Large Louisiana school district shines light on endpoint security

Cleared 5,000 infections in the first week

THE CHALLENGE

Keeping 36,000 desktops, laptops and tablets, along with physical and virtual servers up and running, in peak performance and cyber-secure is a never-ending process. Chasing down infections with the district's old Microsoft System Center Endpoint Protection (SCEP) security solution slowed users' devices and didn't always yield enough information to root out the problem.

"The Microsoft solution just wasn't granular enough," shares Mike Franks, Calcasieu's network administrator. "It couldn't always tell us what endpoint was affected or the variant of the infection. Nor could it confirm if the problem was cleaned out or quarantined."

Speed was another issue. Because the Microsoft solution was more memory-intensive, programs took longer to start up and documents were slower to open. "Users were frustrated with the lag time," says Sheryl Abshire, Chief Technology Officer, Calcasieu Parish Public Schools.

The tipping point came when the CryptoLocker virus hit the district. "We only found out because a user called to say their files were disappearing," says Abshire. "We scrambled to shut down the system so only 10 of our users were affected. Otherwise, it could have been much worse."

THE SOLUTION

Calcasieu Parish Public Schools started intensively evaluating endpoint security solutions from Bitdefender, Sophos, Cylance and others. Since Bitdefender's solutions were top-ranked by independent industry studies and provided the best overall detection and clean-up rate, Calcasieu chose Bitdefender GravityZone.

The school district installed GravityZone on approximately 36,000 desktops, laptops and tablets, as well as 20 physical servers and 20 Microsoft Hyper-V virtualized servers. Because the Bitdefender solution is intuitive and self-configuring, the first phase of deployment was completed in under two weeks.

THE RESULTS

In the first week of operation, GravityZone cleared over 5,000 infections from 7,000 endpoints.

"Prior to Bitdefender, we often didn't know there was a virus outbreak until somebody called to let us know that their machine was acting funny or had slowed to a crawl or a file went missing," says Franks. "Now we can be more proactive and get ahead of it before problems spiral. It also means we've seen a drop-off in trouble calls to IT."

Calcasieu Parish Public Schools is the fifth-largest school district in Louisiana. Stretching across 1,094 square miles, it serves more than 32,000 students at 63 school sites.

Industry
Education

Location
Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana, U.S.A.

Users
Approximately 40,000 students, teachers and staff

Results
- Cleared 5,000 infections from 7,000 endpoints the first week

- Improved responsiveness and speed of user devices

- Reduced volume of trouble calls

The district uses Bitdefender's adaptive, layered endpoint security solution to continuously monitor runtime behavior and help predict, prevent and evade zero-day threats and other cyberattacks. It also would root out hidden files, processes and registry keys, as well as adware and low-level viruses to help computers run faster.

"Bitdefender is an elegant solution that is transparent to the user," explained Abshire. "It uses far less memory than our prior Microsoft security solution, which is especially great for our older machines that have less processing power."

According to Franks, the biggest change is that reality is finally matching expectation.

"Under the old solution, when we didn't get any notification of viruses or adware or security problems across our network, we assumed everything was going smoothly," he says. "That was a false reality. With GravityZone's sophisticated dashboard, we finally have the granular data to prove problems have been detected and purged or quarantined."

Abshire agrees that this increased visibility is vital to instilling confidence in the security of the school district's massive infrastructure. "Before GravityZone, it was like we were driving with obscured vision. Now that we see much more than we could before, we feel much better protected. It helps us sleep a lot better at night."

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Bitdefender Footprint
- GravityZone Security for Servers
- GravityZone Security for Workstations
- GravityZone On-Premises Console

IT Environment
- Amazon Web Services (AWS)
- Microsoft Hyper-V

Operating Systems
- Linux
- Microsoft Windows

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