

Located in the heart of Glasgow city centre, Glasgow Caledonian University is one of the largest universities in Scotland, offering a wide range of learning, research and knowledge transfer opportunities on a national and international basis.

Though its history dates back to 1875, Glasgow Caledonian was officially formed in 1993 with the merger of Glasgow Polytechnic and The Queen's College, Glasgow. Glasgow Caledonian is a dynamic university with a student population of over 14,000 and approximately 90 undergraduate programmes, 40 postgraduate programmes and a large number of students engaged in research for PhDs in topics that put them at the forefront of their disciplines.

The problem

With spam and viruses becoming a large and ever increasing problem, the University's IT Services Group began to evaluate how best to remove inbound spam and viruses from staff e-mail.

The solution

The University's Learning Resources, IT Services team had evaluated options for the effective removal of spam and viruses from inbound staff e-mail. A trial was carried out to ascertain if a managed service was a feasible model for provision of such a service. The trial proved successful and staff were very happy with the new service. An extensive list of vendors were invited to tender both for a managed service and for hardware which could provide the spam removal services required. The process, which was led by Learning Resources and managed by the Procurement Department, resulted in the selection of Webroot E-Mail Security SaaS (Software as a Service) as the provider of a managed service.

Webroot (formerly Email Systems) provides a filtering service, removing messages which are classified as spam and messages which contain viruses. It prevents these from entering the University network. The information supplied below will demonstrate why the filter has been required and what the benefit has been to the business.

The results

A three week trial yielded the following results:

Spam Received: 297,391
Quarantine: 0
Virus: 31,303
Fail: 39,814
Legitimate: 216,976
Total: 585,484

37% of mail during this period was legitimate.

51% of mail during the trial was spam.

Since the service was acquired, it has yielded the following results in the period from 9 November 2005 to 20 May 2006 :

Spam Received: 6,707,938 (54,755)
Quarantine: 3,524 (1,933)
Virus: 1,924,035 (52,934)
Fail: 15,923 (2,564)
Legitimate: 2,274,089 (28,429)
Total: 10,925,509 (93,181)

21% of mail during this period was legitimate.

61% of mail was spam.

(NB – Please note that the figures in brackets represent the maximum numbers of the specific type of messages)

Between 9th November 2005 and 20th May 2006, a total of 10.8m incoming mails were received by the University, 2.25m of which were legitimate. If the figures were extended on a prorata basis for the year, this would equate to approximately 22m incoming mails, 17.5m of which were spam and viruses.

Based on the industry standard figure that it requires approximately three seconds for a recipient to deal with each spam mail, it would have taken the University a total of over 14,583 hours – an equivalent of eight full time members of staff each year equating to more than £178,000 - had it not put the appropriate steps in place. These figures are believed to be representative of how this issue is affecting higher education organisations across the UK.

Comments

“Prior to setting up this solution, spam and viruses were becoming a major issue for the University. We have removed the problem of users having to read messages then discovering they were of no relevance because they were spam.”

Dr Louise Garden, Director of Learning Resources, Glasgow Caledonian University

“One of the benefits of the Webroot E-Mail Security SaaS service is that there is no software or hardware to install, configure, update or maintain. Consequently the system has delivered a significant reduction in the amount of internal IT resource needed to be allocated to the problem when compared to either software or hardware solutions.”

Greg Miller, UK Country Manager, Webroot

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