

ALLIED CASH ADVANCE

CASE STUDY

INDUSTRY:
Financial Services

WEBSense INTEGRATION:
Websense Hosted Web Security

"My IT team couldn't keep up with all the malware, viruses, and spyware tying up our remote computers, and we were unable to focus on other critical projects. With Websense Hosted Web Security, my team and I get to go home on time now and then!"

Christian Alvarez
database administrator
Allied Cash Advance



Allied Cash Advance Protects Remote Offices with Websense Hosted Web Security

Founded in 1999 with a single branch in Northern California, Allied Cash Advance® has grown into one of the nation's largest providers of payday advances, with over 250 branches in 12 states. Headquartered in Miami, Florida, Allied Cash Advance employs over 700 team members.

The mission of Allied Cash Advance is to be the premier provider of payday advances in America. It prides itself in being a results-oriented company that provides superior service and support to its customers, team members, and communities. Dealing with critical financial issues requires computer systems that can assure security, confidentiality, and access.

Situation

The company has recently transitioned from a dial-up connection to broadband access that provides some visibility into how much time employees spend online. It also gives visibility into how many programs and add-ons are downloaded—often without the employee's knowledge. By visiting popular sites like MySpace and Yahoo.com, the employees were unwittingly opening the door to viruses, phishing attacks, spyware and malware—and their computers were showing the strain.

Christian Alvarez, database administrator for Allied Cash Advance, led the Web security project for the company. Managing 700 computers in 257 branches, many with varying degrees of Internet connectivity, was not a simple task. Before broadband access, the IT department didn't know that a remote computer had a virus or other problem until it crashed. They spent countless hours trying to remotely clean up the machines, often without success. With the move to broadband providing greater access, Alvarez suspected that time spent on risky sites was causing productivity issues. After compiling a select group of sites necessary for business purposes, he decided to block the unauthorized sites that provided a conduit to viruses and malware. He attempted to manage the problem by using the limited capabilities of his firewall, but this proved difficult because of the many remote branches.

Solution

Seeking an economical solution, Alvarez talked to other vendors and discovered Websense Hosted Web Security. "I was looking for a product that I could control centrally, but that would also protect the computers in all of our branches—without having to install something on each machine," he states. "With Websense, when I make a change, it's immediately effective throughout whichever branches I choose."

Alvarez ran a demo version of Websense Hosted Web Security at a few locations, and using the reporting features, discovered where and how much time the employees were spending on non-work-related sites. Rather than wrestle with the diverse requirements of the various ISPs he relied on, he created global and regional policies in Websense Hosted Web Security, then applied them to his remote computers. When he makes adjustments, all are automatically updated.

Benefits

Increased Productivity at Remote Branches. The payroll advance business requires a good deal of time on the Internet to verify critical financial information. With Websense Hosted Web Security, Alvarez discovered that many employees were spending their work time on MySpace-type sites or gaming sites. The reports showed multiple attempts to visit Pogo.com, a gaming site, at one branch. "At first the team members were surprised to see the 'access denied' messages, but pretty quickly the culture changed and they began to focus more on their work," says Alvarez. "The team has become more productive."

Reduced Exposure to Malware, Spyware, Phishing Attacks and Viruses

Allied Cash Advance deals with large amounts of personal data and has a special need for security. Phishing attacks or software that can read key-strokes can cause considerable damage. With Websense Hosted Web Security, sites that are most likely to download toolbars and other elements that often hide malware are simply denied access.

On-Demand Solution Eases IT Burden

Before implementing Websense Hosted Web Security, Alvarez and his team spent countless hours cleaning or replacing infected computers every week. To guarantee that no location was ever without a computer for long, the IT team found they were often pulled away from important projects. "My IT team couldn't keep up with all the malware, viruses, and spyware tying up our remote computers, and we were unable to focus on other critical projects," says Alvarez. "With WebDefense, my team and I can go home on time now and then!"

About Websense

Websense, Inc. (NASDAQ: WBSN) is the worldwide leader in Web filtering, and the premier provider of Web security and desktop security software. Websense products are preferred by leading Fortune 500 and FTSE customers, as well as government agencies and educational institutions. Websense products increase employee Internet productivity and secure organizations from emerging Internet threats by providing a proactive Web security component that compliments traditional security solutions. Only Websense delivers flexible, integrated policy enforcement at the Internet gateway, network, desktop, and remotely with over 22 million seats under subscription, ranging in size from 100-person firms to many of the world's largest corporations.

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