Strategic email security means savings for Waimakariri District Council

Imagine being able to halve your IT hardware expenditure? That's just what's the Waimakariri District Council were able to do as part of working with New Zealand owned-and-operated email security specialist SMX. In moving to a cloud-based system, the council has also managed to eliminate any associated appliance maintenance and management headaches.

As one of the largest employers in North Canterbury, the Waimakariri District Council (WDC) uses SMX's inbound and outbound email filtering and custom engine rules for an extra layer of email security. These customised rules have allowed the council to block particular threats, reducing the amount of time their team has to waste on these, and also keeping their systems free from attack, and end users safe.

The Council took advantage of the Telecommunications-as-a-Service (TaaS) pricing for both services at the beginning of 2018, and will look to change its archiving to TaaS as well. Both SMX and TaaS sat neatly with the Council's long-term Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) strategy, which has already freed up resources to focus on adding value to other areas of the business.

David Sewell, ICT Team Leader at WDC, Information & Technology Services, joined the organisation in 2013 and says with All of Government (TaaS) pricing there has been no reason to look for an alternative to the SMX service.

"In my previous job, we used an email filtering service that required constant management. When I arrived at WDC, SMX filtering was already in place and it is one of the few services we consume that simply ticks along in the background. It requires minimal management from me – it just works. It's awesome!"

Complete email protection

The Council has 280 full-time employees, plus temporary and part-time staff, using laptops, desktops, tablets and mobile phones to access email both onsite and remotely. The Council currently uses an on-premise Exchange 2016 server for email, and all email coming into or leaving the Council is filtered by SMX to ensure it is free of spam, viruses and malware.

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> ICT Team Leader, Information & Technology Services
> WAIMAKARIRI DISTRICT COUNCIL

Strategic email security

The SMX custom engine rules allow the Council to change the filters in response to customer feedback, current trends and email security threats. A simple drag-and-drop interface on the SMX management dashboard offers preset rules, or SMX can help customise rules.

Data Loss Prevention (DLP) is also enabled to protect sensitive data (e.g. credit card numbers) from leakage, insider theft and accidental distribution via email. The Council also has rules enabled to block inbound/outbound adult content, and inbound large emails. The custom whaling rule provides protection for the Council's senior management team against a range of increasingly sophisticated malicious phishing and whaling attacks.

The SMX email security service is managed from a single central dashboard, which allows users to take control of their whole environment, monitor trends and threats, and develop reports to help inform their email security strategy. Enhancements made in response to user feedback, will soon give WDC even more reporting and management functionality, including greater visibility of email traffic for users.

The benefit of being on TaaS

Taas was set up by the NZ Government to provide a broad range of well-priced, best-of-breed telecommunications and managed security services, for government organisations. SMX is the only NZ-owned and operated email security solution provider accredited under the TaaS scheme.

"TaaS uses volume pricing, so the overall cost of providing the services will reduce incrementally as more organisations take advantage of it. The SMX Accelerate package makes a comprehensive range of enterprise-grade email security services accessible and is priced very competitively, which evens out the playing field for the smaller organisations," SMX's Key Accounts and Channel Manager, John Hill, says.

"The TaaS offerings are always going to be greenfield" Sewell says, "the latest, most up-to-date versions at any point in time."

"We're currently using an appliance-based archiving solution that is costing us big money. Moving to TaaS will remove the

onerous appliance management we have to do currently – and it will save us money, too," Sewell explains.

The 'as-a-service' advantage

Since 2015, the Council has been steadily moving to an Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) model, for which cost savings over time, simplified management, and better ROI have been key drivers, Sewell says.

"We worked out that over a five-year period we could halve our IT hardware expenditure, but still remain current. From a management point of view, we no longer had to worry about failures and upgrades, as this is all built into the IaaS model. This allowed two of my staff to focus on areas to add benefit, rather than keeping the lights on."

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> Having used SMX now for several years, I'd have no hesitation recommending it to others as a service of choice.
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> **Reyna Ramirez Montes**

The NZ advantage

The SMX support team is just an email or a call away and Sewell is happy with the support the Council receives, although he hasn't seen much need for it: "When we've had to log tickets around things like spam, the support we've received has been good. I can count the number of times we've needed to log a ticket on one hand," he says.

Sewell also says that as a government organisation, working with a NZ based company for its email security is 'quite important' in terms of data sovereignty and local knowledge.

"Having our email managed by a NZ company means we have confidence that they have a better understanding of requirements and issues which are unique to NZ. We also know our data remains within our borders," he says.