

Comprehensive in-the-cloud email service replaces three point products

UT Medical Center faced a number of challenges; an increasing volume of spam, an incomplete system for archival and retrieval, and a lack of a coordinated disaster recovery strategy. They found that Mimecast could deliver not only anti-spam and anti-virus, but also email retention and retrieval, disaster recovery and policy management - all from one service.

University of Tennessee Medical Center is a major medical center providing superior treatment and healthcare support to residents of the East Tennessee region, as well as offering expert care as the area’s only Level I Trauma Center. The hospital offers general, specialty and sub-specialty care in a full range of medical fields, including specialties with heart, lung, vascular, brain, spine, childbirth and cancer as well as many other conditions. The only academic hospital in the Knoxville area, UT Medical Center is the leading resource for research, discovery and updated treatments in the community. The hospital maintains a serious environment with devotion to technological and treatment advances that provide better care for patients.

As might be expected, a significant amount of communication among doctors, patients and support staff takes place via email. In fact, there are more than 4,600 users on the UT Medical Center’s domain. Jerry Hook, Manager of Windows Systems, is responsible for upkeep and support of all email and related technologies such as anti-spam, anti-virus and encryption.

Challenge

For many years, Hook and his IT team at UT Medical Center used an appliance for spam prevention, and third-party software for virus prevention, archiving and retrieval, and encryption.

The latter makes for a particularly interesting infrastructure, explains Hook, due to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Privacy Rule. HIPAA requires all health-care providers to ensure the privacy of protected health information (PHI). With regard to email, this typically means encryption.

“You might think that virtually all email coming out of a medical center would contain PHI,” says Hook. “But in fact, it’s only about two percent. Therefore an all-encompassing encryption strategy doesn’t make sense for us. Instead we use specialized software that, based on content, can determine when an outgoing email contains PHI and then automatically encrypts it.”



AT A GLANCE:

Company

- University of Tennessee Medical Center (www.utmedicalcenter.org)
- Industry: Healthcare
- Number of Email Users: 4,600

Objectives

- Reduce spam volume and virus outbreaks
- Gain more comprehensive archival access and easier retrieval
- Implement disaster recovery solution
- Reduce cost and administrative burden of email management

Benefits

- Replaced three anti-spam appliances and two software solutions with one service
- Reduced costs by 60 percent while adding disaster recovery and policy management
- Reduced spam and virus outbreaks to virtually nothing
- Administrative time reduced from 40 hours to less than two hours per month

This encryption scheme worked well for UT Medical Center. But Hook and his team faced challenges in other areas; chiefly, an increasing volume of spam, an incomplete system for archival and retrieval, and a lack of a coordinated disaster-recovery strategy. Because of HIPAA, they also needed to ensure that data held in email is fully secure both in transit and in storage.

Solution

“We’d been using well-known anti-spam and anti-virus vendors,” recalls Hook. “Both required us to do the scans on our Exchange server, which really slowed everything down. Reliability was also an issue – we had to constantly ride the vendors to make sure we had updates. Typically, it would take a call from us about increasing spam levels or a virus problem before they would apply new policies. It was time-consuming for our staff, and the problems were becoming noticeable to users.”

With regard to email archiving and retrieval, due to space limitations on the Exchange server, the third-party software UT Medical Center used was only able to back up certain boxes. Other email was backed up only via PST files. In the event email had to be retrieved from backup (whether from a server or a PST file), it would have been a slow, manual process. And disaster recovery was virtually non-existent.

With the maintenance due to expire on its anti-spam and anti-virus products, Hook decided it was time to investigate a change. He began researching appliance-based approaches, but was put off by the cost, complexity and potential difficulty of integrating a new system in with UT Medical Center’s encryption processes. Then a colleague suggested Mimecast.

Benefits

“At the very beginning, there was uncertainty about putting all of our email management off-site,” says Hook. “But the feature set won us over. The initial demonstration we got from Mimecast was great – with one service, we could get a holistic and comprehensive solution for our entire email environment. We were amazed at how easy it was to administer, and because Mimecast operated in the cloud, it would be relatively easy to integrate it with our encryption solution. None of the other vendors we evaluated even came close to providing the wide feature set we got from Mimecast.” The implementation was far simpler than we’d anticipated, says Hook.

“This was a fairly big deal for our IT group, but I’d have to describe the implementation as ‘painless.’ The Mimecast team was just incredible. They were logging in on weekends and in the middle of the night to make sure everything went smoothly. I’ve never seen that kind of a support from a vendor.”

Mimecast enabled UT Medical Center to retire three anti-spam appliances, plus its anti-virus and archiving/retrieval software (with associated servers). “Overall, we estimate that UT Medical Center saved 60 percent on IT costs with unified email management from Mimecast,” says Hook.

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- Jerry Hook,
Manager of Windows Systems



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