

No lines, no waiting: Encore Tickets delivers, with a little help from Ipswitch

Case study

Company:

Encore Tickets

Industry:

Ticket sales

Business challenge:

At Encore Tickets, network security and fast response to customer calls and email was critical to making sales, so they needed an email server that would help keep their business free of viruses and spam.

Outcome:

By using Ipswitch Collaboration Suite, Encore Tickets maintains a high level of network security and keeps its employees' email free of spam.

The Internet is now the ticket booth of choice for fans who want VIP seats for sports events, concerts, and theater—many of which are sold-out events. Working in a segment of the multi-billion dollar U.S. ticket industry called the secondary ticket market, licensed broker Encore Tickets helps companies and individuals obtain VIP tickets to premium, high-demand and sold-out events. Their loyal customers appreciate their great service.

Since Encore Tickets began in 1993, Ipswitch email technology has been quietly at work behind the scenes as the ticket company has grown from a small team to 50 employees with some 60,000 happy customers. Ipswitch email tools have helped prevent attacks on the Encore Tickets network since the early days of the company.

Encore Tickets currently uses Ipswitch Collaboration Suite (ICS) and its advanced anti-virus and anti-spam technologies. ICS helps prevent lost sales by blocking viruses, worms and Trojan horses from reaching the network via email and filters out spam from Encore Tickets' 50+ Outlook email accounts.

Christian Griffith, CIO at Encore Tickets, summarized the benefits of using Ipswitch Collaboration Suite, saying it "makes network administration at Encore Tickets a lot easier. Without it, there would undoubtedly be overhead problems, and we would have to set up our own systems and filters to avoid corruption and spying. Instead of hassles and the need for more staff, Ipswitch Collaboration Suite delivers plain and simple email—and that's just the way I like it."

First line of defense

The potential "hassles" to which Griffith refers are an increasingly sophisticated range of attacks that impact businesses with denial of service, compromise of sensitive information, misinformation, and time and resources diverted from the business. The e-commerce aspect of today's businesses are particularly vulnerable to attack.

Thirty to fifty percent of Encore Tickets customers purchase their tickets online, so the servers must be up 24 x 7 to serve those customers. If the network were to be crippled by malicious code that had entered the system through email, sales would be lost to the competitor whose server happened to be up and running. The Encore Tickets security plan uses ICS as an effective first line of defense.

Proactive security

In 1988, after a worm took down about 10 percent of the Internet, CERT, the Computer Emergency Response Team, was formed by the U.S. Department of Defense and Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute. CERT coordinates responses to Internet security compromises, identifies trends in intruder activity, and identifies solutions. The center, respected internationally, partners with and supports the Office of Homeland Security's National Cyber Security Division. One of CERT's key recommendations for keeping a network free from attack is to use virus-monitoring software tools and to assure that virus definitions are kept up to date.

The Premium Anti-Virus protection in Ipswitch Collaboration Suite is such a monitoring tool, with an added bonus: it is proactive, working to identify and remove the latest threats coming in via email before they can get to the network. As recommended by CERT, virus definitions are continuously updated, and the Suite's Symantec Scan Engine Technology keeps Encore Tickets email squeaky clean. Griffith attests that "the anti-virus capability has worked very well to keep the network secure."

Effective spam prevention

Encore Tickets differentiates itself from the competition in two ways: by providing highly desirable seat locations and excellent customer service. Part of the Encore Tickets customer service program requires everyone in sales and support to check email every three minutes in order to promptly answer customer questions. Since the volume of spam today is typically three to six times that of legitimate email, and can carry dangerous code, keeping spam out of Encore Tickets' inboxes is of practical importance in being able to quickly answer customer inquiries and move sales forward. Encore Tickets has built its business on delivering what they promise in a service oriented atmosphere-and service via email has been an important factor in that growth.

The Premium Anti-Spam technology in ICS is an unobtrusive part of the infrastructure that helps make Encore Tickets' high quality customer service possible. Ipswitch Collaboration Suite fights spam with a multi-layered approach that combines a broad range of techniques to turn spam's own objectives, characteristics and defenses against itself.

Only from Ipswitch

ICS employs sophisticated spam collection and analysis technology with human editors working in over 30 languages, reviewing and tweaking signature files and distributing them to Encore Tickets' server every 5 to 15 minutes. By adding the element of human intelligence to its continuous updates, Ipswitch has achieved a higher level of efficacy in anti-spam protection.

Griffith notes that "the human component in ICS definitely helps. Without it we'd have to come up with filters ourselves and that's not the business we're in. I really appreciate that they constantly update the keyword list-it has made email much easier to administer and to avoid problems. We have definitely captured more spam than we ever could by creating domain filters on our own."

Sophisticated simplicity

Griffith reports that Ipswitch Collaboration Suite is "very easy to set up and manage. It is not hard to use yet is very effective. Using ICS means that we don't need to hire a full-time security person. We've had zero problems with the software and there has been very little administration needed. When we do have an issue or question, we call technical support and get it resolved."

Griffith added that "Ipswitch has the best tech support ever. Their staff is very knowledgeable and are always willing to help you solve a problem, not just answer a question for you. For example, I worked closely with a technical support specialist on setting up spam filters when we switched from IMail Server to ICS. He worked with me to establish customized filters specific to our ticketing business so that we can catch false positives and that means those customers weren't lost in the shuffle."

Encore Tickets uses Ipswitch Collaboration Suite for highly effective email security. The robust, easy-to-use technologies in ICS have delivered as promised, giving the Encore Tickets IT staff the freedom to work on projects fostering new growth, rather than spending time mopping up after the latest intrusion attempt or wasting time endlessly dealing with spam. CIO Griffith noted that as Encore Tickets grows their growing number of email accounts will all be protected by ICS. He summarized his experience with the Ipswitch technology by saying that it is "very easy to use and manage, is flexible, has a yearly maintenance plan with regular updates, and has had an excellent track record for us in preventing problems."