

HORWOOD**HORWOOD HOMEWARES LTD**

Horwood Homewares Ltd is a kitchenware manufacturer, based in Bristol. Its products – from the Judge, Stellar, Horwood and Harmony brands – are sold through department stores. The company was established in 1896 and it is now part of the leading European cookware manufacturer, Silampos SA. The company has been a MessageLabs customer since October 2007.

A thorn in the side

The company was seeing a rise in 'PDF spam'. This is when spammers embed their messages inside an Adobe Acrobat PDF file and send it as an email attachment. Conventional anti-spam software can't always block this kind of spam effectively. After trying different approaches to the problem, including hardware and a free anti-spam solution, Horwood Homewares decided to switch to MessageLabs hosted services.

It goes beyond spam. For a business like Horwood – that depends on the ability to send and receive PDF files – it is also a security threat. Attached PDFs could contain links to malware websites.

An additional problem was 'false positives'. No business can afford to miss business-critical emails and a spam filter that mislabels legitimate emails as spam can cause real difficulties. It's like having your post delivered to the wrong address.

Under pressure from senior management to tame the rising tide of spam, Neil Bolton, the company's IT Manager, chose the MessageLabs Email Anti-Virus and Anti-Spam services because they were so much more effective at differentiating between spam and genuine email.

Two sites, one IT manager

"There's only me on the IT side," says Bolton. With two separate sites and dozens of users to support, time is at a premium. Before the switch, he used software-based solutions that ran on company servers. This approach was very time-consuming. One program required constant maintenance and tweaking in order to keep up with spammers' ever-changing tactics. "I was spending all my time becoming a specialist in spam filtering."

Horwood works with manufacturers in the Far East which meant that it couldn't simply block all emails from known spam and virus hotspots overseas, compounding the problem.

Each of Horwood's two sites has their own email server. So supporting two sites with in-house solutions meant that everything had to be duplicated, including the purchase price of anti-spam software.

Measurable savings and benefits

Horwood pays for MessageLabs services on a per-user basis, not on a per-server or per-site basis. This means that the company doesn't pay any extra to protect two sites. Because it is an internet-based service, Neil Bolton can manage the MessageLabs services from a single website. This reduces operating and capital costs as well as unnecessary travel between the two sites.

Because the MessageLabs service doesn't require manual tuning or updates to stay ahead of the spammers, Bolton saves two to three hours a week. "It's fit and forget," he explains. Instead, he can spend his time supporting the business rather than tinkering with software settings. In addition, he estimates that company staff get at least 30,000 fewer spam emails each year – a big boost to productivity.

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IT Manager,
Horwood Homewares

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Perhaps the biggest accolade comes from his boss, the company’s managing director. He had been frustrated with increasing spam and frequent false positives. With the MessageLabs services, the issue “just went away,” says Bolton. “Sometimes we struggle to show the value of IT investments. Not in this case. My boss told me MessageLabs was a good buy.”

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

Solution:

- MessageLabs Email AntiSpam, Email AntiVirus

Technology Challenges:

- Increasing volumes of PDF spam

Business Requirements:

- Low-maintenance solution to serve multiple office sites

Business Value and Benefits:

- Quick and easy deployment as a service
- Predictable cost structure
- No capital expenditure for hardware or software
- Service complements existing infrastructure