



MessageLabs[®]
Now part of Symantec

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Edward Gilbreath
Director of Technology
Singapore American School

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Established in 1956, the Singapore American School (SAS) is an independent, non-profit, co-educational day school offering an American-based curriculum for preschool through to grade 12 expatriate students.

Located on thirty-seven acres in Singapore, the purpose built school includes state-of-the-art facilities for students at all grade levels. With over 50 different nationalities represented among the 3,800 students attending SAS and 345 faculty members working at the school, the school required a fast, dependable email system for internal and external correspondence.

"The email network is extremely important for Singapore American School – it is a crucial mode of communication for our staff, students, and their parents. On average, we send and receive 189,861 emails per month," explained Mr Edward Gilbreath, Director of Technology, Singapore American School.

Education sector a major target for Internet-based threats

Not a lot of people know that the Education sector is one of the biggest targets for Internet-based security threats. According to the latest MessageLabs Intelligence Report, virus activity in the Education sector was the highest of all industries with 1 in 96.0 emails being infected – significantly higher than the IT Services sector at 1 in 285.9, 1 in 428.0 for Retail, and 1 in 409.3 for Finance.

Unfortunately, the Education sector has traditionally been the least well-equipped to deal with these security problems. The nature of schools makes them more susceptible to attacks than larger organisations. They typically have smaller IT departments, limited budgets and employees who may not be IT security savvy when compared to corporate environments.

"School of Virtual knocks" – crippled by spam and virus attacks

As one of Singapore's leading schools, SAS learnt first-hand what it was like to be a target of spam and virus attacks. Their IT team previously used basic filtering methods but soon realised that this solution was not sophisticated enough to eliminate all security threats. At the time, approximately 70 percent of all email traffic still contained spam or viruses that were clogging up email bandwidth.

The IT team also found that resources were already fully committed to operational duties supporting the school, and dealing with security issues was an expensive, resource-hungry activity. Therefore, the quest to streamline cost structures while maintaining service levels was important.

"We needed a systematic way of eliminating these viruses and spam. Initially, we tried installing different solutions in order to resolve this issue in-house, but it became impossible to update the IT infrastructure quickly enough to keep up with the latest viruses and threats. Furthermore, it took up valuable time just to keep all these short-term solutions up-to-date," explains Gilbreath.

In the face of such security and resourcing problems at SAS, what could they do?

"The Answer" – messaging security software as a service (SaaS)

Faced with an escalating challenge, the IT team wanted to find an effective and very efficient way to secure the school's email system from external threats. After reviewing the various software and in-house options, the team decided to outsource their email security to MessageLabs, now part of Symantec.

"In the end, MessageLabs was a logical choice given that they already help hundreds of educational organisations, eliminating new threats faster than any other service provider," said Gilbreath. "The improvements we have experienced since switching to MessageLabs including real-time threat protection against spam, viruses and spyware or adware have been enormous."

By using MessageLabs Anti-Spam services, any potential spam is now filtered out

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before it even reaches the SAS network. The IT team now saves valuable time as they no longer have to go through hundreds of spam messages to find legitimate emails from educational partners, parents, and students.

On the virus side of things, SAS deployed the MessageLabs Anti-Virus service which stops all known and unknown viruses. Without having to worry about performing any signature based updates the IT group can now focus their time on core activities.

“The Benefits” – Guaranteed Security at a Low Total Cost of Ownership

Since the school implemented MessageLabs’ Email Anti-spam and Anti-Virus solutions, the incidence of spam and viruses arriving in email has dropped to almost zero.

“MessageLabs’ detailed and comprehensive service level agreements, guaranteeing extremely high levels of protection and email availability, gave us the certainty we needed,” shared Gilbreath. “It is also comforting to know that we are being protected by the same managed security service that is protecting Fortune 500 companies,” adds Gilbreath.

In addition, MessageLabs services create real efficiencies by being simple to set up and configure, and having a predictable cost structure without the expense and hassle of hardware, software or maintenance.

“The best part is, we didn’t have to buy any hardware or software from MessageLabs – there are no installations, upgrades or maintenance required on our part. We just pay a flat monthly fee and our security is up and running in minutes,” adds Gilbreath.

In addition to providing a truly protected electronic messaging environment cemented by high service level agreements, MessageLabs also provides the school with weekly and monthly reports that document all intercepted viruses, spam levels and their respective sources.

With MessageLabs now on the job, the team at Singapore American School can breathe easier knowing that their network communications are secure and protected. This allows employees at the school to place their full focus on providing leading educational services for their students.

Solution at a Glance

Business Drivers

- Education sector a major target for Internet-based threats
- Reliance on email for secure, sensitive and business-critical communication
- 189,861 emails sent and received each month
- 70 percent spam volume

Technology Challenges

- Diversion of IT resources from core tasks in having to handle security issues
- High spam volume slowing down system and wasting bandwidth

Solution

- MessageLabs Email Anti-Spam and Anti-Virus Managed Services

Size of Organisation

550 staff
3,800 students

Business Value and Technical Benefits

Performance benefits – improved productivity for end-users and in IT

- Quick and easy deployment as a managed service
- Increased network performance
- Eliminates spam burden on bandwidth

Guaranteed security

- Industry leading service level agreements
- Secure and reliable communications
- Guaranteed result of clean email inboxes

Cost benefits

- Predictable cost structure
- Low total cost of ownership – no new hardware or software required

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