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James Verambeck, Manager of Lotus Notes.

Olympus America Case Study

Before MessageLabs, Olympus America was getting hundreds of thousands of unwanted messages a week. Since signing on with MessageLabs Anti-Spam and Anti-Virus services, the amount of spam email reaching the desks of its end users has virtually stopped, and viruses are a thing of the past.

Olympus is a precision technology leader, designing and delivering innovative solutions in health-care and consumer electronics. The 2,000 employees of Olympus America are responsible for the marketing, sales, after-sales support, and education and training programs for all Olympus-branded products sold in the Americas. These include industry-leading medical endoscopes and research microscopes, chemistry immuno and blood bank test systems, as well as digital cameras, among many other products and services.

Spam Attack

Using the Internet to source goods and services is par for the course for many of Olympus America's employees. But the company came under a spam attack as workers regularly gave their corporate email addresses as their contact information. Network administrators tried to block spam once it came into the system. They also built their own filters and blacklists to prevent emails containing particular words or phrases from reaching end users.

But this approach did not work. For a start, the increasing volume of mail was having a negative impact on the routers. False positives were an even bigger problem. On top of building the filters and trying to block spam, the administrators had to manage the messages being quarantined. This included emailing the end user to explain that a message had been blocked, providing details such as sender information and subject line, and describing why it had been blocked. Then, more often than not the administrators had to release the message back to the end user.

"We spent up to 35 hours a week trying to block spam, and we only caught around 5% of it, if that," says James Verambeck, Manager of Lotus Notes at Olympus. "Our end users were really unhappy. There was only so much we could block." With the implementation of MessageLabs anti-spam service, Olympus now reaps the benefits of MessageLabs multi-layered services, and discovered that an average of 70% of all their inbound mail was spam. With MessageLabs Service Level Agreements, guaranteeing a 95% spam catch rate with 0.004% false positives, virtually all of their spam has been eliminated.

Time For Action

Verambeck knew he had to take action, so he and his team of two Lotus Notes administrators researched the marketplace for an effective anti-spam and anti-virus service. They found that most had a significant downside. For instance, they opted not to go with a hardware solution due to the maintenance—they would need to replace or upgrade the box every few years. Constantly increasing mail volume also meant they were uncertain how many boxes would be required to handle the load.

Favorable analyst reviews led them to contact MessageLabs. "The whole relationship from day one seemed to suit our needs and our strategic direction," says Verambeck. "MessageLabs gave us an excellent hands-on demo. They walked with us every step of the way. Of all the products we looked at, MessageLabs stood out as being the best fit for Olympus."

MessageLabs saves the administrators time and energy. Now they can be much more effective in dealing with spam, and at the same time, they can focus on tasks that add value to the organization, such as infrastructure upgrades and systems updates. Mail statistics provided by MessageLabs client portal, ClientNet™, made Olympus aware of the week over week increase in virus-related emails. This risk to business continuity, mitigated by MessageLabs Anti-Virus solution, gives Olympus 100% virus protection, something they were never able to achieve in house.

Best of all, the implementation of the MessageLabs solution was easy. The administrators simply handed over their MX records and clicked the enable button on the web interface. MessageLabs even gave the administrators email templates to notify end users of the change. "We turned it on, we turned the other product off, and we sat back," says Verambeck.

Since then, the administrators have had few complaints from end users. With MessageLabs, end users have their own account for managing mail quarantined as spam. They can read, review and release blocked messages themselves. Yet administrators can block emails from particular domains that are deemed inappropriate.

The success of the MessageLabs implementation at Olympus America comes down to good communication, Verambeck points out. The Olympus Lotus Notes team was clear in explaining their objectives to MessageLabs. In turn, they were impressed by MessageLabs willingness to share its future plans and product roadmap. The implementation at Olympus America has been so successful that the company is considering extending the service to other regions of the world.