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THE PENINSULA HOTELS

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Shane Izaks

General Manager

Information Technology of The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels Limited.

“Security as a Service” No Surprise for The Peninsula Hotels

While “Security as a Service”, or SaaS has captured a lot of news coverage recently, the idea of outsourcing such an important part of an enterprise’s IT infrastructure is nothing new to The Peninsula Hotels. It has been doing exactly that for the past seven years, relying on managed services from MessageLabs for e-mail anti-virus and anti-spam protection.

The reason for such a proactive approach is clear. With the focus on impeccable service and branding by Peninsula Hotels, a virus outbreak or spyware infestation could damage the Group’s reputation or service quality.

About The Peninsula Hotels

The Peninsula Hotels has a unique identity among the world’s leading hotels. Established in 1928, it now operates prestigious luxury properties in eight major cities. These include the flagship Peninsula Hotel in Hong Kong, as well as properties in New York, Beverly Hills, Chicago, Beijing, Bangkok, Manila and Tokyo. It’s latest property opens in Shanghai in late 2009.

Now in its eighth decade, The Peninsula Hotels is something of a living legend. It sets its sights high and its standards higher, always aiming to please customers. It is an approach that works well for the Group, which, in many cases, is now serving the third generation of loyal guests.

However, The Peninsula Hotels now includes additional businesses such as Hong Kong’s venerable Peak Tramways, Repulse Bay Apartments, the Tai Pan Laundry as well as the Thai Country Club.

Like any modern organisation, the Group relies on a sophisticated information infrastructure to ensure the entire enterprise operates smoothly and at peak efficiency. Electronic mail has become the central nervous system of the Group’s communication network, linking approximately 1,400 of its 3,000 strong workforce with each other, with business partners and also with guests and customers.

Today, the Group processes more than 1.3 million e-mail messages a month. However, its e-mail stream is entirely devoid of unwelcome and potentially dangerous content such as spam, spyware and viruses thanks to a seven-year relationship with the leading provider of e-mail security, web security and secure IM services, MessageLabs, now part of Symantec.

Protecting a Vital Communications Channel

In 2002, the Group reviewed its posture regarding overall inbound and outbound security, protection and control. Starting with a vulnerability assessment, the organisation benchmarked its existing safeguards and established stricter policies to ensure its IT infrastructure remained protected. Then it began looking for a solution to put its policies into practise.

The selection criteria were strict. They began by considering total cost of ownership (TCO) – the initial cost, plus the ongoing costs of running the solution. Return on investment (ROI) – defined as the value of the contribution the solution would make to the Group’s operations, minus the costs of acquiring it – was also on the list. Third, and perhaps most important, was an analysis of the service level the solution actually delivered, not just what the vendor might promise.

It was a tall order, but after a detailed evaluation of a variety of solutions in the market, The Peninsula Hotels compiled a very short list of possibilities, with a MessageLabs solution right at the top.

Instant, Zero-investment Solution

MessageLabs services are used by more than 19,000 business customers and

“The total cost of the system is also far lower than a software, hardware or hybrid solution, and it stays current, no matter how the threat landscape changes.”

approximately 8 million end-users worldwide in small and Fortune 500 firms in more than 86 countries. From a TCO perspective, MessageLabs is above other industry offerings. Uniquely from the other offerings the Peninsula Hotels Group evaluated, the MessageLabs’ offering required zero up-front costs and no hardware, software or in-house IT expertise or support.

“One of the biggest headaches for enterprise IT security professionals is keeping systems current. With new security threats appearing daily, hourly and even minute-by-minute, just staying up-to-date can be a full-time job,” said Nigel Mendonca, MessageLabs’ Regional Director, Asia.

“SaaS removes that burden from the customer and deals with it fast and effectively behind the scenes. That leaves businesses such as the Peninsula Hotels Group free to get on with what it does best – serving its customers.”

The confidence and comfort that customers such as The Peninsula Hotels enjoy after implementing a MessageLabs SaaS solution is priceless. A 100 per cent service level guarantee means that every genuine message that the MessageLabs technology handles is delivered, no questions asked. Coupled with a spam catch rate that bounces close to 100 per cent and true zero-day virus detection, the Group’s systems are now among the best protected in the world.

The MessageLabs team is committed to making sure they stay that way. It has 14 secure data centres worldwide so there is no single point of failure in the MessageLabs system. A network of resilient international links virtually eliminates the potential for network failure.

MessageLabs’ security and protection systems require no human intervention. All MessageLabs systems are ISO 27001 compliant – currently the highest possible level of security certification. With MessageLabs there is absolutely zero chance of anyone ever seeing anyone’s messages, guaranteeing complete confidentiality.

No Reservations about MessageLabs

When The Peninsula Hotels decided to adopt the MessageLabs solution, the implementation took three weeks, with less than a week of that time devoted to actually setting up the system.

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Solution at a Glance

Business Drivers

- Reputation protection
- Business efficiency
- Timely communications

Technology Challenges

- Limited internal resources mean management or maintenance is a major drain
- In-house solutions cannot easily accommodate traffic spikes and are vulnerable to DOS (deny of services) attacks
- Rapidly changing viruses and spam are hard to defend against

Solution

- MessageLabs Email Anti-Virus and Anti-Spam

Size of Organisation

- 3,000 employees
- 13 locations
- 1,400 PC and email users

Business Value and Technical Benefits

- Using a guaranteed protection services provider ensures that incoming and outgoing emails between The Peninsula Hotels, its partners and its customers are always clean
- Internet level approach ensures the availability of email services. There’s no need to worry about latency, lost messages or false-positives as traffic volumes and attacks increase
- With the SaaS model, The Peninsula Hotels spends almost no time dealing with email protection issues, confident in the track record and robust SLAs of MessageLabs Email Services
- The Peninsula Hotels is free to focus limited internal resources on other critical IT issues, such as developing applications that support the business and help it excel and grow

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