

City of Birmingham, Alabama

GOVERNMENT

Like many businesses, the City of Birmingham, Alabama was looking for a way to reduce spam and provide its employees with a way to safely browse the web — while at the same time blocking access to productivity-zapping social networking sites such as Facebook. Like many businesses, Birmingham found Sophos was the perfect solution.



McWane Science Center Birmingham, Alabama

Business challenge

Birmingham is the largest city in Alabama, with a population currently estimated at 242,820 and a metro population of 1,079,089. Under the laws of its state, the City of Birmingham is a municipal corporation.

Once the primary industrial center of the southern United States, Birmingham has transformed into a medical research, banking and service-based economy. Birmingham is one of the nation's most livable cities, with a vibrant downtown, a burgeoning loft community, a world-class culinary scene and more green space per capita than any other city in the nation.

Protecting the City's IT infrastructure is a critical and challenging undertaking.

The City needed better anti-virus, email and web protection. Birmingham's previous endpoint solution didn't work across all the City's computers. Making matters worse, the vendor couldn't explain why.

So, when Birmingham's endpoint security license was coming up for renewal, it was just smart business to consider other options.

Key facts

Organization

City of Birmingham, Alabama

Location

Birmingham, Alabama

No of desktops

Endpoint Security and Control:
2,600 users

Email Appliance: 2,600 users

Web Appliance: 1,600 users

Solutions

Endpoint Security and Control
Email Appliance
Web Appliance

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John Gog, Network System Administrator, City of Birmingham

Technology solution

In its search for a new endpoint solution, the City of Birmingham looked at Sophos, Authentium and the incumbent Symantec.

"I was familiar with Sophos, having seen reviews of the product for many years," says John Gog, Network System Administrator for the City of Birmingham.

After a thorough assessment of the options available, Birmingham chose to go with Sophos industry-leading Endpoint Security and Control, Sophos Email Appliance and Sophos Web Appliance.

Mr. Gog explains, "Ordinarily, the single-vendor idea is not one I favor, because I believe you should use the best product for the need to be filled. But, quite simply, Sophos provided the best products for our needs... The initial and continuing experience with Sophos has been the best that I've had with any vendor."

The installation and deployment of the new Sophos solutions went smoothly.

"The competitor removal tool worked better than we had hoped," says Mr. Gog. With help from Sophos engineers, the City's IT department was able identify GUID strings that could be added to the Symantec removal scripts. As a result, removing the old software was almost incident-free.

"We had to touch fewer than 100 machines out of 1,300 initially deployed. And that was only because our old product had allowed malware onto the systems and that prevented installation of new anti-virus software," Mr. Gog explains.

Users were introduced to the new solutions gradually. Ultimately, the total time for processing 1,300 PCs and users, as well as 90 servers, was about six weeks.

The Birmingham IT team was especially pleased with the help and guidance provided by the Sophos engineers. Mr. Gog explains, "Working with the engineers was a very positive experience. What I like the most is that they explained how things worked. We learned in detail how the library servers work, how the competitor-uninstall scripts operate, and step-by-step things to look for when troubleshooting installation issues."

Business results

Today, with its Sophos solutions in place, the City of Birmingham's network enjoys comprehensive protection from viruses, malware and spam. And managing that protection is easy with Sophos' intuitive, centralized console.



Birmingham Museum of Art

"The Sophos Enterprise Console was the best of those we evaluated by a long way," Mr. Gog continues. "The product worked just as advertised."

Mr. Gog and his team found that Sophos updates are more frequent than the City was getting with its previous solution. Additionally, the updates are small enough not to disrupt the network.

Since deploying its Sophos endpoint, email and web solutions, the City of Birmingham has realized a drop in irresponsible behavior on the Internet and a corresponding improvement in productivity.

"We've set a lot of policies," Mr. Gog explains. "We're blocking social sites like Facebook. Anonymizer sites are blocked. We've tightened policies at the request of certain departments who wanted to control Internet abusers... Thanks to Active Directory integration, we are able to target policies to the appropriate users with ease."

The Sophos Web appliance allows the City to scan websites and prevent malware from ever reaching the desktop. As a result, Birmingham has seen a reduction of about 80% in the number of machines with malware detections at the desktop.

In addition, the City's technicians report significantly fewer cases where machines have to be rebuilt because of infections. And since installing the Sophos appliances, complaints about slow machines have dropped to zero.

Mr. Gog concludes, "The products do what Sophos says they will. But, that's not all. Sophos supports us as if we're the most important customer they have. That's the highest praise I can give any vendor."

To find out how Sophos products can help protect your organization, visit www.sophos.com/products