Walsall College

Customer-at-a-Glance

Walsall College is the only college in the Black Country to be rated outstanding by Ofsted. In 2015, they opened a new £11m Business and Sports Hub and have invested £300,000 in an impressive Engineering and Manufacturing Workshop.

Industry
Further education

Number of Staff
8,000 students and 700 staff

Sophos Solutions
Sophos UTM FullGuard

Sophos Customer
Since July 2014

Walsall College choose Sophos to replace the Microsoft Threat Management Gateway and reduce helpdesk incidents by 99%

'When support for the Microsoft Threat Management Gateway went end of life in 2014 we replaced it with Sophos UTM and have seen a 99% reduction in helpdesk incidents.''

MIKE BEDFORD
IT System Support Coordinator - Walsall College

'We like Sophos UTM because it's a software solution and there is no risk of associated hardware failures.'

MIKE BEDFORD
IT System Support Coordinator
Walsall College

Mike Bedford is IT System Support Coordinator at Walsall College. In late 2014 he began searching fora replacement for the Microsoft Threat Management Gateway which was due to end its support in December 2015. He researched WatchGuard, Fortinet and Sophos and Sophos came out as the clear winner.

Business Challenge

As an education establishment, Walsall College face numerous challenges. These include:

‣ Online safety

Keeping staff and students safe online is crucial, regardless of the device they are using. With an onsite nursery, younger children need to be protected too, so the college must secure online safety for 0-18 year olds, as well as staff. According to IT System Support Coordinator Mike Bedford: "We have a duty of care to keep everyone protected, even those bringing their own device to college."

‣ Wireless provision

The IT team provide both college and guest wireless so all users can access the internet wherever they are, and from their own laptops, tablets or smartphones. The wireless provision therefore needs to be safe and secure.

‣ Budget restrictions

Mike was looking for a solution that didn't require initial or ongoing purchase of hardware and the associated costs and time it would take to assess, manage and replace fails.

Technology Solution

Walsall College spent some time assessing potential solutions and compared security products from WatchGuard, Fortinet and Sophos. Sophos UTM beat the competitors' products due to:

‣ The ability to 'try before you buy' and test before purchase. Mike and his team were able to download a free trial version of Sophos UTM to see the interface and how it worked.

‣ Ease of management. According to Mike: "We were up and running within three days compared with weeks from other vendors and this even included setting up all the permissions. With competing solutions we would have spent at least double the amount of time doing this. Sophos UTM does exactly what you expect it to do and there has been no going back and forth with issues as we experienced with previous vendors."

‣ The range of security options available within Sophos UTM, including web server protection, network protection, wireless, web filtering and more.

‣ The excellent service offered by Sophos. "They provided us with all the information we needed to make a decision," says Mike. "Their technical support is also fantastic."

When the college's existing email and endpoint security contracts come to an end, Mike also plans to switch these elements on within Sophos UTM. This will save further costs and management time by consolidating all solutions under the UTM umbrella.

' We now have one Sophos solution doing more work than our three previous Microsoft solutions – and we are getting greater bandwidth.'

MIKE BEDFORD
IT System Support Coordinator
Walsall College

Business Results

Mike and his team now enjoy a significantly reduced security workload. In fact, Mike believes that helpdesk calls have been reduced by 99%. Further benefits to the college include:

‣ Sophos UTM filtering 10 million packets every day

‣ 500,000 web requests filtered every day

‣ One single Sophos solution doing the same amount of work as the three previous Microsoft solutions

‣ A 20% increase in bandwidth

‣ Easy to use customised web filtering

‣ Essentially, a hardware free solution that carries far fewer failure risks and associated costs

Mike concludes: "We chose Sophos due to their software solution - and as an education establishment, price played a big part in our decision making too. Sophos UTM is a plug and play product and for us, security is now less of a worry. We also passed our yearly IT audit with no problems whatsoever and based on the feature set and the price, we would definitely recommend Sophos for the education sector."

To find out more about Sophos solutions,

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