LTE group aces cybersecurity

Education provider reduces threats to zero, revs up performance of virtual desktops, and decreases security administration time by 80 percent

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Learning | Training | Employment

LTE group is a leading provider of quality learning, training and employment opportunities across the U.K. With 5,000 colleagues and more than 100,000 learners, LTE Group offers continuing education, training and employment services; professional training courses; and apprenticeships and work-based training.

Industry
Education

Headquarters
Manchester, England, United Kingdom

Employees
5,000 (IT staff, 48)

Results
- Zero security incidents over the last 18 months since deployment

- Reduced time to perform full scans to 20-30 minutes compared to one hour or more

- Cut virtual desktop login and response times by 30 percent

- Decreased security administration time from 3-8 hours to one hour per week

THE CHALLENGE

LTE group, a leading provider of learning and training services, knew that replacing a long-time legacy PBX phone system with Skype VoIP was a big change for the firm's 8,000 phone users. What they didn't expect was that their Skype deployment would be disrupted by an infection bypassing the incumbent McAfee endpoint security solution. The infection disconnected and reduced the quality of Skype sessions that employees depend on for phone and video conversations and delivery of remote video-based training.

But that wasn't all. A security breach occurred resulting in rolling downtime for 1,000 employees and several thousand students over two weeks as IT scrambled to take machines off-line and clean them. Despite being turned off, McAfee's peer-to-peer broadcasting (to share signature files) led to problems on the network. IT proved the root of the problem with packet capture but while McAfee acknowledged the problem, they couldn't fix it.

Dissatisfied with the breach and high number of threats missed by McAfee, the IT team turned to an evaluation of alternatives, including Sophos, Cylance, Microsoft Windows Defender, and Bitdefender solutions. The winner was Bitdefender GravityZone.

Jamie Marshall, Group IT Director, LTE group, says, "Bitdefender simply was the best. We have a complex, diverse and highly virtualized infrastructure. During our pilot, GravityZone automatically pulled everything in and started blocking threats. It passed every single test we threw at it."

THE SOLUTION

LTE group uses Bitdefender GravityZone to safeguard 6,000 Microsoft Windows and Apple workstations with plans to extend GravityZone to an additional 4,000 workstations. Bitdefender also protects LTE group's 600 VMware ESXi virtual servers, 1,750 VMware Horizon View virtual desktops, 70 physical Windows and Linux servers, and 7,000 Microsoft Exchange mailboxes.

Bitdefender

Additional applications running on LTE group's infrastructure protected by Bitdefender include Microsoft SQL Server, Skype, file management, and EBS learning management system.

The Bitdefender implementation was remarkably smooth, explains Marshall: "The GravityZone rollout was the best deployment I've seen. It automatically removed McAfee while installing GravityZone and immediately started picking up threats. Users were unaware of what was happening. Typically, these deployments are quite resource intensive but GravityZone barely required our attention."

THE RESULTS

The IT team has more time available now that GravityZone consistently keeps out malware and other threats from breaching LTE group's large, diverse infrastructure. James Coppock, Enterprise Architect, LTE group, explains, "We haven't had a single breach since installing GravityZone 18 months ago. It's blocking hundreds of threats a day."

Previously, a big entry point for malware were USB devices plugged into endpoints by staff and students. "GravityZone's device control allows us to block USB devices on both Windows and Mac endpoints," notes Coppock. "The automated exceptions and content filter are quite powerful. All these safeguards save us time because we no longer have to manually address security or clean up after infections get through.

Weekly time spent on security administration has decreased by up to more than 80 percent. "Before, we spent three to eight hours a week on checking McAfee updates and addressing missed endpoints," recalls Marshall. "That doesn't include all the time troubleshooting and resolving security issues. With Bitdefender, we do a quick check of the console daily, which adds up to an hour a week. We don't spend any time dealing with outbreaks, since there are none."

Since adopting Bitdefender, LTE group's security-related trouble calls also decreased from about 150 to less than 50 on average per month. Coppock reflects, "We're a small IT team, so we need hands-off solutions that look after themselves. Bitdefender absolutely nailed it because GravityZone is so simple to use but extremely powerful."

Another major improvement is endpoint performance. If IT feared an infection and executed a massive scan with McAfee, the infrastructure was almost crippled. Marshall says, "Bitdefender doesn't affect endpoints during scanning. The full scans also are much quicker—20 to 30 minutes compared to an hour or more for McAfee."

Another performance booster is GravityZone's seamless integration with LTE group's VMware NSX environment. The integration enables agentless security that eliminates the need to install and run an agent on virtual endpoints. This improves performance of servers and virtual desktops since resource-intensive security tasks, such as antimalware scanning and threat-database updates, run on a dedicated security server rather than each individual virtual machine. Shares Marshall, "Our virtual desktop users have seen login and response times decrease by 30 percent with GravityZone."

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James Coppock, Enterprise Architect, LTE group

IT Environment
- VMware ESXi
- VMware Horizon View
- VMware NSX

Operating Systems
- Apple (Mac)
- Linux
- Microsoft Windows