

# Sherman Independent School District Taking Control of Spam and Viruses

“I’M SURE MIRAPOINT HAS PAID FOR ITSELF FOUR TIMES OVER IN INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY.”

*Mignon Plyler, Director of Technology, Sherman Independent School District*

CASE STUDY | EDUCATION



## BUSINESS NEED

Secure, reliable, easy-to-manage, in-house email solution

## SOLUTION

Installed one Mirapoint Message Server® providing highly effective virus and spam filtering

## BOTTOM LINE

Virtual elimination of spam and viruses  
Easy to manage  
Zero downtime

## Background

Sherman Independent School District (ISD) serves the city and surrounding area of Sherman, Texas, about 60 miles north of Dallas. The District’s six elementary schools, intermediate and middle school, and two high schools provide education to over 6,400 K-12 students. Sherman ISD’s 950 faculty and staff have embraced email, which has become mission-critical, facilitating communication among all aspects of the organization.

## The Business Need

For nine years, Sherman ISD’s faculty and staff had relied upon a local Internet Service Provider for hosted email service. While the service had been dependable, spam and viruses had continually escalated to the point where, by 2005, 90 percent of the 80,000 email messages received by Sherman ISD users each day was spam or contained viruses and had to be quarantined. “We did our virus updates on Monday nights and on Tuesday morning we would have 50 to a 100 inboxes quarantined with viruses that could have been there for as long as a week,” recalls Mignon Plyler, director of technology for Sherman ISD. “Our technical people were spending a lot of time cleaning up mailboxes and users were spending a lot of time dealing with spam.”

Although the ISP provided email service to the District free of charge, the service was not free. Contending with spam and viruses was costing a lot in lost productivity and support time. Because the service was hosted, the District couldn’t address the problem at the server. “We were using Norton anti-virus, but by the time the virus gets to the desktop, it’s too late,” says Plyler who added, “I would dread going to administrative council meetings after a big virus attack knowing I was going to get blasted.”

Sherman ISD realized the only way to control the problem was to bring the email system in house. But that could bring on other problems. Plyler wanted to make sure the chosen solution was easy to manage, extremely reliable, and provides a high level of security to combat spam and viruses. “Whatever solution we chose, security had to be a non-issue,” says Plyler. She also wanted a system that could easily grow, should the District decide at some point to issue email accounts to students. And, of course, the system would have to be cost effective.



# Sherman Independent School District

## The Mirapoint Solution

Sherman ISD looked at a number of solutions and narrowed its short list down to Microsoft Exchange and Mirapoint. As a 'Microsoft shop' Plyler strongly considered Exchange, but concerns over security and cost eliminated it from the running. "We were looking for a solution that wouldn't be a target," says Plyler. "With Exchange I would be wondering daily whether we were going to be attacked. Microsoft had a big red bull's eye on it. With Mirapoint that wasn't a concern." And from a total cost of ownership standpoint Plyler noted, "I could buy an Exchange server relatively inexpensively, and while Mirapoint might cost a little more upfront, on the backend, Exchange would kill me on tech support. I didn't want to have to hire an additional staff member just to maintain email."

Based on security, reliability, ease of management, and total cost of ownership, Mirapoint came out the clear winner. The solution could also scale to handle student accounts should the district choose to do that.

The District deployed a Message Server® M450 Appliance plus a second appliance as a hot-swappable spare for disaster backup. Implementation of the Mirapoint appliance took place over the Christmas break in 2005. Rather than migrate messages to the new system, the District decided to start fresh. "We had a file with all the account data that we loaded into the Mirapoint appliance," says Plyler. "We told our staff to download any messages they wanted to save."

On the first day of school after the holiday break, faculty and staff were shown how to access the system via webmail and set up their account. "The team we worked with from Mirapoint was outstanding," says Plyler.

During the summer, email users will be given the option to choose Microsoft Outlook for their email client. "In the past we had a real issue with viruses and we could trace it back to Outlook," says Plyler. "Now I don't have any reservations because I know Mirapoint is doing its job on the backend."

The District will also be looking at adding calendaring features to the Mirapoint appliance for faculty and staff.

## The Bottom Line

The Mirapoint appliance is getting high marks from the District's email users with the virtual elimination of spam and viruses. "Mirapoint has allowed our faculty and staff to use their time more efficiently," says Plyler. "Teachers have more time for teaching, and administrators have more time to perform their jobs. They're not wasting an hour a day purging spam from mailboxes. "I'm sure Mirapoint has paid for itself four times over in increased productivity."

Taking on the task of managing the email system has had no impact on the IT staff or the reliability of the service. Plyler estimates that one hour or less per week is required to manage the Mirapoint appliance and since deployment, there has been zero downtime. "We've been very, very pleased."

## About Mirapoint

Mirapoint® is the market leader in appliance-based solutions for secure message networks in enterprise, service provider, and education organizations, with more than 120 million mailboxes served and secured worldwide. Customers use Mirapoint appliances including the Message Server mail appliance and RazorGate mail security appliance to build the messaging infrastructure that intelligently serves, secures and manages email. Mirapoint is headquartered in Sunnyvale, California, with offices throughout North America, Europe and Asia. For more information on Mirapoint, visit its Website at [www.mirapoint.com](http://www.mirapoint.com).

## Configuration

- One Mirapoint Message Server M450 Appliance