

CEO Fraud and advanced spear phishing protection for Office 365

When a user almost fell for a CEO fraud email scam that could have resulted in financial losses, McGaw YMCA decided it was time to deploy advanced email security for Office 365.

A COMPLEX ORGANIZATION WITH CHALLENGING IT NEEDS

Founded in 1885 in Evanston, Illinois, McGaw YMCA has about 12,000 members and serves an estimated 20,000 people in the community each year. It is still true to the values on which it was founded – to strengthen communities through programs and services that nurture and enrich the lives of youth, promote healthy living and embed the ideals of social responsibility.

In practice, this translates to a diverse range of services for the community. These include those that are managed like standard businesses, such as day care and a gymnasium, to those more typical of a non-profit organization, like residential provision for low-income workers and supporting students and minorities. This has led to a complex organization encompassing a number of departments with very different information technology needs. Supporting them is the responsibility of Marc Blettry, Senior Director of Information Technology, and two IT staff.

SUPPORTING THE BUSINESS TO SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY

Marc's goal for the IT team is to ensure that their users are supported in every way possible to allow them to do their job and support the community. This extends to safeguarding them, so no one is unnecessarily hampered because they are concerned that they might become the victim of a cyber attack.

When he arrived at McGaw two years ago, his first task was to survey each area of the organization to get their views on how the IT team was doing. He then embarked on a number of projects related to unifying the IT infrastructure across the disparate departments. The goals were to reduce costs through centralized purchasing and ensure users were provided with the best IT to meet their specific needs. Finally, information security needed to be addressed.

IMPROVING THE INFORMATION SECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE

McGaw YMCA is a non-profit, 400 IT user organization. Like many similar companies, there was a belief that they had nothing of value that cyber criminals might want to steal. And like many such organizations, because of this belief, there were few resources dedicated to information security.

Marc knew that all organizations, regardless of size or commercial activities, can be subject to a cyber attack. He explained that unscrupulous cyber criminals often see non-profits as soft targets. They know they are often resource constrained, driven by a desire to maximize return on investment in any IT spend by ensuring it benefits their good work. So, he embarked on a project to strengthen security.

First, he put a dedicated security budget in place, then consolidated multiple endpoint security solutions to reduce cost of acquisition and support, and finally implemented web security. Since the organization was using Office 365, he assumed that email security was well covered by the native secure email gateway capabilities included with it.



“ When I look at the number of threats Cyren blocks, I think we were lucky not to have suffered a successful attack. ”

Marc Blettry, Senior Director of Information Technology

ADDRESSING EMAIL SECURITY CHALLENGES

It became clear that some threats were reaching users' mailboxes, reflecting the fact that email threats have changed and become more evasive and sophisticated.

Marc discovered how dangerous these threats were when a user asked him how to go about buying iTunes gift cards, since she had received a request to do so from a member of the senior leadership team. It transpired that the organization was suffering targeted spear phishing attacks that were reaching the CFO and CEO's assistants – so-called CEO fraud or impostor emails. Had this individual not flagged this incident it could have cost \$10,000-15,000.

PROOF OF CONCEPT DEMONSTRATES INCREASED PROTECTION

Marc contacted Cyren regarding advanced protection for their Office 365 email platform. A quick trial clearly demonstrated the extent of the problem he was facing, which was actually 10 times worse than he'd understood. Previously, reports he obtained from Office 365 suggested the service had been blocking around 1,000 phishing emails a week. During the trial, Cyren was blocking closer to 10,000 a week.

ONGOING PROTECTION FROM IMPOSTOR EMAILS AND IDENTIFYING TARGETED USERS

Now fully deployed, Cyren Email Security continues to protect from spam, malware, phishing and spear phishing, but the major benefit is in its ability to block over 99% of impostor emails.

Marc recognizes that no email security can block every threat, especially those that contain no attachments, links or obvious signs of social engineering. Cyren's reporting allows Marc to identify the users that are most targeted, those that cyber criminals are researching and sending well-crafted scam emails to. Now that he knows who they are, he is able to engage them and provide additional awareness training, so that if the worst happens and they do receive an impostor email, they recognize it and do not fall for the scam.

STRONG TECHNICAL SUPPORT FROM THE CYREN TEAM

The three-person McGaw YMCA IT team manages the needs of the whole organization. Support from their IT service providers, like Cyren, removes some of the burden on them.

Cyren Customer Success and Support worked closely with McGaw to not only deploy Cyren Email Security, but to educate them on security best practices. Since Cyren Email Security is a cloud service, and new functionality is deployed on a regular basis, Cyren schedules regular calls with the IT team to discuss any new functionality and make sure that McGaw is getting the best value from the service. This has resulted in a high level of trust and partnership between the two companies.

THE CHALLENGE

McGaw YMCA has a diverse set of departments, each with different IT needs. Adding to this complexity, like many non-profit organizations, it was seen as a soft target by cyber criminals who were targeting staff with spear phishing emails.

When an executive's assistant almost fell for a CEO fraud scam it was time to act and add advanced phishing protection for the Office 365 email platform.

THE CYREN DIFFERENCE

- Enables the IT team to better support their internal customers, who can focus on supporting the community, as users are no longer distracted by email threats
- Value was demonstrated with a free proof of concept
- Blocks 10,000 malicious and unwanted emails each week – around 50% of received emails
- Blocked 147 sophisticated and difficult-to-detect impostor emails in one week
- Identifies targeted users so the IT team can provide them with additional support
- Strong support from Cyren enables realization of maximum value from the service