

Tweed Shire Council



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With 500 email users and 90,000 incoming and outgoing emails every month, bandwidth was a costly investment for Tweed Shire Council – under pressure from a deluge of spam which amounted to almost half the total email volume. Council was grappling with delays in message transport from congested internet links and an overload on internal filtering software, which was not correctly identifying spam.

Serving businesses and a community spread across more than 1300 square kilometres, electronic communications are critical to every business unit within Council. As in any business, email is used to manage most inbound and outbound customer communications.

“Email is the primary communication medium with customers, Council constituents and vendors. Purchases are all done via email now, where once upon a time they all used to be by fax,” said Christopher Peate, systems supervisor in technology and corporate services for Tweed Shire Council.

Council’s website is a vital community directory and through it, residents access TweedLink, Council’s newsletter. Council is increasing the client services accessible through its website, such as submission of development applications, and email integrates with the website for the transfer of data.

The failure to correctly control the influx of spam and malware hidden in junk emails, on suspect websites (or coming from unprotected home computers via constituent emails) had direct cost implications for Council, including bandwidth wastage, administrative overheads and the impact on end-user productivity.

BUSINESS DRIVERS

- Vendors and constituents rely on email communications
- Many emails sent from unprotected home computers or via webmail
- Valuable bandwidth wasted on high spam volume
- False capture of legitimate emails interrupts business
- Complaints from staff and productivity impacts

INDUSTRY

Local Government

NUMBER OF USERS

500 email users

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Christopher Peate
Systems Supervisor
Tweed Shire Council

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

Technology Challenges

- Spam exacerbating local network traffic congestion
- Threat to network from viruses and malware hidden in spam
- Bandwidth wastage from non-essential multimedia streaming
- Senior IT managers burdened with handling all maintenance tasks
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Business value and technical benefits

- Predictable cost structure
- Email guaranteed virus-free
- Elimination of spam nuisance – and happier staff
- Email communications protected
- Conserving valuable bandwidth

- Administrative tasks easily delegated to IT support staff
- Easy to use with no maintenance costs
- Support at hand 24x7
- Seamless service invisible to the business

Solution

- MessageLabs Hosted Web Security Services and Email AntiSpam, AntiVirus & Image Control



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Chris Collins
Network Administrator
Tweed Shire Council



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Paying for trouble

Before being introduced to the MessageLabs suite from Symantec Hosted Services, Council relied on server-based in-house anti-spam software. “Although the software was quarantining some of the spam, it could only do this after all spam was downloaded onto our corporate network. We were wasting about three hours a week managing false positives, and our valuable bandwidth was being consumed by large amounts of spam, a waste which was very costly to Council,” said Chris Collins, Tweed’s Network Administrator.

“The previous in-house software also allowed end users some control over spam management, which meant that some spam was still being distributed internally, so there was a disruption to productivity.”

Before the Symantec Hosted Services solution was switched on, Tweed Shire Council had an outbreak of the Sasser Worm, with 13 machines affected. “It was a nightmare and took a week to clean up,” said Christopher Peate. “The worm affected computers running vulnerable versions of the Microsoft operating systems Windows XP and Windows 2000, and we had to make sure everything was patched correctly on each individual machine.”

Control in the cloud

As soon as Council moved to MessageLabs Hosted Email AntiSpam & AntiVirus and Web Filtering, all spam, malware-infected emails and suspect web pages were stopped in the cloud.

“Spam is no longer a problem we need to think about, and we’re also completely protected from online security threats,” said Chris Collins. “MessageLabs detects and blocks around 100 viruses a month for us, and does this before they even reach our network.”

With unrivalled accuracy in identifying spam and viruses, the hosted services have

given Council total control over the content reaching its infrastructure. Web filtering provides visibility into internet usage, and automatically enforces Council’s Acceptable Use Policy – further controlling bandwidth wastage by limiting multimedia streaming to a small group of users whose job requires it.

As well as slashing bandwidth costs and improving security and productivity, the MessageLabs services have relieved the administrative burden on Council’s IT team – and liberated end-users from a time-wasting nuisance. With a negligible false positive rate, the IT team no longer needs to manually filter or release incorrectly blocked mail, and there is no internal software or hardware requiring costly management and maintenance.

“The web filtering settings are organised just the way we want them,” said Christopher Peate. “We like how granular the service is. We have control at both the Active User Directory and Active Directory Group level. The solution provides the tools we need to update our Active User Directory and Active Directory Group on our external proxy.

“What this means is that internal IT support staff now have the ability to make changes as required, like allowing someone access to Facebook. We previously had no user-based authentication, so these maintenance tasks couldn’t be delegated to our IT support team. They had no rights to access the server which is where we had to make the configuration changes. Only managers had rights to do maintenance. It wasn’t a very good situation.”

“The MessageLabs system is very easy to use and has minimal impact on our IT resources,” said Chris Collins. “Our IT administrators no longer have to waste time trawling through spam, precious bandwidth and server space is released, and we don’t have the worry of false positives any more. The MessageLabs services are extremely easy to configure, obtain reports from and manage, and the predictable cost structure is a huge plus for the Council.”