrigerator can be connected online.

“So all of that information, including personal information, is flowing everywhere,” said Moon Hyung Lee, Korea Country Leader of Vormetric Korea, a data-centric security solutions provider for the physical, virtual and cloud environments. “So we have to protect.”

The California-based company’s products and services include data firewall capabilities, granular access control, advanced encryption & key management, security intelligence integration and deployment & automation tools and capabilities. Vormetric Korea was started a year and a half ago as Vormetric’s only office in the Asia-Pacific region, including Japan, and as one of the company’s five global branches.

While the data protection industry has focused on the endpoint solution — on complete desktop-to-server data protection — recent security breaches have highlighted the need for server-centric security that is more effective than a firewall. That’s why the main business of Vormetric Korea is encryption, a means of translating data into a secret code. To read an encrypted file, you need a key or password.

With security being a more sensitive issue in Korea than most other countries due to its proximity to North Korea and widespread use of resident registration numbers that make anyone easily identifiable and trackable, encryption is a solution being sought by many local companies.

“Everybody invested much money in the endpoint network, but finally, it doesn’t work. So they’re trying to find the final way to protect their data. Our message is that encryption is the final step,” said Lee.

Sales for Vormetric Korea last year saw 25 percent year-on-year growth and accounted for 5 percent of the global Vormetric’s total sales. With about 200 customers now, Lee’s goal for this year is to increase that figure to 300 and eventually boost the 5 percent sales portion to 10 percent, after which he plans to request additional support from headquarters to conduct research and development in Korea. Vormetric Korea is now working with a local university known for its encryption and security research.

Customers in the finance industry account for a significant portion of Vormetric Korea’s business. Lee plans to target companies in the manufacturing industry and government agencies as well.

One technological trend spurring the need for greater data protection, and therefore Vormetric’s focus on big data, is the prevalence of closed circuit televisions, mobile phone cameras, black boxes and voice recorders. The content caught on these cameras qualifies as valuable and potentially sensitive personal information, and Vormetric Korea plans to provide encryption protection for that type of data as well.

“Currently we can do it, but actually, the customer is not willing to encrypt all data yet,” said Lee. “But I believe that will soon rise in priority.”

In fact, the way Lee sees it, with the encryption market growing more than 20 percent annually as data becomes increasingly defenseless, data security solutions shouldn’t be considered a luxury or even an expense.

“This is not cost. This is not small money, but anyway it will help your future, and to protect your position also,” said Lee. “This is actually made to protect customers’ assets.”

By Young Chang
young.chang@kotra.or.kr