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Luton College chooses SonicWall to safeguard its students and data

Business need

The college needed to secure its network and data from unknown and zero day threats, and improve its visibility and reporting of network traffic entering and leaving the college.

Solution

An upgrade to the SonicWall Advanced Gateway Security Suite (AGSS) safeguarded all web activity, even on the student's own devices. It also gave the non-technical safeguarding team the ability to easily set up and run relevant detailed activity reports.

Benefits

- Quick to setup, configure and manage
- Far deeper level of security, reducing complaints of malware traffic from 10 a month to about 3 a year
- Increased visibility and monitoring of all web user activity
- Reporting no longer confined to IT staff due to user friendly interface
- Detailed reporting enables college to comply with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) statutory guidance
- Data can be compiled and analysed to assist local safeguarding party

Solutions at a glance

- Next Generation Firewalls
- Management and Reporting

"Our SonicWall technical consultant demonstrated the advanced features of SonicWall AGSS, which includes the SonicWall Capture Advanced Threat Protection (ATP) multi-engine sandbox, and showed how easy it is to set up new rules for different groups. He also explained how the Fastvue Reporting for SonicWall simplifies the entire reporting process, intelligently interpreting SonicWall log files to deliver detailed web activity reports. This was exactly what we were looking for – threats can be blocked and reports easily produced to show real-time alerts of user activity during any specific timeframe."

Rob Moir, IT Manager, Luton College

Luton Sixth Form College provides academic and general vocational education for students aged 16 to 18 years. Established in September 1966, it is the oldest sixth form in the country and recently celebrated its 50th birthday. It is also one of the largest educational institutions with over 2700 students on its beautiful purpose-built campus with state-of-the-art facilities.

Student's safety is paramount

The college is very in tune with modern day communications and operates it's WIFI through an 'eduroam policy' - a secure, international service that allows users from participating institutions to access the internet through a single Wi-Fi profile and set of credentials. The college also allows students to use their own devices to access information from the internet.

The college wanted to continue providing its students with this service, but was very aware of the security issues surrounding the use of the internet and the risk of threats that could arise including radicalisation, grooming and access to harmful and illegal content by students.

Statutory requirement to keep students safe

The KCSiE guidance, which became a statutory legal requirement in September 2016, includes the 'Prevent Duty' which evolved from the Counter-Terrorism & Security Act in 2015 and sets out the legal obligations schools must follow to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people under the age of 18 in schools and colleges. This means that schools must deploy appropriate filtering and monitoring tools that would include the police assessed lists of unlawful terrorist content, produced on behalf of the home office by the Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (CTIRU) as well as the Child Abuse Image Content (CAIC) lists supplied and maintained by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) to safeguard against users accessing harmful and illegal content on the internet. Under these new regulations schools are expected to provide detailed reports on all internet usage during any given timeframe.

Educational data is also now at risk of being held for ransom

There is also an extremely high risk of serious unknown and zero day threats, such as ransomware. Other local schools in the area had been targeted with this particular threat and found it difficult and expensive to recover confidential files and student examination work once the systems have been broken into and compromised.

The college needed a system that was powerful enough to keep its student's work safe at all times. It also needed to be able to carry out more granular content filtering and reporting so that its Safeguarding Team could closely monitor user activity and easily detect any concerning patterns of behavior at a detailed level. This would ultimately enable the college to stay one-step ahead and put interventions in place before any actual problems occurred.

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Advanced content filtering & management

Content filtering is very important to the college and the new Content Filtering Service (CFS) 4.0, which was released in September 2016 makes content filtering across groups very straightforward - the rules are easy to set up, troubleshoot and apply to different groups. Content Filtering 4.0 includes framework and workflow redesigning, and UI reorganizing, providing more accurate filtering options and handling of small packets. This enables the college to see what different individuals and groups are looking at on the web, for example, what a particular user is doing on specific social media platform, what a group of children are looking at on Facebook, even what an individual or group is looking at using their own device on campus, at any particular time.

Complete network security in a single, integrated platform

SonicWall AGSS provides a complete, integrated protection solution that includes Capture Advanced Threat Protection (ATP), a multi-engine sandbox that runs and inspects suspicious files, programs and code in an isolated cloud-based environment. It secures the college network at the gateway against known and unknown threats such as zero-day attacks, ransomware, intrusions, viruses, spyware, worms, Trojans, adware, keyloggers, malicious mobile code (MMC), and other malicious threats for total protection in a convenient, affordable subscription-based service.

Granular web usage reporting

The solution includes Fastvue Reporting for SonicWall, a reporting tool that intelligently interprets SonicWall log files and is easily able to extract detailed user activity on the web, during any specific timeframe, producing defined reports that can be sent to safeguarding officers. The content filtering is built around the government KCSiE guidelines, which address safety and security concerns, with controls to enforce Internet user policies by blocking access to harmful and inappropriate web content. "We are delighted with the results – the reporting couldn't be easier. In fact, it's so simple and user-friendly that our safeguarding team of 8 staff can now set up reports, run them and analyse them themselves, which really saves the IT team time that they can now spend on other activities. The data we compile is critical and highlights any concerns we may have with individuals or groups of students, so that we can steer students away from any problems before they actually occur. The data also benefits a wider audience. We can easily illustrate trends in internet activity, behavior patterns and outcomes, and the college is part of a local Safeguarding Partnership that has been set up to improve social and educational services locally and nationally.

Products & Services

HA pair of SonicWall NSA 5600 in active/passive mode

SonicWall Advanced Gateway Security Suite

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