

Mission critical success: Netbox Blue's built on IBM System x solution enhances security at The Hamilton and Alexandra College.

Overview

Challenge

- The Hamilton and Alexandra College was having trouble addressing its internet security needs – spam was an issue, the system could not be accessed externally, and there was no way of monitoring all their network traffic.

Solution

- IBM business partner, Netbox Blue, implemented the College's Built on Express Advantage internet security and management solution, using IBM System x and BladeCenter servers.

Key Benefits

- There has been a dramatic drop in the amount of spam getting through to the College's end users, staff can now securely access the network from outside the College, and administration staff no longer need to log and bill students for internet access.



About The Hamilton and Alexandra College

The Hamilton and Alexandra College is a co-educational day and boarding School located in Hamilton, in the south west of Victoria. The College has two campuses – a senior school for students from Year 7 through to Year 12 and a separate property for the boarding houses, and the junior school. The College was established in 1871 and has a long history of academic excellence and a tradition of high achievement.

Security a top concern

The College has a total of 450 PC users including 50 staff members and 50 boarders, who are dependent on a reliable IT network. Virtually every aspect of education is affected by access to the network, making security and productivity a top concern for both staff and students.

All mission critical correspondence with education authorities, including examination information, is conducted via email. The College intranet is used for students' and staff timetables, homework, policy documents, curriculum sheets, reporting and library services.

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All up there are 300 computer systems and 10 servers that are a critical part of ensuring the College maintains its academic excellence.

On one occasion, prior to implementing the solution, the whole network was down for three days when the College attempted a system upgrade. A bug in the upgrade process brought the servers down, causing widespread disruption to every part of the school.

“Basically we lived in fear of a crash. It was a time bomb waiting to happen as far as we were concerned,” says Peter Steer, Head of ICT.

Finding the right solution

The college was looking for an integrated solution that could combine spam filtering, port forwarding and a reliable reporting system. Staff members needed a secure way to access the system from outside the school but didn't feel confident in the system that was in place. The College spent several months investigating options.

“Either they were too expensive, only a part solution, or possibly the organisation marketing the system was overseas and lacked the supporting personnel with the knowledge or the desire to go out of their way to backup their solution,” says Peter Steer.

The College was looking for an affordable, fully integrated solution that would be easy to manage, as well as IT partner that could be entrusted with its mission critical IT components.

The College decided to trial the Blue on Blue Internet Security and Management solution through NetBox Blue for five weeks to assess its suite of features. After a successful trial, the College went ahead with full installation.

Less downtime, greater peace of mind

“The benefits of the Netbox Blue on Blue solution were felt immediately. The Principal and Business Manager, as well as other members of staff, instantly saw a dramatic drop in the amount of spam,” said Peter Steer.

The College has found the reporting features of the solution particularly useful for monitoring students' use of the internet.

“On a day to day basis we examine the internet habits of individual users and the sites the top ten users have visited. Using this information we can then block inappropriate sites and check up on particular students to see why their individual traffic usage is so high,” says Peter Steer.

The solution automatically pushes through upgrades and updates to the College, saving their technician's time and avoiding any disruptive network downtime. If a disaster does strike, a replacement unit is available. The software configuration is backed up automatically and can be rebuilt quickly in any emergency, giving the College staff further peace of mind.

“We would highly recommend working with IBM's business partner NetBox Blue to anyone who needs a fully integrated internet firewall server and security appliance system,” concluded Peter.

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