

Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker Frees Up Hours and Inboxes for Small Businesses

Confronting a Growing Mountain of Spam

Spam email continues to be a big problem, especially for small businesses. Small companies rely on email just as much as large enterprises, and their mail servers get clogged with unsolicited mail just as often. But, with fewer resources to spare to address the spam problem, small businesses need smarter solutions.

Unfortunately, the options that traditionally have been available to small businesses, such as anti-spam appliances and services, have been less than perfect solutions. Miocon Networks, for example, a small technology integrator in Louisville, Kentucky, relied on a third-party email filtering service to reduce spam, but the service carried a high recurring cost. Miocon's leaders were also uncomfortable with the lack of visibility and control over their email.

"We're getting involved with a lot of security-based projects, and we didn't like having our non-encrypted mail traffic going out to a hosted provider," says Michael O'Coners, owner of Miocon. "Having our email passing through a third party was never satisfactory for us."

LUNAR, a product development consulting firm with offices in California, Europe, and Hong Kong had a major spam problem despite having just 50 employees.

"In the past, we have received as many as 160,000 spam messages in a day," says Dick Taylor, the company's systems administrator. "As much as 98 percent of the mail coming into our business is spam."

LUNAR had purchased a small-business anti-spam appliance, but the solution required a significant amount of ongoing time and attention. "I had to work very hard to keep that appliance working right," says Taylor. "Training the system to understand what was legitimate mail and what was spam was an ongoing effort. I used to spend anywhere from three to five hours a week working with it."

Even then, some spam continued to get through. Worse yet, the appliance occasionally misidentified valid email and blocked it. Some employees even demanded that Taylor remove filtering from their mailboxes to make sure that they didn't miss any messages from customers. The anti-spam solution also affected the performance of LUNAR's network and email services.

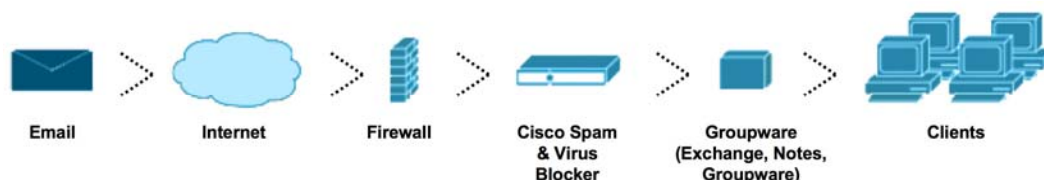
"By continually creating email filters, over time the performance of the spam appliance slowed down," says Taylor. "Eventually, we had latency with our email of a minute to a minute and a half. A lot of email ended up getting spooled off to a secondary server, just because the appliance couldn't handle the volume."

A Smarter Solution: Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker

Today, small businesses like Miocon and LUNAR have a better option for dealing with spam and email threats: the Cisco® Spam & Virus Blocker. The Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker is a dedicated anti-spam, anti-virus, and anti-phishing security appliance that delivers extraordinary accuracy and ease of use, in a solution designed specifically for small businesses.

The Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker deploys in minutes, just behind the network firewall. (Figure 1.) Once installed, the solution uses award-winning filtering technology to process all email traffic coming into the business and identify even the latest spam and malware attacks. Only clean, valid email messages are passed onto employees.

Figure 1.



An Easy-to-Use Solution

Where other spam solutions require extensive training and time-consuming manual administration, the Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker installs in just minutes and requires no configuration of “white list” or “black list” filters.

“Installation was very easy,” says O’Coners. “We had it up and running in 10 minutes. It doesn’t require any administrative time, and it’s a low-overhead solution. You just plug it in and let it run.”

“The installation of our previous spam appliance was a fairly lengthy process, so the Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker really took me by surprise,” says Taylor. “Once we got it set up, I didn’t have to create filters or train a database. It just worked.”

Boosting Productivity

Once installed, the Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker requires practically no ongoing administration, which is a huge benefit for companies like Miocon and LUNAR that don’t have IT resources to spare to constantly tune a spam solution.

“Everything we do is based on time,” says O’Coners. “If we spend an hour working on a spam appliance, we lose an hour of billing. With the Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker, we just log in occasionally to verify the updates and perform security checks. That’s it. We may spend 15 minutes a month.”

“I used to devote a lot more time to handling email problems than I do now,” says Taylor. “With the Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker, I just check in on it once a week, out of curiosity more than anything else. It’s freed up three to five hours a week that I can use to do other things. I’m pretty amazed with it.”

Exceptional Accuracy

Small business IT administrators also appreciate the accuracy of the Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker. Taylor and O'Coners have found the results to be impressive in their own business.

"The accuracy of the Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker is much better than what I've experienced with other products," says Taylor. "Since we deployed it, I haven't received a single complaint from any employee about spam or about email that didn't get through."

"Up until we deployed the Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker, I was skeptical about how accurate an appliance could be," says O'Coners. "None of us has seen a false positive. We don't get any junk email in our inboxes. I've never seen an appliance work this well."

A Secure, High-Performance Solution

In addition to cutting out unsolicited mail, the Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker provides robust protection against viruses, malware, phishing attacks, and other email-based threats. For Miocon, the appliance also offers much more visibility and control than the company could achieve with a third-party service.

"Being in the security business, it's nice to know what is going in and out of the company," says O'Coners. "We were also amazed at the reporting capabilities."

The Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker has also had an impact on the performance of the companies' networks and vital email services.

"We haven't noticed any performance issues since switching from an anti-spam service to the Cisco solution," says O'Coners. "Email goes in and out of the company very fast, with no delays or issues."

"The throughput is quite a bit better, probably a 30 percent improvement over the previous solution," says Taylor. "I have also noticed a substantial decrease in mail that has to go through our secondary mail server."

A Complete Spam Solution for Small Businesses

Miocon's and LUNAR's stories are not unique. Small companies around the world are replacing expensive anti-spam services and inaccurate, productivity-draining appliances with the Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker, and realizing the same impressive results.

To find out how you can use the Cisco Spam & Virus Blocker to eliminate spam, improve productivity, and boost security and network performance in your business, visit: <http://www.cisco.com/go/blocker>.



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