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The Education Alliance Protects Students and Their Education

As a Multi Academy Trust comprised of several schools and more than 6,000 students and staff, email security is a priority for The Education Alliance. "Ultimately, we are responsible for protecting our students' education," said Matt Wadsworth, IT Director at The Education Alliance.

Now, with Mimecast's complete Email Security suite, Wadsworth and his team are doing exactly that.

Vision

Initially, Wadsworth and his IT team relied on Microsoft's security suite to protect thousands of Office 365 accounts. "We were lacking any advanced protection features," said Wadsworth. "I always felt that products like Microsoft's security tools are like locking the door to your house but leaving a key under the mat. There's always a way in."

And with the threat of ransomware growing, a change in strategy was necessary. "Ransomware attacks in the education sector have grown exponentially in the last 18 months," Wadsworth noted. "And it's difficult to protect educational institutions because a lot of products are user

At a Glance

The Education Alliance is a Multi Academy Trust based in Yorkshire comprised of roughly 600 staff and 6,000 students.

THE EDUCATION ALLIANCE

Problem

With the ransomware epidemic growing, particularly among educational institutions, The Education Alliance needed a comprehensive email security solution that would help them block threats and be more proactive at the same time.

Solution

- Mimecast Email Security
- Mimecast URL Protect
- Mimecast Attachment Protect
- Mimecast Impersonation Protect
- Mimecast Internal Email Protect
- Mimecast Awareness Training

Benefits

- Mimecast URL Protect blocks suspicious domains while users are at work or at home
- Customizable features free up the IT teams' time and make for a more user-friendly experience
- Mimecast naturally educates users on best cyber practices

based, and being an organisation comprised of close to 7,000 people, there's a lot that can go wrong. All it takes is one wrong click."

"We undertook a review of where we stand in the fight against ransomware," said Wadsworth. "We looked at all the ways in and realised we needed a more complete and proactive solution."

Strategy

After working with several security vendors spanning nearly two years, The Education Alliance wasn't satisfied. "Most solutions were purely just a gateway. While they blocked the bulk of threats, they couldn't block URLs within email bodies and there was no training aspect," he said. "That led to a lot of manual processes which consumed a lot of our time for both the user and my team."

Eventually, Wadsworth spoke with a third-party who told him to look into Mimecast. "Right away I could see they were a market leader. Not only did Mimecast offer a more comprehensive solution beyond just a gateway, but we were intrigued by how customisable their products were," said Wadsworth.

Outcome

Shortly after implementing Mimecast's comprehensive suite of Email Security products, they were put to the test. "Quite a number of schools and colleges in our area have been hit by account takeovers recently," Wadsworth said. "Luckily we had Mimecast at work when the threat reached The Education Alliance. A user clicked on a malicious link, and it got through the gateway, but link protection blocked it. That was all the proof we needed to know that Mimecast was right for us."

And he notes that Mimecast URL Protect has perhaps had the biggest impact of all. "It's amazing that with Mimecast URL Protect you can directly block URLs and suddenly become aware of a domain in a link," Wadsworth noted. "Being able to easily block a domain in a URL, no matter if the user is at work or at home, is an important feature."

Overall, Wadsworth feels that The Education Alliance is better positioned to battle cyber threats, and he feels that users are more proactive as a result. "Mimecast naturally educates our email users because it makes them think about what they're doing," said Wadsworth. "And they understand that we're not trying to slow them down, we're just trying to protect our schools."

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> *Matt Wadsworth*
> *Head of Infrastructure, IT Director, The Education Alliance*