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John Pavy
Manager, Information Technology
City of Fremantle

The City of Fremantle

Fremantle, the largest metropolitan retail centre outside of Perth, has long been known as Western Australia's other capital – and has a long standing reputation as a distinctive and vibrant destination. It is the responsibility of the local government authority, The City of Fremantle, to maintain and promote this character through community leadership and the continual search for ways to provide better services along with value for ratepayers.

The City Council is actively improving its efficiency and effectiveness through business planning, competitive practices, benchmarking and performance management. Within Council's corporate services arm, the Information and Technology business unit constantly monitors technological developments to ensure that the organisation's information systems are contributing to its overall excellence and competitiveness.

"With just six staff members, the IT unit manages a network for 300 users in ten locations across Fremantle as well as seven websites including our corporate site, the intranet and tourism and marketing sites," said John Pavy, Manager, Information Technology. "We run a VMware environment which enables savings but requires state-of-the-art protection."

Communications log jammed by spam

Council's previous in-house messaging security software was overwhelmed by the vast volume of spam. "We were receiving 10,000 emails every day and only 1800 were genuine. The in-house spam filter and anti-virus software were continually under attack, representing a huge waste of our bandwidth. Because of the enormous volumes, the software would regularly lock up and block all incoming emails, interrupting productivity and wasting IT staff time to sort the mess out," said John Pavy.

The greatest risk to the City of Fremantle from malware hidden in spam and on suspect websites is damage to its network, resulting in downtime. While there has been only one successful attack in recent years, and the Council's internal risk reduction strategies limited the damage to a few desktops, it proved that the inhouse security solution was anything but secure.

Converging threats require converged protection

As Council became aware of the emergence of Software-as-a-Service solutions, it spent a year trialling various providers to test their effectiveness, exploring different configurations to maximise messaging security efficiency. Major West Australian reseller L7 Solutions introduced Council to MessageLabs services.

"The strength of MessageLabs' existing customer base sent a very strong signal to us," said John Pavy. "Because global banks – which have the internal skills and resources to thoroughly assess hosted technologies – trust MessageLabs services, this gave us great confidence.

"We were also looking for both email and internet security and the MessageLabs solution is a market leader in that space." Aware of the close links between email and internet use and abuse, The City of Fremantle implemented MessageLabs Email and Web Security products to enable cross-fertilisation and converged threat detection across multiple protocols that delivers unparalleled protection.

"The MessageLabs implementation has been a critical element in our information technology strategy to reduce risks and increase efficiency."

The genuine article

Once the trials were successfully completed, the MessageLabs implementation took only a few days. Council can continually fine-tune the service settings so that staff members can access the online resources they need, while Council achieves the risk reduction it needs.

The City of Fremantle now receives only genuine emails, with all spam and malwareinfected emails blocked at the internet level, and access to unsafe and non workrelated websites prevented. "Because MessageLabs technology eliminates spam, viruses and trojans in email or on suspect websites remotely, the reduction in inappropriate material coming down the pipe has been quite dramatic," said John Pavy. "The MessageLabs team understands both our business and the people we provide a service to, so the process is smooth and we have seen real results."

Prevention is the only cure

Technological advances bring exciting opportunities for cost savings as well as for increased productivity but they also carry the baggage of escalating risks. "Local government is a leader in collaboration with the business and the broader community, but we do so in a very dangerous environment," said John Pavy.

"As my team has more than enough to do in meeting organisational needs, and we can't afford specialised training to detect and combat internet-level threats even if we had time, I have to assume that whatever I imagine a trojan, virus or bot can do, someone out there can make it happen. A hosted service significantly reduces the risk of malware arriving at our network unrecognised or sitting silent, waiting for a trigger."

Immediate results, long term opportunity

The City of Fremantle's network is now protected from downtime, ensuring that its corporate websites are up and running to optimise productivity across the entire organisation.

Implementing MessageLabs services has dramatically reduced the time and costs of managing messaging security and fixing the problems caused by spam and malware infections. However, it has also had a longer term impact on productivity for The City of Fremantle. Not only do its malware detection capabilities minimise downtime, but MessageLabs URL Filtering and MessageLabs Image Control and Content Control are a highly efficient method of enforcing Council's acceptable use policies.

"Because we are confident our entire internal environment is clean, we have been able to increase the return on our investment with initiatives such as virtualisation. The MessageLabs implementation has been a critical element in our information technology strategy to reduce risks and increase efficiency."

Solution at a Glance

Business Drivers

- High proportion of incoming email was spam
- Malicious code attack resulting in network downtime

Technology Challenges

- Vast spam volume jamming in-house software

Solution

- MessageLabs Email Anti-Spam & Anti-Virus
- MessageLabs Image Control & Content Control
- MessageLabs Web Security Anti-Spyware Anti-Virus
- MessageLabs URL Filtering

Size of Organization

- 300 network users
- 7 websites
- 10 offices with 450 total members of staff

Business Value and Technical Benefits

- Guaranteed clean email inboxes
- Safe and compliant email and web usage
- Network protected from downtime
- No in-house labour or technology costs
- Improved productivity in IT and for end-users
- Seamless implementation, 'set and forget' service
- No new hardware or software required

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