



Postini Perimeter Manager Pays for Itself by Eliminating 200,000+ Unwanted Emails a Day and Preventing Directory Harvest Attacks

“The Postini email security and anti-spam service has paid for itself with direct IT staff labor and email infrastructure savings. And when you count the increase in productivity for our users, there is no doubt Postini has more than paid for itself.”

Mark McKeen, Vice President of Information Technology, Jefferson-Pilot Communications

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

- Once the Postini service was activated, Exchange email queues dropped from 30,000 messages to little more than a dozen.
- McKeen reported that he has been able to reduce his email infrastructure by four servers.
- Add in the productivity gains for everyone in the company and Postini has more than paid for itself.

THE PROBLEM

Anti-spam Appliance Fails to Stem Flood of Spam and Email Attacks

As a leading broadcast media company based in Greensboro, North Carolina, Jefferson-Pilot Communications Company (JPCC) depends on email communications as a critical business enabler. JPCC owns 17 radio stations in the nation’s top 50 markets, three television stations in the Southeastern U.S. and a TV production company. News, advertising, and sports operations at JPCC rely on email to provide timely information and to transfer audio files for radio commercials.

In late 2003, Mark McKeen, Vice President of Information Technology for JPCC noticed a marked increase in spam and unwanted email flooding JPCC’s email system. By early 2004, the volume of messages had skyrocketed, overloading JPCC’s email infrastructure and causing email queue delays of up to 45 minutes on some days.

“We were struggling with managing this enormous increase in email volume using an anti-spam appliance and adding multiple email servers to try and load balance the huge volume of traffic,” McKeen recalled. McKeen had to also cope with the side effects of the increasing spam and unwanted messages.

During a directory harvest attack, JPCC’s Microsoft Exchange server asynchronously creates non-delivery reports (NDRs) for all invalid addresses, which can number in the thousands or tens of thousands during a single attack. If, for example, a directory harvest attack makes 10,000 delivery attempts to an email system and only 100 turn out to be deliverable, the Exchange server will generate 9,900 non-delivery reports. These NDRs literally filled and often overloaded two outbound email servers.

“We came to realize that most of our NDRs were generated as a result of directory harvest attacks that attempted to steal or ‘harvest’ legitimate email addresses,” McKeen said. “On some days we might have 30,000 to 40,000 NDRs in the outbound queue, causing huge delays in email performance.”

“We were processing all this traffic internally with an anti-spam appliance,” McKeen emphasized, “and we were simply getting overwhelmed. It was like trying to drink from a fire hose.”

THE SOLUTION

Postini’s Preemptive Email Security Service Puts IT and Users Back in Control

Determined to find a solution as quickly as possible, McKeen and his staff surveyed alternative solutions, consulting Gartner reports and analysts. Postini’s email security and management service stood out as a managed service that blocks spam and viruses and prevents directory harvest attacks at the SMTP level, before these email threats can ever reach JPCC’s email system.

“We were looking for a way to fight this war on someone else’s territory,” McKeen noted. “The whole idea of Postini keeping spam and viruses completely off our system was very appealing. We are committed to keeping our IT resources focused on growing revenue and shareholder value,” he explained. “If I can push the spam and junk email problem out to an expert like Postini, that’s a huge win for me and my staff.”

McKeen also appreciated the fact that Postini serviced a base of more than 3,500 customers, and he was impressed with Postini’s reliability backed by redundant data centers in two different geographic locations. He also liked how Postini provided a wide range of administrative flexibility for both IT staff and users.

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of Information Technology,
Jefferson-Pilot Communications

Through the Postini service, users can examine suspect or quarantined email via a web interface, control the aggressiveness of the message filtering beyond a standard set by the IT department, and manage their own white lists. “When I looked at the Postini user interface, it is just so simple and easy to use. I was sure our people could easily manage the options given to them.”

A 30-day free trial offer from Postini clinched the decision. He activated the Postini service initially for about 300 of his 1,000 users. The results were swift and dramatic.

THE RESULTS

Spam Eliminated. DHAs Prevented. Postini More Than Pays for Itself in IT Savings and Productivity Gains

Once the Postini service was activated, McKeen saw his Exchange email queues drop from 30,000 messages to little more than a dozen. “We thought something was wrong at first,” he said. But he soon realized how well the Postini service was working.

McKeen also watched his email system peak volume fall from 220,000 messages a day to 13,000—much of it due to Postini’s ability to block directory harvest attacks that had been assaulting his servers about every 10 or 15 minutes. McKeen also observed that virus attacks declined nearly as dramatically.

The trial was so successful in restoring user productivity and email system performance that McKeen is converting all 1,000 users to the Postini service.

The bottom-line payback on the Postini service was just as dramatic. McKeen

reported that he has been able to reduce his email infrastructure by four servers. “When you also consider the staff time saved by not having to manage those four servers—the patching, tuning, service contracts, etc.—Postini has paid for itself just in terms of direct savings to our IT department,” he said. “Add in the productivity gains for everyone in the company and Postini has more than paid for itself.”

JPCC is discovering more advantages of the Postini service every day, according to McKeen. He cited several examples including making users more self-sufficient in managing their own emails, and more productive.

“Those users who have BlackBerry handhelds are now extremely happy,” McKeen noted. Prior to the Postini service, BlackBerry users at JPCC might get several hundred unwanted emails a day, making it nearly impossible to quickly identify and respond to important messages. Since Postini activation, these same users have seen their emails drop to only a couple of dozen legitimate messages.

While most JPCC users don’t carry a BlackBerry, nearly all have cell phones. The sales staff in particular uses the Postini capability to activate a wireless notification when they receive email from specific senders. This capability has proved to be especially beneficial when trying to close a deal with prospective customers.

Based on his Postini experience, McKeen is more convinced than ever that a managed service provides the optimum approach to email protection. “An in-house anti-spam solution doesn’t solve the problem of NDRs, directory harvest attacks or virus attacks,” he concluded. “I can’t imagine anyone who would want to try and manage spam and email threats internally...not when you’ve got Postini.”



ABOUT POSTINI

As the leader in Integrated Message Management, Postini protects businesses from a wide range of email, instant messaging (IM) and Web threats, provides message archiving and encryption, and enables the management and enforcement of enterprise policies to meet regulatory compliance requirements.

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