

Mansfield Independent School District

K-12 EDUCATION

Mansfield Independent School District (ISD) has more than 8,000 desktops running primarily on Novell® and Windows® platforms. In order to protect the District's network and improve the reliability of IT services, Mansfield ISD switched from McAfee to Sophos Anti-Virus™ to combat viruses and other malware. Subsequently, the District implemented Sophos PureMessage® to help eliminate spam and set policy controls.



Business challenge

Located in northern Texas, Mansfield Independent School District (ISD) is the second-fastest growing school district in the state, with a student population of 25,000 along with 3,600 staff and faculty. Serving 44 facilities – including 31 schools – Mansfield ISD processes up to 90,000 emails per day.

"Technology is a crucial part of our organization and, as such, every teacher in the District is required to attend workshops to help them understand technology issues and policies," says Raymond Jaksa, Chief Technology Officer, who is responsible for IT design, purchasing, training, and technology implementation at Mansfield ISD. "With these expectations set, having a network

security strategy in place that ensures the safety and privacy of our students and faculty is obviously a top priority for the District."

Nevertheless, Mansfield ISD suffered a major virus outbreak in the summer of 2003. Following the attack, Jaksa and his team began to question the reliability of their anti-virus product.

"We started researching different tools to replace our former solution after a rampant worm hit our Novell network and hundreds of individual workstations, leading to seven days of downtime and blacklisting our service center during that period," Jaksa remarks. "It was a complete nightmare."

Key facts

Organization

Mansfield Independent School District

Location

Mansfield, Texas

Number of users

6,500 (Sophos Anti-Virus)
2,500 (PureMessage)

Email traffic

80-90,000 per day

Number of desktop servers

100

Operating Systems

Novell, UNIX, Windows 98,
Windows 2000, Windows XP

Solutions

Sophos Anti-Virus
PureMessage for UNIX™

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*Raymond Jaksa,
Chief Technology Officer,
Mansfield ISD*

He continues: "It was difficult to get a quick fix because of the District's consistent growth and, obviously after our previous experience, we needed to put a quality product in place. In a nutshell, our team wanted one solution that was fast, flexible, simple to use, and integrated easily with our existing Novell infrastructure."

Technology solution

In addition to Sophos, Mansfield's IT team evaluated Symantec, Trend Micro and AVG Anti-Virus. After thirty days of running Sophos Anti-Virus, Mansfield purchased the product to replace McAfee at the desktop and server levels.

"I first read about Sophos when I was looking for third-party information on the top anti-virus products. Every article spoke of Sophos's outstanding quality. My staff immediately rebelled because they never heard of the company before. But two weeks later, after the product was installed and tested, they understood why Sophos was selected," Jaksa comments. "Furthermore, as I compared prices, Sophos beat out every other vendor."

In addition to product and price evaluation, Jaksa's team conducted a thorough reference check from K-12 schools in Ohio and two major universities in Texas. Jaksa was very impressed with what he heard from other IT professionals using Sophos.

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One year later, Mansfield ISD selected Sophos PureMessage to decrease the amount of spam entering the District's email system and to utilize the policy component of the product for specifying rules and actions applied to email messages.

"After numerous complaints about the amount of spam our staff were encountering, we realized we had to address this issue immediately," says Jaksa. "Because of its seamless integration with Sophos Anti-Virus, our Novell 6.5 platform, and GroupWise – our mail transfer agent – PureMessage was a natural fit."

"PureMessage is not only easy to use but it provides multiple methods for ferreting out offensive and dangerous spam, which we obviously don't want in a K-12 environment," said Jaksa. "With PureMessage we get a cost-effective solution with a flexible web-based interface for managing policy, which runs alongside the best anti-virus solution – Sophos Anti-Virus."

Business results

Mansfield ISD purchased Sophos Anti-Virus to protect its desktops and servers and Sophos PureMessage for UNIX anti-spam and policy management for the gateway. Jaksa and his team plan to add additional licenses next year.

Jaksa comments: "Prior to implementing Sophos, approximately 20% of our email was spam, while more than 23% contained viruses, often up to 50% during key attack times. With PureMessage in place, our team can easily filter spam messages and we haven't had a single virus since deploying Sophos Anti-Virus almost two years ago."

Jaksa also states that Sophos solutions have helped the District to increase worker productivity because Mansfield employees no longer have to waste time determining if their computer has a virus or whether their email is valid or invalid.

"Sophos's products are outstanding and their dedicated pre- and post-sales support are the best we have ever experienced. As our District continues to grow as it has year over year, we expect to add at least 2,500 licenses on an annual basis," Jaksa concludes.

To find out how Sophos products can help protect your organization, visit www.sophos.com/products, call toll-free 1-866-866-2802, or email us at nasales@sophos.com.