Malwarebytes

Aztec Municipal School District tests seven solutions to protect against threats

Malwarebytes gets the only A+ against ransomware

INDUSTRY
Education

BUSINESS CHALLENGE
Protect student data and privacy

IT ENVIRONMENT
Layered security approach with firewalls and content filtering

SOLUTION
Malwarebytes Endpoint Security, Premium Services

RESULTS
- Eliminated ransomware and malware infections
- Accelerated protection for staff computers with rapid deployment
- Saved hours of technician time lost to re-imaging systems and cleaning infections

Business profile

Located in the Four Corners area of New Mexico, the Aztec Municipal School District is dedicated to helping students build a foundation for successful lives. Three thousand students rely on a safe computing experience while they learn and explore the world. The district's technology department relies on Malwarebytes to help them keep computers clean and student privacy and data safe.

> We tested Kaspersky, Malwarebytes, McAfee, Microsoft, Panda, Sophos, Symantec, and VIPRE. Only Malwarebytes isolated potential threats to prevent infection and protected users from going to damaging sites. Malwarebytes won handily.
>
> —Shawn Shay, Director of Technology, Aztec Municipal School District

Business challenge

Fighting the battle against ransomware

Students use the district's computer labs or mobile computer carts for lessons and homework, while teachers and administrators are provided with PCs and administrative privileges on their machines. The IT team protects all machines with a layered security approach and, until recently, Sophos antivirus software.

"Our biggest concern is that we're responsible for student data," said Shawn Shay, Director of Technology for the Aztec Municipal School District. "We want to make sure that they aren't exposed to cyberthreats that could have a detrimental effect on their futures."

Keeping data safe has gotten more difficult. In the past year, ransomware encrypted several staff computers. Malware, particularly rootkits, increased. Infections also came from staff clicking on malicious attachments or URLs and sharing USB drives. If a lab computer became infected, a technician shut it down and reinstalled the image in a few minutes. In contrast, it took several hours to two days to clean and reinstall everything on a staff

machine. Aztec had been using Sophos antivirus, but it wasn't catching malware.

"Sophos was the worst antivirus product we ever had," said Shay. "It didn't catch as many malware instances or viruses as had been advertised. Worse, when we installed the upgrade, it corrupted our SQL server. It simply wasn't manageable and we terminated the agreement early."

Every time the technicians looked at the Sophos solution, they saw multiple computers with the same infection—and previously cleaned computers became re-infected.

"Sophos wouldn't clean up the infections," said Matt Palulis, Technology Technician for Aztec Municipal School District. "We had to back up the files and reimage the systems, which became even more time-consuming."

The solution

Malwarebytes Endpoint Security

The school district re-evaluates its solutions every year. The team chose all of the best-known antivirus and anti-malware solutions on the market and threw every possible type of infection at them. They evaluated the solutions on three criteria. First, did it stop suspicious behavior? Second, if it initially allowed the behavior, did it later remove it? If the solution failed these tests, it was discarded. And finally, was the management console easy to use?

"We tested Kaspersky, Malwarebytes, McAfee, Microsoft, Panda, Sophos, Symantec, and VIPRE," said Shay. "Only Malwarebytes isolated potential threats to prevent infection and protected users from going to damaging sites. Malwarebytes won handily."

Priceless protection

Since Malwarebytes was deployed, the school district has not had any ransomware or malware infections. Malwarebytes has stopped all kinds of threats—drive-by downloads, access to malicious sites, fake antivirus programs, ransomware, and fake Java updates.

"The protection is priceless," said Shay. "Malwarebytes is capable of stopping whatever staff members or students get into. The company completely backed up its claim of protecting against ransomware."

Fast response

Fast, easy deployment through the Malwarebytes Management Console saved hours of time for technicians and minimized risk for the district. Previous solutions were cumbersome to use and required "jumping through a lot of hoops." Now it takes just minutes—even for staff machines. If an administrator is leaving for a conference the next day, a technician can ensure that the machine is clean and updated on the fly.

"One of our first 'wow' moments was when we deployed Malwarebytes," said Palulis. "It shocked me how fast it deployed. In just a few days, we were able to protect all of the staff machines before they left for the summer."

Staying on top

The team looks at Malwarebytes reports monthly to see what is blocked and to ensure that all machines are up to date. Shay also reviews Malwarebytes data for additional insight into threats that the firewall and content filtering solution encounter. Correlating information between systems provides better visibility into potential infection patterns.

"Malwarebytes' consistency is a determining factor for our choice," said Shay. "In the past, we purchased solutions for one year, and then reevaluated. This time, it made perfect sense to choose Malwarebytes for two years. Malwarebytes stays on top of what they do so we can stay on top of protecting our students and staff."