East Kent NHS — Avast Case Study

I am an IT professional employed by the UK National Health Service (NHS) and employed by the Health Informatics Services in East Kent — a geographical size of approximately 770 square miles and a population of 610,000 people or approximately 1% of the UK population. Supported are three main hospitals, numerous cottage hospitals and many clinics and GP surgeries located around East Kent along with several hundred servers and approximately 8000 workstations.

The nature of our business is health care and many of our applications are required by frontline medical staff on a 24/7 basis. One of my responsibilities is the security of data and to ensure the uninterrupted access to our clinical applications used in our hospitals, clinics and doctor's surgeries. Many of these applications are in use on a 24/7 basis and supply access to patient records, medical procedures and other critical data. Some of the data is supplied by applications running on local servers whilst other applications are web based and are accessed via the internet.

During February 2009 our network was infiltrated and infected with the Conficker viruses. As you may be aware this is an extremely virulent virus capable of causing widespread havoc and not only capable of putting servers or workstations out of action, but slowing network traffic to a crawl due to the sheer weight of traffic it created. The anti-virus application we were using at the time did not detect the infiltration of the virus much less contain it and we were staring into the abyss with the prospect of our network grinding to a halt with access to our clinical systems in jeopardy.

At this point a decision was taken by our management to change our anti-virus supplier on the recommendation of our colleagues in West Kent who were already using Avast and who had successfully contained the viral outbreak, a decision was made to switch to Avast anti-virus. Once the decision was taken to switch, the UK agent for Avast — Avosec run by Mr James Norris, were on site and were immediately able to assist in bringing the outbreak under control. Avosec supplied a server and a utility to allow for the uninstallation of our previous AV application. Once the Avast Antivirus server had been set up, we wrote a short and simple script which was then included in the system login script. When a user logged into the network, the script would run. Un-installation of the old AV agent would occur followed by the installation of our new AV agent, Avast.

Within the space of less than a week we were able to contain and then eliminate the threat posed by the Conficker virus and get our network back to normal.

As the person responsible for maintaining the shield against virus attack, my principal weapon is the Avast ADNM (**A**vast **D**istributed **N**etwork **M**anager) console from which I control all defences.

From the word go, and this whilst under tremendous pressure to contain the virus infestation, I found the controls easy to use and setting up was simple and intuitive.

We were able to deploy Avast to over 8000 workstations and numerous servers using a single server located at a single point without any bandwidth issues. The deployment was quick and efficient.

Ongoing maintenance is simple and does not require a lot of my time.

Virus definition updates occur automatically and is reliable. Updating of client versions is simple and does not tax available network bandwidth as is other console maintenance like licencing.

Maintenance of the Avast database using "SQL Express" is simple and the application automatically.

Once the Avast client has been set up on workstations and servers, it can be made tamper-proof preventing staff from disabling or otherwise changing the predetermined client configuration.

We utilise several applications which cannot be scanned in the normal manner and setting up specific scanning tasks for this type of client is easy to do and provides the flexibility to fine tune AV scanning on heavily accessed and utilized servers.

The Avast Management Console contains all the features you would expect from a world class anti virus agent. The computer catalogue (list of all clients) can be set up by location, domain, etc. Any updating task can be initiated from the console and new tasks are easy to create and deploy. Logs are available for all tasks.

Software support for Avast is supplied by the UK agent for Avast namely AVOSEC. Responses to any requests for support have been quick and accurate. Helpdesk staff is knowledgeable and professional with good knowledge of the products they provide their clients with.

To sum up:

Protection is good and we have successfully maintained our defences against the relentless viral/malware attack emanating from the World Wide Web, as well as locally introduced infections. The console is easy to use and does not require a lot of time to maintain to a high standard.

We are happy with the Avast product and on a personal level, I would recommend this product to any organisation wishing to secure their network from viral threats.

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