



MPP Helps Central Utah Schools Stay Spam Free

Overview

In this case study we will look at the example of Central Utah Educational Services (CUES), who provides technology and support for 7 Utah school districts. First we will look at CUES' email platform needs, and what led it to choose Message Partner Platform (MPP) for its spam, virus, and content scanning capabilities, and finally, we'll review the results.

Central Utah Educational Services (CUES)

Overseeing the technology services for 7 remote Utah school districts with over 13,000 students, teachers, administrators, and support staff is no easy task. But because the rural school districts in Central Utah do not have the resources or the technical expertise of the larger school systems, they have to rely on CUES to afford their students a relevant digital education.

As you can imagine, providing email for so many different students from so many different schools is both extremely challenging and offers very little margin for error. One of the first things the Board of Superintendents insisted upon when first considering email accounts for its middle and high school students was the absolute certainty that they would be able to screen the student's incoming and outgoing email for inappropriate and objectionable language. This meant that whatever screening software CUES deployed had to handle messages sent and received using the school's internal email system as well as any email originating from the Internet.

Additionally, the email platform also had to be extra vigilant in protecting the kids against any unwanted and potentially offensive spam (these are impressionable teenagers, after all). Furthermore, as is the case with any secure email system, the platform also had to be on the constant lookout for any potentially devastating viruses.

What made this case particularly difficult, at least in terms of screening student-to-student email, was that any student email sent to any other student, either in the same or different domain (CUES has 45 different domains), meant that that email would have to be filtered directly on the mail server. Therefore the standard external SMTP gateways simply would not work.

Based on these requirements, CUES chose MPP for its email filtering needs. As Byron Peterson, the Internet Support Specialist for CUES, stated, "With such a large number of users and so many different districts, we needed a way to insure complete email scanning. MPP gave us that ability."



The MPP Solution

While some email filtering platforms might effectively interface with an ideal virus scanner but then force you to use a less-than-optimal spam filter, and other platforms might be strong in weeding out spam but weak with content filtering or virus protection, MPP allows you the freedom to literally pick and choose a variety of open source and commercial scanners for each task. With MPP you only need to set your service and provisioning environment once, then simply plug-in whatever commercial or open-source scanning technology the job requires.

MPP effectively ends the endless cycle of rip-outs and redeployments that have become commonplace as spam and viruses continuously evolve. At the heart of MPP's superior capacity is a high performance policy engine that enables it to interface with a wide variety of scanning software and which also allows for customization of control lists, engine serialization, archival formats, and much more.

As was the case with CUES, MPP enabled it to plug-in ClamAV to screen out viruses and SpamAssassin and MailShell to stamp out spam. Also, MPP's built-in content filtering capabilities allowed CUES to create custom filters to screen out abusive and profane language, any potential threats of violence, and all pornography. As Byron Peterson said, "The great thing about MPP is that it interfaces with lots of different scanners allowing for robust installations that suit the needs and licensing of its users."

The Results

With MPP as its email filtering platform, CUES was able to meet the stringent demands of the school superintendents as well as calm the fears of some very concerned parents. Byron Peterson concluded, "We have been fully satisfied with MPP. There has not been a feature request yet that has not been met by MPP's platform. I couldn't be happier."

Finally, CUES says in its Mission Statement that one of its goals is to give the students a better education through better communication and, at least in terms of email, MPP is doing its best to help them achieve that goal.

Technical Specs

CUES uses XServe G5 with 8GB of RAM and a hardware Raid Controller running RAID Level 5 on 3 500GB drives for its mail server and Stalker Software Communicate Pro (CGP) for email software.