

COTA CO., LTD.

Implemented Symantec Email Security.cloud to Protect PCs and Mobile Devices Against Spam Emails

Challenge

- Reduce security risks on emails received on PCs used by clerical staff, implement measures to counter spam emails sent to the 160 iPads supplied to sales reps, and improve work productivity.
- Limitations with server-side measures and free spam filters are too complex to be incorporated into the official operations

Solution

- Symantec Email Security.cloud

Benefit

- Approximately 1,400 spam emails are blocked daily throughout the company, bringing the number of email virus down to zero.
- Employees can now check their email without having to worry about spam emails, boosting work productivity.

Client Profile

Site: www.cota.co.jp/

Industry: Manufacturing and sales of hair products and quasi-drugs for beauty salons

Headquarters: Kyoto City, Japan

Employees: 305 (as of March 2018)

COTA

Something Must Be Done About Spam Emails

Besides the retailing of hair care and styling products, COTA also has a management consulting arm for beauty salons using the management improvement system “Junpoten System”.

COTA provides 160 iPads to its sales reps who are frequently on-the-go and the massive amount of spam emails received on an everyday basis has been a cause for headaches. Chief of IT Management Team Mr. Mitsuhide Hosotani (General Affairs Group, Department of General Affairs) is tasked with the implementation and operation of company-wide IT services.

“Employees checking their emails waste a lot of time dealing with spam, which could cause them to miss out on important emails. Thus, eliminating junk mails was a major issue,” he explained.

He said COTA has been using Symantec Endpoint Protection (SEP) as an endpoint product and fortunately, there had not been any critical incidents such as virus infection until now, adding that the company received about 1,400 spam emails daily.

COTA uses an on-premises email server and has been trying out various server-side settings to counter spam. “You can block spam to a certain extent using header and SPF checks but these measures are insufficient to catch up with the ever evolving and sophisticated tactics used by spammers,” he elaborated.

He added that making the rules too exclusive run the risk of filtering out legit emails. These and other factors forced his team to give up on the idea of server-side countermeasures. They did however try a free spam filter tool but the method proved to be too complicated.

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- Mitsuhide Hosotani, Chief of the IT Management Team, General Affairs Group, Department of General Affairs

“When something goes wrong with a new tool, especially a security product, it will lead to inquiries. No one has contacted us which means that the implementation has been a success.”

- Kengo Kano, IT Management Team, General Affairs Group, Department of General Affairs

Symantec is All About Speedy Response and Functional Superiority

The process to select an email security product started around August 2018. Hosotani said his team narrowed down the selection to five products with the most promising being Symantec.

“We are already using SEP as an endpoint product and we were subsequently briefed by the Symantec’s telesales team on Symantec Email Security.cloud”.

“It so happened that we were thinking of bolstering our email security so we asked to learn more. We were impressed by the speedy response of the Symantec team prior to the validation process. This proved to be the decisive factor for us to adopt Symantec Email Security.cloud,” he said.

Mr. Hosotani also had high praise for how Ricoh Japan, a Symantec Platinum Partner in charge of implementing COTA’s system, contributed to the project.

“Ricoch Japan always accompanies Symantec sales representatives when they come visit, and this time was no exception. Security can be a pretty specialized field, and they did a great job breaking it down for us so that we could better understand.”

“There’s no way to know the differences in performance or usability of an email security product until you actually test it out. Compared to its competitors, Symantec’s response up to the point of free trial use was very quick, which definitely gave them an advantage.”

In terms of performance, he was in awe of the leading-edge features — such as filtering using the AI engine “Skeptic” and SLA for service uptime, malware infection, spam capture rate, false positives and delivery delays — Symantec has to offer.

“The Link Following technology that scans URLs in real time to determine if they are safe and block access accordingly and the optional Click-time URL Protection made us feel safe to use the product.” recalls Mr. Hosotani.

Click-time URL Protection defends against the latest delayed attack pattern, i.e., when a malicious email is received, the link points to a non-malicious site, and its content is altered at a later time when the recipient is expected to click on the link. The link destination is accessed via Symantec’s data center, thus even if a user receives a malicious email, they are protected from accessing dangerous sites.

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“We were able to validate the effectiveness of the proposed features and implement the software smoothly. Symantec is the only supplier that offers a fee structure based on the number of users, which we find to be a cost.”

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Trials started by around October 2018. “Verification and validation resulted in a dramatic decrease in spam and virus emails, proving that the product could resolve the issues we had identified thus far. And the way Symantec’s licenses were priced offered great cost advantages. So we decided to officially implement the product,” said Hosotani.

“Of our employees, 300 have their own email address. Each person can use multiple email accounts, adding up to a total of more than 600 accounts. Symantec’s fee structure charges are based on the number of users and not the number of email accounts, which means that our service contract only needs to cover 300 users. We found this to be a cost advantage,” he explains.

No More Unwanted Emails

Hosotani pointed out the implementation effects of Symantec Email Security.cloud approximately two months after it was put into operation. “Of the approximate 2,400 emails received on any given day, the Symantec software blocks 1,400 spam emails and the number of virus emails has dropped to zero,” he said.

Furthermore, employees are immediately free from the onerous task of deleting spam emails every morning before they could start work. The Symantec Email Security.cloud management screen allows for efficient tuning, e.g., the easy configuration of blacklisting settings. This led to significant results on the spam email front.

Mr. Kengo Kano from the IT Management Team said no settings need to be made on the individual PCs and iPads with the user experience remaining the same.

“When something goes wrong with a new tool, especially a security product, it will lead to inquiries. No one has contacted us which means that the implementation has been a success,” he enthused.

As for future prospects, Hosotani said further improvement in filtering accuracy is a key point. “We are currently working with Symantec to check whether any emails that need to make their way into the inbox, such as those from customers, have been eliminated as spam.”

“We want to further our understanding of the solution and not be complacent about where things stand and press on with our tuning efforts so that we can make the transition to operation without any intervention.”

However, support from Symantec and Ricoh Japan sales reps and system engineers will still be available even after implementation.

In terms of feature utilization, COTA plans to use the various features included in Symantec Advanced Threat Protection for Email (implemented as an optional service), so as to bolster its defense against targeted attacks. The features include Click-time URL Protection, that protects against delayed attacks, and advanced analysis that allows for the detailed visualization of email attack activity.

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What does COTA hope from Symantec in the future? “We’re hoping that Symantec can provide us with regular updates on insights and information about cyber risks,” said Kano.

“For example, we heard that Symantec Endpoint Protection Cloud, the cloud version of SEP which we have implemented as an endpoint product, can run without a management server, effectively cutting costs, among other things. I’m also looking forward to getting information and proposals that factor in the latest threat trends to allow us to achieve security in a cost-effective way, such as Symantec Web Security Service which ensures Internet access security for outbound protection.”

ESS in a Service Environment

