

Case Study: National Instruments



National Instruments stomps out spam with the Proofpoint Messaging Security Gateway.™

battling spam

National Instruments is an Austin, Texas-based company focusing on virtual instrumentation, a revolutionary concept that has changed the way engineers and scientists approach measurement and automation. Using the personal computer and its related technologies, virtual instrumentation improves productivity and reduces customer costs through easy-to-integrate software and modular hardware for test and measurement. National Instruments customers include engineers, scientists and technical professionals across a wide variety of vertical markets.

In early 2003, National Instruments noticed a rise in the amount of spam it was receiving and a decrease in the effectiveness of its homegrown anti-spam solution. “The spammers and their technology seemed to be getting more clever,” said Ryan Trevino, Enterprise Messaging Administrator at National Instruments. National Instruments was receiving upward of 250,000 inbound emails per day, which placed a considerable strain on downstream systems. “We were being inundated with a rising number unsolicited email and needed to implement a new solution quickly,” said Trevino.

think globally, act locally

Trevino and his team began evaluating anti-spam products during the second quarter of 2004 and narrowed the search to appliances and hosted solutions that could stop spam and viruses at the email gateway. According to Trevino, the most important decision criterion in the evaluation process was the efficiency of the proposed solution. The solution also had to provide sufficient administrative control and an easy-to-use interface. Equally important, the new anti-spam solution had to decrease the bandwidth drain on the National Instrument downstream messaging systems.

The challenge for National Instruments in implementing an anti-spam solution lay in the diversity and distribution of its users. National Instruments has more than 3,500 user inboxes located in 44 countries worldwide. “We had to be absolutely sure that the anti-spam solution we selected matched our needs from the perspective of both infrastructure and

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Ryan Trevino
Enterprise Messaging Administrator
National Instruments

Business challenge

National Instruments needed anti-spam technology to replace its existing “home grown” solution that could no longer keep up with the influx of unsolicited email. The company also wanted to ensure its employees had a flexible, user-friendly solution that allows for individually tailored safe- and block-lists to best meet employee needs without the risk of false positives.

Proofpoint solution

National Instruments selected Proofpoint and the Proofpoint Messaging Security Gateway™ to protect more than 3,500 employee inboxes. Proofpoint set up a test environment that allowed National Instruments to examine in-depth how the Messaging Security Gateway could effectively cleanse the email channel of all message-borne threats, including spam, viruses and phishing attacks. During the test, the Proofpoint Messaging Security Gateway identified more than 95% of incoming messages as spam with virtually no false positives.

Results achieved

With Proofpoint, National Instruments could eliminate its spam problem overnight. The Proofpoint solution also provided a very user-friendly interface and the additional benefit of more stringent protection against phishing attacks.

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corporate culture. With so many international locations, we had to block a wide range of spam attacks and accommodate an equally diverse range of end user spam-blocking preferences,” said Trevino.

The typical end user at National Instruments ranges from highly technical engineers to manufacturing and sales personnel located all over the world. With the requirements for the company’s anti-spam solution clearly outlined, Trevino and his team commenced testing products from numerous vendors. The tests consisted of a month-long evaluation beginning first with a test sampling of 50 users email systems in audit mode. Trevino and his team assessed the results for two weeks and then expanded the test to the entire company’s email stream for an additional two weeks.

Proofpoint Products Deployed
Proofpoint Messaging Security Gateway
Proofpoint Spam Detection
Proofpoint Virus Protection (F-Secure)

Not every solution met the strict standards of National Instruments. Using Proofpoint, National Instruments achieved well over 95% accuracy out-of-the-box, and for most users the company was able to block spam with 99% accuracy. During the pilot program, Proofpoint accurately blocked incoming spam (which represented 80% of the total mail volume at National Instruments) with a high degree of confidence. Only 2% of those messages were identified as “probable spam,” allowing National Instruments to adopt aggressive spam elimination policies and discard undesired email messages before they can affect downstream systems.

single platform, worldwide solution

Following the successful test of the Proofpoint Messaging Security Gateway, the National Instruments team moved to a full-scale implementation. Since rolling out the Proofpoint Messaging Security Gateway, National Instruments continues to reap the benefits of superior spam blocking, and Trevino and his team routinely receive positive feedback from employees.

According to Trevino, Proofpoint’s execution, from pre-sales through testing, all the way to the final sale and implementation, was flawless. “Proofpoint provided excellent, knowledgeable support and was genuinely interested in tuning the solution to best meet the needs of National Instruments. The feedback from our user base has been outstanding. People cannot stop talking about the solution and the fact that their spam disappeared virtually overnight. We couldn’t be happier with the Proofpoint Messaging Security Gateway.” ➤

About National Instruments

National Instruments (www.ni.com) is a technology pioneer and leader in virtual instrumentation – a revolutionary concept that has changed the way engineers and scientists in industry, government and academia approach measurement and automation. Leveraging the PC and its related technologies, virtual instrumentation increases productivity and lowers costs through easy-to-integrate software, such as the NI LabVIEW graphical development environment, and modular hardware, such as PXI modules for data acquisition, instrument control and machine vision. Headquartered in Austin, Texas, NI has more than 3,400 employees and direct operations in approximately 40 countries. In 2004, the company sold products to more than 25,000 companies in 90 countries.

About Proofpoint, Inc.

Proofpoint provides messaging security solutions for large enterprises to stop spam, protect against email viruses and ensure compliance with corporate policies and regulations through their messaging infrastructure. The company’s flagship products, the Proofpoint Messaging Security Gateway™ and Proofpoint Protection Server® provide future-proof messaging security using Proofpoint MLX™ technology, an advanced machine learning system developed by Proofpoint scientists and engineers.

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