

Grant Thornton LLP

Security, effectiveness convince fast-growing accounting firm—Service eliminates need for more IT staff

“Technologies such as email combined with an effective anti-spam system enable our professional services staff to conveniently stay connected to clients.”

Mike Ruman, Messaging Manager, Grant Thornton LLP

The Problem

Inhouse Anti-Spam System "Untrustworthy", Labor-Intensive

Grant Thornton LLP, the U.S. member firm of Global 6 accounting giant Grant Thornton International, has 4,200 employees working in 49 offices throughout the United States. By successfully providing clients with personalized attention and resources, the U.S. firm has led its larger national competitors in growth for three consecutive years, acquiring more than 1,000 new client engagements from the Big 4 accounting firms.

In a recent survey, Grant Thornton LLP ranked number one among auditing firms managing clients with less than \$1 billion in revenue, and placed second overall in a separate survey of major tax firms. According to the study, Grant Thornton LLP clients believe the company "performs particularly well in understanding their operations and industry, in responding to requests and questions, and in trustworthiness."

To provide this high level of support and responsiveness, the firm has invested heavily in high technology as a competitive advantage. "We're known as one of the most technologically advanced firms in our industry," states Mike Ruman, Messaging Manager for Grant Thornton LLP. For example, the firm has merged data, video, and voice

communications over a single IP network. The Grant Thornton IT staff have also implemented a unified messaging system; employees can use a single inbox for their voice, fax, and email messages, accessed through email or mobile devices.

The Grant Thornton LLP headquarters and enterprise data center are located in Oak Brook, Illinois near Chicago. Four regional hubs—in Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, and New York City—anchor the firm's email infrastructure. Each hub provides IT support for up to 10-15 offices. The distributed system design adds scalability and faster service deployment to the firm's offices as well as a layer of system redundancy.

Unfortunately, Grant Thornton LLP's in-house anti-spam system just wasn't keeping pace with either their expanded email capabilities or their explosive company growth (700 new employees in the last 6 months). Ruman and his staff spent up to eight hours a day fielding phone calls, tracking down legitimate emails for frustrated users, and updating spam filters.

Ruman began to look for a new cost-effective anti-spam solution that would reduce the percentage of false positives, give users some control over blocked messages, supply some additional security, and decrease IT support time.

The Solution

Postini Demo Overcomes Initial Doubts, Free Trial Results Delight Users, Support Staff

Armed with industry publication product reviews and analysts reports, Ruman and his staff evaluated a host of anti-spam appliances, software packages, and managed service solutions, including FrontBridge, BrightMail, Proofpoint, MessagaGate, Sybari, MX Logic, Barracuda, SurfControl, and Postini. Some solutions required the purchase of additional servers, while others didn't offer user control, or required significant user training or IT support.

"To be honest, I was not big on the idea of managed services in the beginning," Ruman admits. "I thought that locating and solving email problems between us and our email senders would be a real issue and involve lots of finger-pointing. I also thought that setup time would be a hassle and cause us some significant downtime."

Postini's preemptive managed email security service sits between the Internet and company email gateways. It blocks unwanted mail before it hits corporate mail servers, lightening the spam load on servers, IT staff, and end users without introducing delay or impacting or affecting existing IT infrastructures.

Multiple conversations with Postini's sales representative and systems engineer persuaded Ruman that the company was very knowledgeable in email technology, understood the issues and needs surrounding his firm's communication requirements, and answered his deployment and management concerns. Ruman also interviewed several Postini customers who, like Grant Thornton LLP, provide professional services to clients nationwide.

Next, Ruman invited two desktop support persons from each of the firm's regional support hubs to participate in Postini "Webinars," interactive online product demonstrations conducted by Postini sales engineers. "Staff members could ask questions, listen to others air their concerns, and get a real feel for the Postini system, so we ended up with a high level of buy-in before going into the trial," notes Ruman. "And because each regional desktop support staff works so closely with their users, they know their technology comfort level and could tell us what was important."

The free 30-day Postini service trial involved Grant Thornton LLP's 115-person IT staff and 50 selected service professionals who had suffered the most under the old anti-spam regime because of inflexible filters or who were heavily spammed. The trial ran concurrently with the old system in place; the service was up and running in a few hours, requiring only a domain name system mail exchange (DNS MX) record redirect to send selected email address message streams through Postini's anti-spam filtering engines.

The IT support staff were delighted with their newfound flexibility to change passwords and release quarantined messages for their users without having

to contact the central office. End users were equally thrilled with their ability to examine and recover quarantined messages as well as customize anti-spam filter settings.

"The trial feedback was tremendous," Ruman recalls. "Everyone told me the Postini service worked great, and that they really appreciated the Message Center (spam quarantine) review feature and daily email reports."

The Results

Postini Investment Reaps Big Rewards Through Increased Productivity, Reliability, and Security

After the successful trial, the firm extended the Postini Standard Edition service to the entire company with immediate positive results. Ruman had been considering hiring another corporate IT person to help chase down email problems, but with the Postini service in place, support time dropped from eight hours to five minutes a day. Ruman also saw a ten percent decrease in email server storage.

Through its patented, multi-layer technology, Postini is one of the most effective solutions for eliminating email-borne attacks. In a recent comparison test of leading anti-spam products, Postini rated very high in anti-spam effectiveness, with the best overall balance of accuracy (97%) and false positives (.08%). Postini also effectively prevents malicious "mail bombs" and directory harvest attacks (DHAs) that can fuel spam attacks by inspecting in real time every IP address that connects to its service.

In addition, Postini offers strong anti-virus defense in its basic package. Its engines blocked more than 1 billion

viruses total for all customers in 2004. Postini also targets phishing techniques, routinely blocking more than 400,000 total attempts a day.

Ruman is very confident that Postini quickly paid for itself by eliminating the need for additional IT headcount, and through reduced mail server needs. In addition, Postini's flexible, scalable service cost-effectively accommodates new users as the company grows.

Ruman has continued to be impressed with the professionalism, technical knowledge, and integrity of Postini's technical support staff. "The Postini support people are great," he states. "Sometimes we'll hear from clients that they can't send us email. By now, we know it will be the sender's problem, but Postini is always willing to investigate the issue and supply us with a report."

A few months ago, Grant Thornton LLP upgraded to Postini Enterprise Edition, which adds internal policy-based email controls for outbound email. The firm uses the features to block the forwarding of outbound voice mail to non-company inboxes. Outbound email virus filtering also adds another level of "feel good" confidence for clients and keeps the firm off blacklists.

Last December, Postini added Transport Layer Security (TLS) support to its Perimeter Manager Enterprise Edition. TLS automatically encrypts email between two servers, with no user intervention required. As Ruman explains, "With TLS, we will be able to securely send and receive confidential documents with our clients who support TLS. This is just one more piece adding to our competitive advantage over other accounting firms that Postini helps us deliver."

About Postini

Postini, the global leader in secure email boundary services, prevents email threats, enforces policy compliance and improves email manageability. Our patented preEMPT™ technology eliminates spam, viruses, phishing and other threats before they can ever reach your network. As a result, Postini reduces the complexity of your email operations, lowers costs, saves time, and minimizes risk. Processing more than 3 billion messages each week for 6.6 million users, Postini provides the most comprehensive, flexible and trusted email protection for enterprises and small businesses.

For more information, contact Postini at its Redwood City, California headquarters toll-free at 866.767.8461, or visit www.postini.com.



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