

University of Massachusetts-Boston Meeting the Needs of Higher Education

“WE WENT FROM SEVEN EXCHANGE SERVERS TO ONE MIRAPOINT MESSAGE SERVER APPLIANCE. SIMPLIFIED MANAGEMENT ALLOWS ADMINISTRATORS TO SPEND MORE TIME ON OTHER ISSUES. AND WITH THE MIRAPOINT RAZORGATE APPLIANCES STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF NO LONGER NEED TO WORRY ABOUT OR DEAL WITH SPAM.”

Jamil Moosavifard, Senior System Administrator, University of Massachusetts-Boston

CASE STUDY | EDUCATION



BUSINESS NEED

Easy-to-manage and maintain messaging solution with effective anti-spam and anti-virus filtering capabilities

SOLUTION

Mirapoint Message Server and Mirapoint RazorGate®

BOTTOM LINE

Simplified messaging infrastructure and management, virtual elimination of spam and viruses, and a secure, hardened operating system providing piece of mind

Background

The University of Massachusetts-Boston was established in 1964 to provide opportunities for superior education at moderate cost to the people of greater Boston. It serves 15,000 active students with over 800 faculty and 2,200 staff and has been nationally recognized as a model of excellence for urban universities. Because it is a “commuter college,” email plays an even greater role in communications among students, and between students and faculty and staff.

The Business Need

Over a period of two years, UMass-Boston found itself facing two messaging-related challenges: a growing spam problem and an aging messaging infrastructure. In August 2003, the school’s two Microsoft Exchange 2000 messaging systems were straining under an onslaught of spam, which accounted for a third of all messages. One system supported students and alumni while the other supported faculty and staff. Neither system was equipped with anti-spam software. “Users complained they were spending up to an hour a day cleaning out unsolicited email,” says Jamil Moosavifard, senior systems administrator with UMass-Boston. “Sometimes they were deleting so many messages that they would inadvertently delete something important.”

The increased volume of messages was impacting system performance and rapidly eating up available storage. And, with the spam came viruses, which put a severe load on the beleaguered help desk staff who were responsible for disinfecting PCs. The school had installed McAfee GroupShield for Exchange to catch viruses as they entered or left the Exchange servers, but the software solution was struggling to keep up.

In the fall of 2005, the school faced its second messaging-related challenge. The Exchange 2000 system supporting the student body was rapidly reaching its end of life and would need to be upgraded—a costly and time-consuming task. Even when implemented, an upgrade would not ease the ongoing maintenance or simplify management. The never-ending operating system upgrades, or “Patch Tuesdays” as system administrators referred to them, would continue. And system security would also remain a concern with the vulnerable Windows OS.



University of Massachusetts-Boston

The Mirapoint Solution

UMass-Boston tackled its messaging issues in two stages beginning with spam. Just as the level of unsolicited email was becoming unbearable, a new CIO arrived at UMass-Boston in August 2003. She immediately appointed a committee to evaluate solutions. The committee identified three selection criteria that the chosen solution would have to meet. It had to be easy to manage, it had to include highly effective anti-spam functionality, and it had to work with their legacy GroupShield anti-virus software.

Based on prior experience, the CIO suggested that the committee evaluate Mirapoint RazorGate email security appliances. RazorGate offers multi-layered protection from spam, viruses, and hacker attacks. Equipped with Mirapoint's MailHurdle™ connection management technology, it provides an industry-leading approach that blocks up to 80 percent of threats at the network edge before network bandwidth, storage, processor, and administration resources are wasted. In combination with Mirapoint's multi-layered email security technologies such as RAPID Anti-Spam and zero-hour RAPID Anti-Virus, organizations can achieve overall catch-rates upwards of 98 percent with virtually zero false-positives. Mirapoint installed an evaluation unit on the Exchange system supporting faculty and staff. "Suddenly spam dropped to zero," says Moosavifard. "During the several-month evaluation period very few spam messages got through to users."

Although the school followed a formal Request For Proposal (RFP) process, the positive first-hand experience of both users and system administrators made Mirapoint the clear winner. In October 2004, UMass-Boston deployed two Mirapoint RazorGate security appliances in front of the Exchange servers. "The entire set-up and installation only took a couple of hours," says Moosavifard.

In the fall of 2005, UMass-Boston began to deal with the aging Exchange 2000 infrastructure. Another evaluation committee was formed, which narrowed the candidates to an upgraded Exchange system and the Mirapoint Message Server appliance. While the Exchange option was favored by a number of the committee members, the positive RazorGate experience, a greatly simplified infrastructure, and ease of management eventually led the school to select a Mirapoint Message Server appliance to serve its student population. Mirapoint Message Server offers a feature-rich web-based client, the industry's lowest total cost of ownership and server consolidation advantages, and a hardened operating system that has no known exploits.

Mirapoint Professional Services migrated all the data, including messages, calendars, and address books for 20,000 students, within approximately one month. The single Mirapoint Message Server M4500 appliance went into production in February 2006.

One of the unique capabilities that Mirapoint offered was password reset. With the old Exchange system, whenever a student forgot their password, they would have to contact Customer Service to reset it. The support group received as many as 700 calls per week. "You can't imagine the lines of students waiting for password resets," says Moosavifard. "Mirapoint Professional Services created scripts for our Active Directory that allowed students to reset their own passwords."

The Bottom Line

Mirapoint has simplified UMass-Boston's messaging infrastructure and management. "We went from seven Exchange servers supporting students to one Mirapoint Message Server appliance," says Moosavifard. "We no longer have to perform monthly updates, Patch Tuesdays, like we did with Exchange. Mirapoint does that automatically, behind the scenes. Simplified management allows administrators to spend more time on other issues." Marla Filoso, senior systems administrator with UMass-Boston, agrees. "The learning curve for Mirapoint was no where near as steep as it was with Exchange."

Not only is Mirapoint giving back precious time to system administrators—users too are benefiting. "With the RazorGate appliances students, faculty, and staff no longer need to worry about or deal with spam," says Moosavifard. "It also means that we aren't constantly facing the threat of being blacklisted." And, as Filoso notes, "We're no longer storing all that spam."

Concerns over vulnerabilities in the Exchange operating system are also gone. "The secure, hardened operating system gives us piece of mind we didn't have before," says Moosavifard.

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 115 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.

Configuration

- Two Mirapoint RazorGate Appliances
- One Mirapoint Message Server M4500 Appliance



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