



Case Study: Sunflower Broadband

Traffic Control as part of a layered approach to Email Protection

Case Study / May 2006

Proactive Email Protection

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THE ORGANIZATION

Sunflower Broadband serves nearly 80% of all homes in the Lawrence, Eudora, and Douglas County areas of Kansas. A triple-play broadband communications company, Sunflower delivers over 200 television channels, high-speed cable modem Internet access, and local and long distance telephone services to their customers.

THE CHALLENGE

As an internet service provider, ensuring email services are reliable and safe for end-user customers was a mission critical task for Frank Wiles, Sunflower's IT Manager. With 20,000 email accounts to manage and protect, and volumes of spam ever on the increase, Sunflower servers process 1.5 million emails a day, less than a third of which were legitimate.

Wiles was having trouble keeping his content filters running continuously. "PureMessage does a great job for our customers of getting rid of nuisance emails with very few false positives," said Wiles. "But, we were having problems keeping PureMessage up and running because, although it is of great value to our customers, it is CPU resource intensive and has to look at every message that comes through individually."

Sunflower servers could handle 70 concurrent sessions and traffic spikes caused by denial of service attacks—which would invariably occur after midnight—were setting off system administrator pagers. "Our automatic monitors were dutifully letting us know that the system was under pressure from attack, but getting up at 3:00 a.m. to look into the problem was causing staff members some grief," said Wiles.

THE SOLUTION

"I heard through my network about Traffic Control and thought that because it was such a new way to look at the spam problem, that it was worth a try," said Wiles. Sunflower runs two dual Pentium III servers with the Sendmail Mail Transfer Agent (MTA) and a separate Xeon server for PureMessage processing.

Sunflower installed Traffic Control on their MTA servers and since then, Wiles has observed instances when they have handled over 500 concurrent sessions. "Traffic Control reduced the flow of email to the PureMessage server, so much so that I could redeploy the Xeon for other tasks," said Wiles.

SIGNIFICANT REWARDS

Infrastructure Lifecycle Extension

Prior to installing Traffic Control, Wiles was planning to purchase two or three new servers, which saved the company between \$5,000 and \$10,000. Wiles believes he will be able to run his current configuration longer than before without hardware upgrades.

Discouraging Spam

Today, Sunflower can be more aggressive fighting spam with filters. Wiles has added more black lists, which he could not do in the past since large ISPs (AOL for example) are often in these lists. Because Traffic Control only slows email and does not reject it outright from domains on RBLs, legitimate mail gets through and the bad emails don't.

Reduction in False Positives

“While PureMessage was doing a great job, since installing Traffic Control, we’ve seen a further reduction in false positives for customers, which is always a good thing”, said Wiles. “This business is all about quality of service and Traffic Control improves service to our customers.”

The Future

“Email isn’t going away anytime soon and sadly, neither will spam.” said Wiles. “No single solution will solve the problem. Taking a layered software approach to email protection will go a long way to improving service for customers and reducing the need for more CPU horses. Traffic Control is an essential part of our strategy moving forward.”



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MailChannels develops and markets next generation technology solutions that ensure the reliable delivery of legitimate email while neutralizing unwanted email threats. MailChannels’ solutions allow information technology professionals to more effectively utilize scarce resources and improve end-user productivity by dramatically improving email service availability, reliability and security.

Located in Vancouver, a major North American high-tech center with a history of creating industry leading, mission critical email technologies, MailChannels customers include Internet Service Providers, educational institutions, government organizations and large corporations.

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