



Profile

The City of South San Francisco government offices serve a community of more than 60,552

All 450 employees have access to a world of digital content

Industry

Government

Websense Integration

Websense Email Security

“It’s important for every company, and for every government office, to demonstrate that they are trying to keep their work environment safe. Websense helps us do this.”

Doug Hollis

City of South San Francisco
IT Director

case study: City of South San Francisco

Balancing Public Service with the Need to Protect Employees

Overview

The City of South San Francisco serves a population of more than 60,552 people in just under a 10-mile stretch. The site was settled in 1890 for the establishment of stockyards and a market place for cattle. Over the last half-century, the population of South San Francisco has tripled. The City of South San Francisco provides an assortment of public services—from police and fire protection to school and transportation systems.

City employees use the Internet and email as standard business tools. However, management at the government offices of this industrial and residential enclave just south of the famous City by the Bay were receiving complaints about the growing volume of unsolicited emails.

The Problem

City workers helping citizens via email or communicating electronically with other government agencies sometimes find their email addresses posted online, leading to a flood of unsolicited email. Employees began receiving email solicitations for pharmaceutical drugs or sexual come-ons, complete with embedded pornographic pictures that an employee might accidentally call up in the middle of crowded, public offices.

“The spammers are getting more sophisticated in their techniques to avoid filters,” said Director of South San Francisco’s information technology department, Doug Hollis.

The city’s management team quickly decided to attack the spam problem and protect employees from unwanted and unseemly content. However, the city needed a way to eliminate the unwanted spam without hindering other important email communications. Police often email crime photos to other departments for help in tracking down perpetrators, citizens access information and city services online, businesses find city contracts and places bids electronically. These important communications needed to continue to take place unencumbered.

Alarmed by the dramatic rise in spam complaints, Hollis and his colleagues were well aware that the City of South San Francisco could potentially be liable if they didn’t take steps to protect employees from offensive material.

Challenge

Employees complaining of receiving too much spam.

Solution

Websense Email Security

Benefits

Websense blocks the spam that comprised 30 percent of all email messages daily.

About Websense

Websense, Inc. (NASDAQ: WBSN) Websense, the global leader in integrated Web, messaging, and data security, enables its customers' success by protecting essential information in the Web 2.0 world. Only Websense solutions provide complete visibility and control over who may use Web, email, or information resources; what information must be protected; how information can be exchanged; and where users and information can go on the Internet. Websense keeps employees productive on any network, anytime and anywhere, to help businesses realize the full potential of constant connectivity while minimizing the risks of data leaks due to human error and malicious attacks. Websense is Essential Information Protection™.

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The Solution

Hollis and his colleagues decided to test and purchase a sophisticated software content filtering program similar to the filtering technology the city used to manage employee Internet access. Hollis tested a variety of email security programs, searching for a solution that would filter email and identify and block embedded pictures in attachments. Hollis wanted a product that would automate the process and require minimal staff time and work. He also needed a solution that could be continually updated to fight the new techniques spammers devise every day.

South San Francisco tested Websense® Email Security for 30 days and quickly decided that the product fit the bill. Websense Email Security software provides comprehensive content filtering for continuous protection against inbound and outbound email threats including spam, viruses, blended threats, data loss, and regulatory violations. Its threat detection technology is complemented by simple-to-use monitoring and reporting to provide a high level of control and visibility.

Hollis and his staff were impressed by the solution's ability to "digitally fingerprint" known spam, as well as the frequency with which the spam dictionary content was updated to block new spam. Websense Email Security's image recognition module filters explicit images in the body or in attachments to email and can tell the difference between the tan image of a person or sand on a beach. Using Websense Email Security, South San Francisco has stopped the pornographic photo emails that were a particular nuisance.

The Results

In a setting like the City of South San Francisco, information technology (IT) managers tread a fine line between protecting employees from offensive material and respecting their privacy. "We felt Websense Email Security delivered the best of both worlds. We've succeeded in stopping the spam problem and avoided the label of Big Brother," Hollis said.

Websense Email Security blocks an average of 3,000 unwanted emails every day at City of South San Francisco, and more than 90 percent of those are spam—including porn. Of this number, Hollis estimates 300 emails are held for human review and then released or deleted – a process Hollis said takes about an hour of IT staff time per day. Meanwhile, other city employees spend far less time checking and deleting spam and more time serving citizens. With Websense Email Security, employee complaints about spam have plummeted and productivity is on the rise.