

Marshal Case Study



Fred Olsen

Fred Olsen sails smoothly with MailMarshal

BACKGROUND

The Fred Olsen group was established in Hvitsten, a small town in Norway, in 1848 when the three Olsen brothers – Fredrik Christian, Petter and Andreas – bought their first ships and began an international shipping company. Now the fifth generation of the family operates companies in various aspects of the cruise and passenger shipping trade as well as aviation, ships' crewing, shipbuilding and offshore industries. The Fred Olsen group also has interests in the luxury hotel sector, estate management, property development, electronics companies and other sectors.

Group offices are spread throughout the world, with the Fred Olsen Cruise operation based in the UK, at Ipswich in Suffolk. The company operates five luxury cruise liners around the globe, each of which has, on average, at least 50 onboard staff utilizing email and the Internet. Employees keep in touch via email 24 hours a day, using onboard exchange servers and satellite communication.

THE CHALLENGE

For the last two years Fred Olsen used MAILsweeper from Clearswift to control spam. However, the IT team were growing increasingly concerned about the high volume of spam that was getting through.

The solution also underperformed and delayed or halted legitimate email from being delivered. The impact of this was increased time in supporting the solution and general administration tasks became cumbersome. Email communication is vital to the business and even half a day without it can be very expensive for the company. With more than 30,000 emails a day, 60 per cent of which was spam, the sheer volume was proving too much for MAILsweeper. This meant that the six-strong IT team was dedicating an average of two hours per day just managing spam (releasing false positives and deleting spam emails). In addition the team was spending time educating their 350 end users on how to better manage spam at the desktop using the built in Outlook junk filter. The need to find an effective solution to improve the situation was critical.

"It is particularly important that as much spam as possible is blocked at our gateway before reaching our Exchange users and before it reaches the ships. Each of our five ships has its own Exchange server, but mail is routed via the main Exchange gateway at the head office in Ipswich," said Andrew Ericsson, Network Operations and IT Manager at Fred Olsen. "The communication technology used onboard is satellite 192KB – 256KB bandwidth, except for the largest ship, Balmoral, which has 512KB. This line is used for all communications to and from the ships. Global

satellite bandwidth of this type is expensive, so best use must be made of the narrow pipe to ensure it is available for all ship-to-shore communications, such as voice, data and our cruise customers accessing the Internet. Special technology is in place to compress data and allocate the limited resources appropriately, but spam is not part of the service we want to include," added Ericsson.

SOLUTION SEARCH

Early in 2007 the Fred Olsen IT team began its search for an effective solution to resolve its spam problems and protect its network and bandwidth. They explored solutions from major security vendors, including Websense/Blackspider, McAfee, SurfControl, Clearswift and Marshal, and concluded that a hardware appliance solution would both solve their spam issue and reduce the load on the current servers.

"We arranged to have a demonstration of the new MIMESweeper Email Appliance, to be followed by a period of testing," commented Ericsson. "However, this demo raised concerns, both about the management interface which we felt made administration awkward and the hardware specification which seemed very light given the mail volumes we have to manage. Luckily, Marshal introduced its MailMarshal e10000 appliance at that time and our supplier, Vigil

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Software, arranged for us to evaluate the new security appliance which combined the rich functionality and features of content security software with the ease of use of a hardware appliance,” he added.

The Fred Olsen IT team found the MailMarshal management interface easy to use and intuitive, and they considered the hardware specification to be much more robust given the mail volumes they manage. They were also keen to consolidate and replace multiple servers with an appliance device. Out of the 50+ servers running within Fred Olsen, with the Clearswift solution that was currently in place, four were dedicated to email filtering and anti-virus.

The team decided to test the new MailMarshal appliance in the live environment. “Vigil worked closely with us to prepare and run the live test over just a single day and we found the MailMarshal e10000 performance very impressive,” said Ericsson. “The evaluation results made it an easy decision to move to installation almost immediately.”

Installation

Fred Olsen chose to deploy two MailMarshal e10000 appliances, clustered to offer hardware redundancy and to enhance performance. With multiple internet lines, international VPN users, satellite links with head office in Norway, three UK offices and the five ships, Fred Olsen knew that

the extreme and unusual complexity of its network environment would be a challenge, but the IT team were pleasantly surprised that installation was complete and live in just two days.

“There were some technical problems, but thanks to the Vigil consultant and our already excellent relationship, we were able to deploy as agreed and on schedule,” said Ericsson. “Vigil Software supported us all the way and their consultant’s patience and professionalism helped with all aspects of the work. Choosing the right product is only half the job. Pre-sales, implementation and after-sales support is as important as the product itself. We recognized significant benefits as soon as the system went live,” added Ericsson.

Benefits

From the first day the solution went live, the two MailMarshal appliances freed up the four servers that had previously been dedicated to email and anti-virus filtering. Within just a few days the IT team noticed they were spending much less time managing spam and that the helpdesk calls asking for emails to be released had all but stopped. During the first four weeks, more than 98 per cent of spam was caught. The level of false positives was reduced to 2 to 3 per cent, which significantly reduced the administrative overhead for the support team, in terms of the man-hours spent releasing/holding emails.

“In time savings alone, email administration was reduced by more than half and longer term I think this will increase to a 70 to 80 per cent saving,” said Ericsson. “The cluster of two devices provides a more reliable system with each appliance providing automatic backup for the other.”

With MailMarshal, Fred Olsen can now control the email flow to keep spam quarantined at the gateway before reaching its internal network. This means that email traffic to and from the five ships can be virtually free of spam, ensuring that the satellite bandwidth is used to maximum benefit. Large attachments are also held back and monitored before reaching Exchange users to preserve bandwidth.

“We are very pleased with our investment in the MailMarshal e10000, it does exactly what is promised,” said Ericsson. “I anticipate seeing a full 100 per cent ROI from the MailMarshal e10000 appliances within as little as six months to a year and that even includes the hardware costs.”

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