



Case Study: Deerfield Capital

Traffic Control Email Security Pays Handsome Dividends

Case Study

Email Traffic Shaping

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THE ORGANIZATION

Deerfield Capital Management (DCM) is an Illinois-based investment advisor that primarily manages Collateralized Debt Obligations and hedge funds. The firm invests in government securities, investment grade debt, asset-backed securities, and bank loan portfolios. DCM was founded in 1993 and is based in Chicago. The Company firmly believes internal controls and technology are vital to investment management and have made major commitments in these areas.

THE CHALLENGE

The constantly growing size of spam quarantines was frustrating employees to the point when Deerfield's IT department had to do something.

Deerfield's IT environment is comprised of a mix of UNIX machines and Windows desktop workstations. The Company's existing solution was a filtering appliance called MIMESweeper by Clearswift. As a content filter, MIMESweeper was "missing a lot of different types of spam" causing quarantines to receive a high volume of spam messages. End users complained about having to search through the junk folder for good email.

THE SOLUTION

Harry Danilevsky, Managing Director and Chief Architectural Officer a regular reader of Slashdot and ONLamp.com, learned about traffic shaping to combat spam in an article entitled, "Developing High Performance Asynchronous IO Applications" by Stas Bekman, Director of Research at MailChannels. Harry was initially impressed to discover that a company had successfully implemented a spam pre-filter as a SMTP proxy server.

To reduce the load on downstream quarantines, MailChannels proposed an edge solution to install Traffic Control gateways in front of their existing MIMESweeper appliances, that would not require major disruption on their side.

After consulting with a MailChannels engineer, Sibi John, Senior Systems Administrator, found an effective throttling delay of 1.5 to 2 minutes that forced 80% of spam to be eliminated before the network.

"MailChannels Support has been phenomenal," Sibi says. "In the rare instances where I have submitted a ticket, I've received a prompt and helpful reply by phone or email."

"The best aspect of Traffic Control is that it discourages spammers. Restricting bandwidth get spammers to move off the connection. For the most part, it's easier for botnets to move onto a new target rather than to take on the cost of a slow connection." Sibi concludes, "Traffic Control gives us a two-tier approach, giving us an additional check that allows us to decrease the load on our email server immensely."

Harry concludes that having a mutli-layered approach is a very complementary setup. Once the proper configuration was in place, the effects of Traffic Control could be seen immediately.

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THE RESULTS

"Traffic Control was catching stuff sneaking through the back door," says Harry.

Harry reports that they've seen a significant drop in spam content and no longer have to deal with large quarantines. As he puts it, "before Traffic Control, users would complain that there's too many emails and they have to look through a stream of garbage [in their junk folders]. Clearly, the preliminary filtering at the edge is a good thing." An added benefit for them is that Traffic Control requires very little attention and administration from the IT team. "Overall, we're really pleased."

"Over the weekend, I would receive 200-300 spam messages in my own inbox, but now I only see 10-15. If you have an email address as long as I have had, it travels and unfortunately you get picked up on distribution lists and end up having to manually look through 15 pages of quarantine" says Harry. "After installing Traffic Control, only 10-15% reach the quarantine, while the rest is dropped off during the traffic shaping phase."

Top level execs really noticed the improvement in their inboxes, and let Harry know "whatever you did, it's saving me half-hour to an hour of time in the morning."



ABOUT MAILCHANNELS

MailChannels is a leading provider of email traffic shaping software, helping service providers decrease hardware footprint brought on by rapid growth. The company's Traffic Control software presorts incoming email before it hits your network, controlling traffic to prevent server congestion and system slowdowns so that mail servers can run at optimal performance. Recognized by Red Herring Canada Top 50 and the MIT Spam Conference, MailChannels protects Fortune 500 companies, leading service providers and universities worldwide.

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