

PIPER ALDERMAN

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

INDUSTRY:
Law

WEBSense INTEGRATION:
Websense Hosted Email Security

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Paul Colley
IT Director,
Piper Alderman

Law firm stops fake e-mails in their tracks

Introduction

For over 160 years, South Australian-based law firm, Piper Alderman, has been providing legal advice and services to some of this country's best-known commercial organisations. The firm's commitment to excellence in the practice of law has seen continual growth and resulted in the establishment of offices in Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. The company has 53 partners, over 150 lawyers and close to 300 staff in total.

Since the mid-2000s, Piper Alderman has consistently ranked in the top 25 law firms in Australia. In December 2006, it was named one of "Australia's Fast 10 Law Firms" by Australasian Legal Business magazine and in 2007 it was voted "Best South Australian Firm" in the BRW St George Client Choice Awards.

Stealing bandwidth

Piper Alderman's growth has been underpinned by the development of a solid IT foundation, including an infrastructure built on fibre links between the four WAN-connected offices. Most of the company's staff operates from PCs on a regular basis while approximately 20 per cent use laptops, particularly when travelling or working offsite.

According to Paul Colley, Piper Alderman's IT Director, the nature of the firm's business coupled with the partially mobile workforce, means that security and reliability of communications remain among the IT department's primary concerns. Surprisingly, two years ago, Piper Alderman's biggest issue in this area was spam.

"We'd been receiving spam for some time and the levels kept on gradually increasing," Colley explains. "At its peak we were receiving 9,000 spam e-mails per day, all of it coming in via the mail filter servers in our Adelaide office. Many of our partners have a high public presence and are prominent in their field. It made them major targets for spam."

Although the company used an internal filter that caught up to 90 per cent of the incoming spam, the filter could only block problematic e-mails once they had entered the company's servers.

"The incredible volume of spam was significantly compromising our bandwidth and that had a flow-on effect for users who, quite rightly, expect an efficient e-mail system," Colley continues. "More importantly, as a law firm it's extremely important that junk entering our e-mail systems isn't compromising legitimate e-mail communication or placing our systems at risk of compliance breaches."

To solve the problem, Colley turned to Websense Hosted Email Security. "We'd worked with Websense before and were very happy with the products," Colley says. "We'd also considered hosted spam filtering some years earlier but had been nervous about the idea of someone else controlling our information. By 2007 however, we felt that hosted services were more mature with a proven track record. We could see that a hosted filtering solution was a way of blocking the spam further upstream at Internet level – before it even reached our organisation's network. It would allow us to claw back the lost bandwidth and reduce the complexity of managing spam volumes in-house."

Achieving e-mail legitimacy

While the introduction of the hosted service went without a hitch, Colley admits that the initial reaction from non-technical staff was cautious. "Some were concerned about whether they would continue to get their e-mail. Others had thought they would receive no spam at all once the system was up and running."

However, this concern soon disappeared. Legitimate messages were passed on automatically and, whenever there was a question about borderline spam, the recipient now had more control in the form of an email alert and could decide whether the e-mail was junk or not.

Colley adds, "We've significantly reduced spam for our users. Feedback has been great. In fact, I've never had such a positive user response to a new implementation."

Websense Hosted Email Security has also helped Piper Alderman reduce the number of phishing e-mails getting through to staff. "Because we act for banks and large companies, some of the filters we've used in the past were unable to recognise the difference between legitimate e-mails and phishing attacks," Colley explains. "Websense certainly does understand and has helped us to control the problem. One of the major pluses for Websense is that the hosted service automatically offers a lot more features as part of the deal compared with other solutions on the market."

The law firm also found unexpected benefits for its archiving and disaster recovery practices. "We archive every e-mail as it comes in," Colley says. "By hosting the solution upstream and filtering e-mails before they reach our servers we are no longer archiving spam. That in turn reduces our storage demands. In addition, knowing that Websense can hold up to seven days' worth of e-mail external to our network bolsters our disaster recovery procedures. This enhances our risk management and provides greater peace of mind."

With the help of Websense Hosted Email Security, Piper Alderman now blocks 8,000-9,000 spam e-mails daily. Reporting tools mean that Colley can identify how much spam is being directed at the company at any given time and how much is slipping through. Employees know whenever an incoming e-mail is considered questionable and their decisions about borderline e-mails help to train the system to identify new and future spam.

"Given the profile of our organisation and our people, we can't expect to block spam 100 per cent of the time," Colley concludes. "But in our experience the Websense filtering works exceedingly well. Using the hosted service has helped to keep our lines of communication open and provides me with more confidence in our system and that it will accurately handle our email traffic".

About Websense

Websense, Inc. (NASDAQ: WBSN), a global leader in integrated Web, messaging and data protection technologies, provides Essential Information Protection™ for more than 42 million employees at more than 50,000 organisations worldwide. Distributed through its global network of channel partners, Websense software and hosted security solutions help organisations block malicious code, prevent the loss of confidential information and enforce Internet use and security policies. For more information, visit www.websense.com

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