

College of Law Resolves Email Security Issue with Webroot® E-Mail Security SaaS

Guildford-based College of Law is a leading supplier of legal education and training in the UK, with affiliations and endorsements from many of the country's leading legal firms. The College offers numerous courses and publications, as well as free legal advice to members of the public.



The Problem

The IT team had installed GWAVA, an anti-spam and anti-virus solution for GroupWise systems, to protect its network of 2,500 PCs. However, the solution was not performing well, and vast amounts of spam continued to inundate its computers.

"We were receiving a huge amount of spam," said Nick Galt, IT director for the College. "Our existing solution worked, but it needed a lot of management. We were looking for a more efficient solution to deal with the sheer volume with which we were being hit."

According to Galt, the levels of unwanted mail were extraordinarily high partly because many of the people behind those 2,500 computer screens were students.

"Inevitably, a lot of them use Hotmail, Yahoo! and other online email systems which are open to harvesting," Galt said. "Standard systems just didn't do the job. GWAVA proved unworkable, and we tried device-based systems, which were either equally difficult to manage or had associated difficulties that we were unwilling to live with."

The Solution

Working in conjunction with Altman, the college's regular IT supplier, Galt settled on a managed email service: Webroot® E-Mail Security Software-as-a-Service (SaaS).

Webroot Managing Director Mark Tickle described why a standard anti-spam product was not sufficient for the college's needs. "An organisation focused on law will need to view texts and case studies which will use very particular words and phrases," he said. "You need to offer something flexible – the students will quite legitimately need to view things with profanities and other elements most organisations will seek to block."

Comments

"In the four months since Webroot E-Mail Security SaaS was implemented, it has already blocked 6.5 million spam emails, and the number of legitimate emails has been just over 800,000. I am extremely happy with Webroot as a company and the solution overall."

**–Nick Galt
IT Director, College of Law**

A service that could meet these needs was required and the college found it in Webroot. The service supports pre-defined and custom dictionaries of regular expressions and keywords to aid in detecting and controlling messages with sensitive or inappropriate content. Administrators can also create custom rules by combining subsets or supersets of dictionaries.

Tickle explains that Webroot's task was to offer all of the flexibility and configurability that the customer needed without requiring the College to pick up the phone every time a change was required.

"Webroot 'hosts' emails, which means that email is directed to Webroot's own servers rather than those of the College or an Internet Service Provider," Tickle said. "Webroot filters the messages there, which provides enhanced security, increased bandwidth and more customisable settings. A Web-based administrative panel and summary dashboard offer total visibility, control and flexibility."

There were a number of options for implementation, but Galt wanted the system to become ubiquitous immediately. "We evaluated the service for a couple of days, but it's not the sort of thing you can have in a test environment," he said. "You really have to evaluate it in a live environment to see whether it's going to work."

He was reassured that if the new system proved to be unworkable, a call to Webroot could have the mail redirection and hosting switched off within minutes. Although that knowledge provided peace of mind, the Webroot solution worked ideally and Galt never had to make that call.

Implementation was rapid, with the system being completely live within four months of the College first identifying the need for change. The biggest practical issue was synchronising the service with the email accounts so that valid users did not have their email blocked by the service.

"Webroot worked through the problems with us," Galt added, "and made various technical tweaks to allow seamless synchronisation."

The Benefits

One of the risks of any spam filtering system is that it potentially filters a small amount of legitimate emails as well as the unwanted.

"We had some complaints about that with the old system, but since Webroot went live, the complaints have stopped," Galt said.

More importantly, the spam email has ceased to be an issue. "We saw an overnight drop in the volume of junk mail, and that led to an immediate freeing up of our network bandwidth," Galt says. "At the height of the problem, 95 percent of our incoming mail from the Internet was identified as spam and blocked."

Previously, these emails would have been accepted and filtered on the College's servers, requiring additional manual filtering where there were grey areas. Once the Webroot system took over, all of this overhead was eliminated immediately. The college remains a satisfied customer with all of the benefits delivered rapidly, along with a smooth transition between the old and new system.

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