

Twin Valley Homes

Twin Valley Homes have spam under control

Twin Valley Homes (TVH) is a registered social landlord and after its creation in 2001 became the largest provider of rented homes in Blackburn and Darwen. Twin Valley Homes manages 8500 homes and operates on a not-for-profit basis with a 30 year business plan approved by the Housing Corporation. The aim is to provide much improved housing through the borrowing facilities of up to £90 million provided by the Royal Bank of Scotland.

Introduction

The new housing association came into existence following the stock transfer of all council homes formerly controlled by Blackburn with Darwen Borough's housing department. TVH operates on a not-for-profit basis with a massive program of home improvements, it now manages 8500 homes. The company employs around 250 people.

On establishment, TVH had no network infrastructure in place and was temporarily using the Council's email system. By the end of 2001 a new network system was up and running supported initially by five servers; that has grown rapidly and today there are 21 servers managing their network system.

The Challenges

The company became heavily involved in email and web back in 2002 and at the time had no idea of the legalities governing email and web traffic. As an organization TVH relied heavily on email and many employees keep all their emails rather than archiving. Two months after going live they purchased licenses for Sophos anti-virus software and Microsoft ISA firewall.

In 2001 their network integrator, Enforce Technologies, demonstrated MIMesweeper for SMTP 4.3 and MIMesweeper for Web 4.1, which they deployed immediately, after recognizing Clearswift's experience in and knowledge of the security market place.

"The key attraction was Clearswift's 16,000 satisfied customers" said Lee Richardson, Systems Administrator responsible for email and web security at Twin Valley Homes.



TVH wanted to monitor the email and web traffic leaving and entering their organization, to prevent users sending confidential emails and also to block certain websites. Users initially were nervous regarding the change, fearing the fact that their emails and web activities were to be monitored.

Initial fears turned to satisfaction, however, as the IT department were soon able to use MIMesweeper to reduce threats posed by email. And this at a time when the scale of the threat had risen exponentially: by 2004 TVH were processing 100,000 emails a month compared with less than 1500 before the installations.

The Solution

TVH upgraded to MIMesweeper for SMTP 5.0 and MIMesweeper for Web 5.0 in 2004 to meet this renewed threat. Key to the decision were the improved reporting capabilities and the spam management. MIMesweeper for SMTP 5.0 was easy to install and TVH saved resources by handling the upgrade themselves.

Summary:

Number of Users: 250

Products Deployed:

- MIMesweeper for SMTP 5.0
- MIMesweeper for Web 5.0

Reasons for choosing Clearswift:

- Ability to produce statistical reports for senior management
- Effectiveness in blocking spam
- Improved performance, easier and safer to use

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Lee Richardson

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The new and improved functionalities enabled TVH to produce the necessary reports required by senior management highlighting statistical data on email and web traffic. Lee Richardson said "I was so confident in MIMESweeper for SMTP 5.0 that I wanted to run it in a live environment from the go ahead, but had to respect TVH roll out processes and procedures".

"The product came with numerous scenarios that could be installed out-of-the-box," said Richardson confidently. Once installed, the challenge was to educate employees on how to avoid receiving spam, the legal implications of accessing non-work related sites such as eBay and also deterring users from sending out confidential emails.

During 2004, over 90 per cent of the 100,000 emails a month received by the housing association were spam. Primarily, this was due to users receiving receipts on emails delivered and then subsequently read. Users were encouraged to archive emails in order to leave a paper trail if required at a later date. Lee Richardson commented that "The managed services element of the product allowed spoof and spam to be automatically updated which proved to be an enormous help to the IT department".

TVH understands the importance of email policies and is fully aware of the damaging court cases a number of large organizations have faced. TVH Human Resources & IT departments are responsible for the definition of acceptable use in email terms. Email & web policies are now in place and have been signed by all employees.

Policy is quite severe in terms of what is blocked: attachments, EXEs, oversized files, inappropriate emails (including spam) are all prevented, and comprehensive protection against virus infections and rigid compliance with legal requirements are enforced. This has all added up to significant increases in user productivity.

According to Richardson, a major advantage of MIMESweeper for SMTP 5.0 was the policy engine. "The policy engine was a separate entity so we could set up our scenarios and policies without interfering with the email & web scanning process". The policy also states that TVH has permission to monitor users' email and web activities.

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The Results

When asked "What did you think of MIMESweeper for SMTP 5.0 when you first saw it?" Lee Richardson replied "Brilliant!" All TVH employees have access to email and MIMESweeper has made our senior management much more comfortable in using email. "MIMESweeper for SMTP 5.0 feels better, it is easier and safer to use," he said. TVH customers are confident that their email messages entering and leaving the company are secure.

About MIMESweeper for SMTP

MIMESweeper for SMTP 5.0 is the most comprehensive enterprise class email content security solution available in the market, delivering the best scalability and robustness anywhere.

It is a best of breed solution that counters all content security threats - spam, viruses, worms, Trojan horses, and DOS attacks, while allowing companies to remain compliant and meet best practice standards.

MIMESweeper allows consistent policy definition and enforcement, through automated policy replication. This new version incorporates a 'roles-based' approach to administration too, moving mail management from back office to the front office. This allows, for example, the HR department - rather than IT - to implement company mail policy on, say, profanity, sexism or racism. Its unique approach to system management allows for hierarchical devolvement of duties to multiple administrators. IT managers can delegate specific responsibilities, such as server monitoring, access to particular quarantine areas and reporting, to the most appropriate administrators or department, therefore spreading the load of administration and significantly reducing the time it takes to process blocked emails.

Contact Clearswift

United States

303 Twin Dolphin Drive, 6th Floor
Redwood City, CA 94065
Tel: +1 800 982 6109 | Fax: +1 650 632 4601

United Kingdom

1310 Waterside, Arlington Business Park, Theale,
Reading, Berkshire, RG7 4SA
Tel: +44 (0) 11 8903 8903 | Fax: +44 (0) 11 8903 9000

Germany

Amsinckstrasse 67, 20097 Hamburg
Tel: +49 40 23 999 0 | Fax: +49 40 23 999 100

Australia

Ground Floor, 165 Walker Street, North Sydney,
New South Wales, 2060
Tel: +61 2 9424 1200 | Fax: +61 2 9424 1201

Japan

Eisho Takanawadai Bldg 6F, 2-11-8, Minato-ku Shiroganedai
Tokyo-to, 108-0071
Tel: +81 (3) 5423 8171 | Fax: +81 (3) 5423 1274