WatchGuard Keeps Brighton Grammar School Network Safe

Overview
Country or Region: Australia
Industry: Education

Company Profile
Brighton Grammar School is an Anglican boys' school in Melbourne, with 1,500 staff and students.

Business Situation
Brighton's enterprise-class network needs enterprise-class security devices to ensure 100 percent uptime, secure connectivity, and sophisticated tools to manage web access and control of content.

Solution
WatchGuard XTM 8 Series in high availability

Benefits
- Easy to manage solution frees up IT resources for other tasks
- Comprehensive protection eliminates security gaps
- Granular tools allow flexibility in setting web access policies
- Scalable, upgradeable products keep pace with growth
- Total visibility into network security activity streamlines reporting
- High Availability ensures maximum network uptime

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- David Young, Brighton Grammar's IT Manager

Background
Brighton Grammar School is an Anglican boys' school based in Melbourne. Its focus is to tailor teaching methods and programs to meet the unique learning styles and interests of boys and to create a curriculum that engages, excites and challenges each student. The School prides itself on an ability to deliver a robust and diverse education that addresses a balanced development of the mind, body, the aesthetic, and the spirit. It's a mix that obviously works as each year the School attracts up to 1,200 student enrolments.

Keeping Connected
To support the educational and administrative aspects of the School, Brighton Grammar maintains an extensive information technology infrastructure including a 10 GB backbone, a storage area network, a VMware virtualised environment plus 600 computers, 30 notebooks and more than 50 thin client computers. In addition, the School's recently established research arm, the Crowther Centre located in the Melbourne CBD, connects to the main School campus via a virtual private network. The system is used by approximately 1,500 on-site staff and students plus a number of parents who remotely log in to the School portal via secure links.

David Young, Brighton Grammar's Information Technology (IT) Manager notes that modern teaching and classroom practices and business operations place a huge reliance on connectivity. "That's why we run an enterprise-class network and we need enterprise-class devices to make sure it all works. Users expect the system to be up 100 percent of the time and it's our job to make sure that everything works."

This makes network integrity and security essential considerations for Young. "We have an enormous diversity of user requirements with students from three years of age through to adults of 70 or 80 using School resources," Young explains. "All have their own specific requirements that we need to address, whether it's from a duty of care point of view or a research perspective. For example, we have to be aware of not letting users access sites that contain inappropriate information. Therefore we need to be able to identify traffic and build appropriate rules for that traffic."

Nine years ago the right level of security was achievable with a simple, limited ISDN solution built into the network router. However, as the potential for intrusion, spam, and malware grew, a dedicated appliance became essential.

Young deployed a WatchGuard® solution as firewall and web service or mail service proxy for internal resources. "We chose WatchGuard because of its ease of management. It was – and remains – straightforward, simple to operate and configure," Young says. "The information that we get from WatchGuard and from our logs means that we know where things are supposedly going and what's happening with the network. We keep intrusion detection turned on and periodically we test it from outside the organisation to make sure there are no security holes."

An ever-changing technology landscape

That was eight years ago and Brighton Grammar is now onto its third generation of firewall solutions. Instead of one appliance the School has two enterprise-level WatchGuard XTM 8 Series appliances at the main campus, with one acting as a fail-over for the other. At the School's remote sites, another WatchGuard Firebox® X Core e-Series device is deployed for VPN connectivity within the network to give even greater flexibility and security. In addition to preventing unwanted intrusion the devices are used to provide policy-based routing.

The School also subscribes to WatchGuard's LiveSecurity® Service, enabling Young to receive regular software updates, early warning of newly identified threats, practical advice and guidance, and professional support.

Young points out that any firewall needs to be regularly reviewed. "This technology is not something that you just put in and forget about. It needs to be managed, maintained and upgraded. As everything else behind the scenes gets bigger and bigger, so must the firewall."

For example, three years ago the School would typically download 40 GB per month. "Last time I looked it was up to approximately 300 or 400 GB per month.

"WatchGuard has proven to be very reliable and despite operating in a more complicated environment, it is still intuitive in terms of what we need to do. Support has always been good whenever we've needed it and the product delivers what it says it delivers. The devices are rock solid and that's why we've stayed with WatchGuard all these years," Young concludes.

There are so many resources available online and the nature of what's available has changed. Demand has grown tenfold in three years and the firewall has to be able to cope with that," Young says.

Another ongoing challenge is the need to adapt security to meet changes in the technology infrastructure. It's not just a matter of desktop computers any more. Network users demand access via wireless notebooks, smart phones, iPads and any number of portable devices. "It's a challenging environment to try to secure," Young acknowledges. "We're always trying to keep a step ahead of our users."

Despite all the changes, Brighton Grammar's firewall has continued to

ensure a safe and secure computing environment for students, teachers and parents alike. "WatchGuard has proven to be very reliable and despite operating in a more complicated environment, it is still intuitive in terms of what we need to do.

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To get more information on WatchGuard's powerful network security solutions, visit www.watchguard.com.

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