

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Taipei

Taipei's top hotels take to the clouds to banish spam and malware



Symantec.cloud™



Le MERIDIEN
TAIPEI
台北寒舍艾美酒店

The Sheraton Taipei Hotel has set the standard for 5-star quality in the city since it opened in 1981. The property is the flagship for Starwood Hotels & Resorts in Taipei where the group also has another high-quality brand in the form of Le Meridien Hotel. Together they lead the field in the provision of accommodation for leisure and business customers.

Currently the Starwood group has 1,500 employees in Taipei – with approximately two thirds of them working at the Sheraton and the remaining 400 at Le Meridien. However, they are all supported by one IT department which employs just seven people to provide technical services to some 450 PCs located throughout the hotels, from the front desk to the back office and everywhere in between!

Like any modern organisation, the Group relies on email to ensure its business runs smoothly. Indeed, the Group has recognizes that a safe and secure email platform is now an indispensable ingredient in sustaining high-quality services. In 2010, the organisation received an average of 60,000 emails per month, ranging from routine communications to important documents and business messages.

As online threats have soared and become more complex, ensuring the privacy of clients' personal information and the security of corporate communication has become one of the Group's main focuses. The issue was especially pressing for the Starwood as it plans to expand operations to include four new hotels in Taiwan by 2013 and expects to hire 2,500 employees.

Acknowledging that its hardware-based email antivirus defence solution was not capable of scaling to meet a growing number of users and online threats, the organisation began looking for alternatives in mid-2010.

After in-depth analysis and planning, the Group decided to adopt Symantec.cloud's Email AntiSpam.cloud and Email AntiVirus.cloud solutions in October 2010 to ensure smooth operation of the network.

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Allen Cheung
IT Director
Starwood Hotels &
Resorts Taipei

ORGANISATION PROFILE

- Manages 1,025 hotels in 100 countries around the world, including the Sheraton and Le Meridien brands in Taipei.
- Employs 1,000 staff at the Sheraton and 400 staff at Le Meridien.
- More than 500 email users
- Small IT team numbering just seven provides technical support to 450 PCs throughout the group

INDUSTRY

Hospitality

Moving to Symantec.cloud has saved our IT department 70 per cent of time they previously had to devote to handling spam-related problems.

Ensure Smooth Network Operations

"As email becomes an important medium for external business communication, the IT department naturally paid a lot of attention to ensure smooth network operations," said Starwood Hotels & Resorts Taipei's IT Director, Allen Cheung.

"The spam and virus problems we faced increased the bandwidth and workload demands on our IT systems. Our original information security solution which was longer able to block spam effectively. We lost many important emails due to false positives. Therefore, it was clear that we had to strengthen our equipments to protect the company against future threats," he said.

In addition, the company is receiving more emails than ever, which seriously affects the smooth operation of the hotel's computer network and eats bandwidth.

"At the same time, it was often hard for people to retrieve emails mis-deleted by the hardware solution. As a result they had to ask their partner or client to resend the email again, which was time-consuming and annoying," said Cheung.

In its search for an effective and scalable solution, the Group evaluated the full spectrum of offerings on the market, including antivirus software, hardware solutions as well as cloud-based services.

However, comparing key criteria such as performance, total-cost-of ownership which includes long-term management, maintenance and upgrades, as well as deployment time, the decision soon became clear. It chose Symantec.cloud.

"Symantec.cloud email solutions have always had a good reputation and the services are easy to manage. System administrators can set their own email security level to adjust to specific user's requirements. They can also define the principles of incoming and outgoing traffic control to balance security and availability. Symantec.cloud can also provide high-quality SLA to satisfy our needs, thus ensuring all staff can continue working in a safe and secure environment," he said.

Significant Business Performance Improvement

After Symantec.cloud's email security cloud services were deployed, the hotel's network bandwidth was freed up significantly as spam was filtered and blocked before it had a chance to reach user's mailbox. While the volume of spam has been cut dramatically, the number of false positives has also been reduced to virtually zero which saves staff a large amount of time previously devoted to administration.

"Most important of all, moving to Symantec.cloud has saved our IT department 70 per cent of time they previously had to devote to handling spam-related problems. That means they can focus on improving systems and developing a better operating environment," he said.

In fact, according to Cheung, in the past the IT department had to organize black and white spam lists five or six times a week. Today, they do it once as week at most, which is a great help in improving manpower allocation.

He continued, "After adopting Symantec.cloud's cloud solution, we don't need to worry about email and virus problems any more."

With the improvement in network bandwidth, the organisation will be able to accommodate its growth plans with ease and confidence.

By adopting solutions from Symantec.cloud, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Taipei has laid the foundation for a more integrated approach to messaging security.

"We are now studying how to further strengthen the company's email management and may include Symantec.cloud's email archiving solution in our development plans in the near future," said Cheung.

"After adopting Symantec.cloud's email security solutions, we don't need to worry about email and virus problems any more."

Allen Cheung

IT Director

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Taipei

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

Business Drivers

- Maximize business efficiency
- Brand image protection
- Improve employee productivity
- Highly efficient internal and external communication

Technology Challenges

- Reduce the burden on limited IT staff resources and combat the increasing volume of email containing spam and malware.
- Support the organization's plans to expand from two to four hotels by 2013 and staff increasing to 2,500.
- Deal with false positives, which were a constant problem with the old security solution.

Solution

- Symantec Messagelabs Email AntiSpam.cloud
- Symantec Messagelabs Email AntiVirus.cloud

Business Value and Technical Benefit

- Symantec.cloud's online anti-spam and anti-virus technology has helped to reduce the workload of the organization's hard-pressed IT staff.
- By deploying cloud-based anti-virus and anti-spam solutions, manpower overhead has been reduced by 70 per cent, freeing up staff to focus on other mission-critical tasks.
- Substantial reduction in spam volumes has returned network bandwidth to normal levels.
- Significant improvement in overall working environment.