



Managing and Accessing Data Archives Provides Food For Thought For Provisions Wholesaler

Bidfood is one of New Zealand's largest wholesale food distributors, providing the foodservice and hospitality industry with a wide range of over 20,000 products. It services all sizes of businesses, from small cafes to major chains.

Challenge

Bidfood is required to keep certain communications around food safety for a minimum of 10 years. With such a huge amount of information residing in the system, finding a way to easily archive, manage and access that data when required had become a massive task.

"Initially, we were purely interested in an archiving solution. We are a big proponent of open source here but there wasn't an open source archiving tool that was a viable option for us," explained Bidfood CIO, Dan Morgan. "Some of our mailboxes are extraordinarily large."

Back in 2019 when the decision was made to go to the market, Dan was the IT operations manager, prior to his promotion to CIO. With a background in security, he wanted a solution that would strengthen Bidfood's security posture, rather than just a standalone archiving solution.

At a Glance

- Bidfood's unwieldy and out of hand archiving system has now been brought under control.
- Search times have been slashed, with much more accurate results now presented to staff.
- The company's IT security and executive team can now rest easy knowing that they have an extra layer of protection against malicious email, and the threat of their network being compromised has been diminished.

Looking Ahead

Bidfood's IT support staff have much more available time to focus on projects that will help grow the business now that they have to deal with far less email security questions from staff.

Staff are also able to dedicate more time to value-add activities now that the time they spend searching for information in the company archive has been drastically reduced.

“Choosing Mimecast was one of the easiest business cases I’ve ever had to make, because there was an incident with a company we have an association with, and Mimecast’s Targeted Threat Protection could stop what happened to them from happening to us.”

Dan Morgan - CIO, Bidfood

“Mimecast ticked all the boxes for us in that regard. We couldn’t find another competitively priced product that would do what Mimecast could for us,” said Morgan.

Prior to engaging Mimecast, Bidfood did its own internal phishing tests and staff security training. 99% of the time, staff were able to flag suspicious emails and links to IT before they actioned it, but the number of malicious messages that were still landing in staff inboxes was a red flag for Dan and his team.

“The measures that we took to train up our staff meant that we captured these messages before they caused any harm, but they shouldn’t have got through undetected in the first place. Email is the primary attack vector these days, and we knew we had to strengthen our borders,” said Morgan.

While Bidfood’s network was “reasonably secure and reasonably locked down”, Morgan said that email was the company’s “biggest gaping hole” when it came to network security.

“It only takes one user to click on one link, then you’ve had it. A business we have a close association with had that exact scenario. They were hit just prior to Christmas, which is the busiest time of the year for us globally as a business. The impact was massive. I couldn’t even begin to calculate how much money they actually lost for being down for 72 hours, but it’s a lot. That’s simply not an acceptable situation for us.”

Solution

While the initial impetus for engaging Mimecast was the archiving capability, once the news of the aforementioned breach, at a company we have an association with, spread throughout the organisation, security became a big part of the conversation.

As for the archiving, because Bidfood is legally required to keep communications, they were retaining absolutely everything, including their email spam, so their databases, exchange logs, and other repositories were bursting at the seams.

“Prior to having Mimecast, I performed a test to restore our Exchange database. In comparison, the last restore test we did with Mimecast took half as long, which is clearly a massive improvement,” said Morgan.

Around 85% of Bidfood’s business comes through its e-commerce platform, with the other 15% via phone and email. To have email downtime would be a critical situation, not just in terms of potential lost orders but also because from time to time, the company receives product recall orders via email. Such emails simply cannot be missed.

“To have the always-on capability that Mimecast provides means that I can turn our Exchange servers off but people still get their messages. Once a product recall lands, we have our own method for recording it that isn’t so reliant on email. But suppliers tend to be reliant on email, so downtime is not an option for that. If you get a product recall wrong, people could die. It’s as simple as that,” explained Morgan.

Previously, if someone sent a link to a dodgy website, Bidfood wasn’t able to sandbox it and have it tested before it hit the company network.

“I’ll be honest, that was something that at times actually kept me awake at night - the thought that if someone clicks on a bad link tonight, what damage is going to be done before we notice it in the morning? To have that extra layer that Mimecast Targeted Threat Protection provides for us between our network and the bad guys has been a huge relief,” said Morgan. “Now that we’ve got Mimecast in place, I’m a lot more confident that a bad link is much less likely to get through.”

Morgan, his security colleagues, and indeed the entire executive team at Bidfood are now a lot happier about their security posture.

“I do a monthly report for the executive team, and the Mimecast service report and executive summary is always at the top of my list to include. Everyone knows how many people clicked on dodgy links and it’s discussed at the executive level, whereas a few years ago, that wouldn’t have been the case. Security is now front of mind for the executive team, which is music to my ears.”

Calls to the helpdesk team have also been dramatically reduced, as they’re no longer having to deal with multiple tickets every day which ask whether an email attachment or link is ok. The rogue emails simply aren’t getting through in the first place.

Another big plus for Bidfood’s staff has been Mimecast Cloud Archive’s search functionality. Morgan lamented the capability of Outlook’s search, noting that searches that previously took half an hour or more on Outlook were now being done on Mimecast in a minute or two.

“The biggest feedback I’ve received from my users is that they love the search functionality with Mimecast Cloud Archive because they can limit the timeframes of searches, focus solely on attachments, and so on. It’s just quick, intuitive and produces way more accurate and relevant results than a traditional email search.”

Dan Morgan - CIO, Bidfood

All of this meant that Bidfood was able to achieve ROI on Mimecast within around six months, which was a few months ahead of its own pre-implementation forecast.

Summary

Mimecast has helped Bidfood on a number of fronts, most notably by easing the management and access of its considerable archive, tightening up its email security so that malicious emails are intercepted and dealt with before they reach employee inboxes, and providing regular insight into how the company’s security performance is tracking.