Florida Gulf Coast University Teaches Malware a Lesson

Malwarebytes Anti-Malware for Business enables the Library Computing and Technology department to eliminate malware from staff systems and improve users' browsing savvy.

INDUSTRY
Education

BUSINESS CHALLENGE
Win the battle against malware while simplifying end user support, saving time, and reducing risk to university systems

IT ENVIRONMENT
The Library IT team supports 50 staff computers and 226 public computers in labs and study rooms. Lab computers have Centurion SmartShield installed to protect machine operating systems. Also uses Microsoft System Center Endpoint Protection anti-virus protection.

SOLUTION
50 licenses of Malwarebytes Anti-Malware for Business, which includes the Management Console.

RESULTS
– Saved time with automatic malware removal

– Increased IT team and library staff productivity by performing background scans and removing malware without taking machines out of service

– Deployed stronger endpoint protection and policy

– Enabled users to acquire safer browsing habits

BUSINESS PROFILE

Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers, FL offers 51 undergraduate and 28 graduate degree programs. With more than 14,600 students enrolled, the university is focused on keeping college affordable, graduating highly employable students with desirable degrees, and achieving recognition for its research. Crucial to student success are computing and technology skills. The Library Services department has its own Computing & Technology IT group with six full-time employees who manage and support computers in a number of labs, study rooms, kiosks, and research stacks.

> *Malwarebytes works flawlessly and has been a big help. We haven't had to take any machines down since we deployed it. It's one of the best purchases we've made."*
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> —Mário Bernardo, Assistant Director, Library Computer & Technology Systems

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

PUPS, TROJANS, AND OTHER BAD ACTORS

Universities' goals are to foster inquiry and learning. Unfortunately, in the 21st century, many of those quests can lead to places that deliver unwanted programs and threats along with answers to questions. The university's Library IT team was finding high amounts of malware on staff machines. Potentially Unwanted Programs (PUPs) were rampant. Some types of malware re-directed browsers, some were Trojans, and others were set to perform malicious exploits. As a result, staff computer performance slowed dramatically and users became frustrated when malware tried to hijack them to other sites.

Besides being frustrating for users, malware caused significant disruption and placed a heavy burden on the IT team. When a machine required malware cleanup, an IT team member had to stop whatever he was doing to fix a user's system. The user suffered a day of downtime and the IT team had to clean or completely re-install the machine. Most frustrating, there seemed to be no way to end the issues once and for all.

Malware also posed a risk to the main integrated library system (ILS) and the university's enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, both of which depend on Java code. Common Java and flash malware was crippling the Java-based applications and gaining direct contact with these systems. Once again, malware-related problems forced the IT team to constantly react to problems.

"We tried several options to fight malware," said Mário Bernardo, Assistant Director of Library Computer & Technology Systems for Florida Gulf Coast University. "I'd known about Malwarebytes from using it at home, and after trying it here, it did the best job."

2

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THE SOLUTION

MALWAREBYTES ANTI-MALWARE FOR BUSINESS

The university purchased Malwarebytes Anti-Malware for Business, which protects against zero-hour malware that most other solutions miss. It detects malware on demand when a scan is activated and provides advanced malware removal. Through the Malwarebytes Management Console, Bernardo and his team gained the upper hand in seeking and destroying harmful malware.

"When we ran Malwarebytes for the first time on our faculty and staff machines, it found 2100 objects," he said. "Most were fake toolbars, but we also found a couple of serious issues. Malwarebytes Anti-Malware for Business cleaned it right up."

AGGRESSIVE, LOW-IMPACT SCANNING IMPROVES PRODUCTIVITY

The IT team also ran Malwarebytes Anti-Malware for Business scanning for peer-to-peer and other advanced types of malware. To their delight, they found that they could perform aggressive scans on users' systems without affecting their productivity. In fact, most users never realized that scans were occurring.

Now Malwarebytes scans run every day—quietly and non-invasively in the background. The IT team can instantly push updates to clients or deploy new policy. Real-time monitoring and scans on demand give the team instant visibility into what's going on.

"Malwarebytes has been completely hands-off since we deployed it," said Bernardo. "It's really keeping the endpoints clean with no intervention on our part."

REPORTING DELIVERS DEEPER INSIGHT

"The Malwarebytes reports have been extremely valuable," Bernardo said. "They show us in detail which machines have issues, what types of malware are appearing, and also provide valuable insight into trends or patterns on library systems. We can also easily present data from Malwarebytes in our regular meetings. The charts are attractive and easy to understand."

STRONGER PROTECTION NOW IN PLACE

Through the reports, malware scans were found to have removed objects derived from web sources such as international websites, which tend to pass on a higher number of infections than domestic sites. And even newsletters and articles from reputable sources have shown up with malware attached.

The IT team also identified a recurring pattern of PUPs and a high number of hits for Mindspark toolbars, which enabled them to ramp up protection against these threats. In addition, Malwarebytes flagged a legacy application that the team discovered had not been designed well or deployed correctly. They were able to change the deployment and include that in its endpoint security policy.

"We changed our default settings to PUPs, and Malwarebytes handles everything," said Bernardo. "It scans everything, automatically removes threats, and delivers heuristics and notifications. We now have much stronger protection in place."

TEACHING SAFER BROWSING HABITS

Bernardo says that one of the most important benefits of Malwarebytes has been that it is teaching users safer browsing habits. Since the university fosters learning, the IT team wants users to know when they encounter a threat or why a website is blocked. They begin to recognize potentially dangerous sites and avoid downloading items that bring malware with them, and these habits can carry over to staff's home computers.

FLAWLESS PERFORMANCE FOR HIGH ROI

The IT team is enjoying significant time savings and higher productivity themselves, in addition to helping their users maintain malware-free productivity.

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About Malwarebytes
Malwarebytes provides anti-malware and anti-exploit software designed to protect businesses and consumers against zero-day threats that consistently escape detection by traditional antivirus solutions. Malwarebytes Anti-Malware earned an "Outstanding" rating by CNET editors, is a PCMag.com Editor's Choice, and was the only security software to earn a perfect malware remediation score from AV-TEST.org. That's why more than 38,000 SMBs and Enterprise businesses worldwide trust Malwarebytes to protect their data. Founded in 2008, Malwarebytes is headquartered in California, operates offices in Europe, and employs a global team of researchers and experts.

4

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