

DEER PARK INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

CASE STUDY

INDUSTRY:
Education

WEBSense INTEGRATION:
Websense Hosted Email Security

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Ryan Petru
Director of Network Systems
Deer Park ISD



Deer Park ISD Uses Websense® Hosted Email Security to Battle Spam and Protect Texas Students

Deer Park Independent School District (ISD) is known throughout the State of Texas for its quality instructional program, outstanding facilities and exemplary teaching and support staff. The district strives to incorporate technology and the latest educational research into its instructional programs, while maintaining a steadfast commitment to helping each and every student succeed at his or her level.

Problem

Director of Network Systems for Deer Park ISD, Ryan Petru leads the group that supports all the voice, video and data systems throughout the 14 campuses. Students range in level from kindergarten through 12th grade. The district has roughly 12,000 students and a staff of about 1,600 with 6,000 computer desktops in all—averaging about five computers per classroom.

Until implementing spam control, the school district received about 40,000 spam emails per day—often displaying offensive content and graphics. This presented a variety of challenges, including the obvious one of protecting students from viewing inappropriate content. A significant problem was the enormous amount of time spent by staff in determining which emails were legitimate and which needed to be deleted. Another looming issue was pending legislation in Texas proposing schools be responsible for archiving all inbound emails for seven years—Deer Park and many other school districts currently archive emails for only 30 days. With a good spam filter, the amount of email to be archived would drop dramatically and the district wouldn't have to absorb the cost of storing and managing junk emails.

To tackle the problem, the school district initially installed Barracuda, an anti-spam product, and found that the product only reduced the spam load by about 85%. The volume and offensive nature of the spam still being delivered was absolutely unacceptable.

Solution: Websense Hosted Email Security

To help protect students, to save valuable staff time and to simplify IT management, Petru chose Websense Hosted Email Security. When Petru heard about the unique hosted solution, he evaluated the price per user and quickly realized that the product was easily worth the cost.

"Before we put a spam filter in place, about 80% of our incoming email was spam." Petru calculated the time that his staff members spent going through each of those emails and figured the time savings alone would be worth the cost. Adding in the value of IT time, he states, "MailControl (now called Websense Hosted Email Security) has certainly been worth it for us. I thought the price point was reasonable, particularly as it covered spam and antivirus," states Petru, "so I decided to try out the demo version on the computer of a school counselor who often had students in her office and was getting about 20 spam emails per day. I checked back with her after a week and she hadn't received a single spam! This was a huge relief for the IT department."

Results

Protecting students and providing an environment that is conducive to learning is paramount to Deer Park ISD. As Petru noted, "With the level of spam we were getting there was always a chance that a teacher or staff member would accidentally open an email that had pornographic material in it. If a student happened to be standing nearby and got subjected to that, we wouldn't be doing our job of protecting him or her."

Before implementing Websense Hosted Email Security, Deer Park ISD received 50,000 email messages every day, with 80% of them estimated to be spam. If staffers throughout the district spent only one minute to open and deal with each of the estimated 40,000 spam emails per day, they would spend over 13,500 hours per month cleaning up spam. Besides costing the district untold dollars, staff was wasting precious time that could be better spent educating and serving students.

Since implementing Websense Hosted Email Security, virtually all spam and virus-containing emails have been blocked. The staff now has more time to work with their students and can provide a more positive learning experience without risk of exposure to offensive content. As legislation tightens, the school may be required to archive all inbound email for long periods. Unlike basic spam filters, Websense Hosted Email Security stops spam at the Internet level before it ever reaches the gateway. If emails never enter the gateway, they won't need archiving, thus providing as-yet-unknown cost benefits.

Petru is delighted with the ease provided by the Websense hosted solution. "From a support standpoint, it's obviously easier because you've got one less variable, one less piece of hardware. If Barracuda went down, I was the one who had to deal with it and spend my time to make sure it was up. It's nice to know that I don't have to worry about that anymore—Websense guarantees availability."

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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