



Woodruff Arts Center's Journey with Mimecast

The Woodruff Arts Center, located in Atlanta, Georgia, is a cultural hub that houses a museum, a Grammy-winning orchestra, and a Tony Award-winning theater. Beyond its artistic endeavors, the center also serves as a premier event and conference space. With such a diverse range of activities and stakeholders, including artists, patrons, and corporate clients, the organization faces unique IT security challenges. At the helm of these efforts is John Cooper, the Director of IT Security, who has been instrumental in transforming the center's cybersecurity posture.

John began his career at the Woodruff Arts Center as an IT analyst, steadily rising through the ranks to become the Director of IT Security. Over the years, he has written and implemented critical security policies, built a team of 12, and overseen the integration of various security tools. One of the most impactful tools in their security stack is Mimecast, which John inherited upon joining the organization. Under his leadership, Mimecast has become a cornerstone of their cybersecurity strategy, helping to protect the center's four major and 12 auxiliary domains.

Mimecast's Role in Strengthening Security

The Woodruff Arts Center adopted Mimecast following a security breach in 2019, which highlighted the need for robust email security and data retention solutions. Mimecast has since played a pivotal role in addressing these challenges:

1. Email Security and Quarantine Process

John and his team rely heavily on Mimecast's quarantine process, which provides real-time alerts and messaging tracking. This feature allows them to quickly identify and address potential threats across the system. John

appreciates how seamlessly Mimecast integrates with other tools like CrowdStrike, ensuring that all solutions deliver consistent and actionable data.

2. Data Retention and Archiving

When John joined the organization, email conversations were not properly backed up or accessible. Mimecast's Archive feature resolved this issue, providing a secure and easily implementable solution. The simplicity of the implementation process, supported by Mimecast's managed services, was a key factor in its success.

3. DMARC Implementation

Woodruff's enforcement of a DMARC policy has prevented spoofing attacks that target vulnerable stakeholders, especially those using freemail accounts, like artists, for which security checks are typically less rigorous than corporate email systems.

4. Dashboards and Reporting

Mimecast's dashboards have become an essential tool for John when presenting security updates to management. The ability to provide consistent and credible data across all systems has enhanced his team's credibility and decision-making processes.

5. Data Loss Prevention and Risk Assessment

Data loss prevention has been a critical focus for the Woodruff Arts Center. Mimecast's Archive has played a pivotal role in these efforts, ensuring data retention. John highlights the importance of consistent data across systems for accurate reporting and incident response, enabling his team to navigate and respond to alerts effectively.

“ You can't get to the level of using AI safely if you're still clicking on bad links...”
- John Cooper, the Director of IT Security

Integration with CrowdStrike: A Unified Approach to Security

John emphasizes the importance of integrating security tools like Mimecast and CrowdStrike to ensure consistent data across applications. This integration not only enhances stability and accuracy in security alerts but also simplifies incident response and reporting. The configuration process for integrating Mimecast with CrowdStrike was straightforward, taking under two hours. While the integration has not significantly altered workflows or policies, it has provided a unified data source that fosters trust and alignment among stakeholders.

Future Plans: Human Risk Command Center and AI Integration

While Mimecast has already delivered significant value, John is excited about the potential of the Human Risk Command Center (HRCC). This tool will allow his team to identify high-risk users and tailor training and simulations to address their specific needs. By leveraging data from existing tools, the HRCC will help the Woodruff Arts Center focus its efforts on improving user behavior and reducing human error.

John envisions HRCC evolving to incorporate AI-driven insights, but he emphasizes the importance of first establishing a baseline of security knowledge among users. “You can't get to the level of using AI safely if you're still clicking on bad links,” he notes. His goal is to ensure that all users understand what data should and shouldn't be shared, laying the groundwork for more advanced AI applications in the future.

Advanced BEC Protection: Opportunities for Growth

Woodruff is actively exploring the Advanced BEC Protection functionality for two core reasons. To leverage Mimecast's behavioral AI platform to catch more attacks, such as payloadless threats and feed behavioral anomalies into the multi-vector threat correlation engine. Second reason is to use the system's banner system that allows end users to access contextual information around the relationship strength between sender and recipient and prompting them to communicate whether it is deemed safe or suspicious, making it a useful tool to enhance training and reduce human risk.

A Trusted Partnership with Mimecast

The Woodruff Arts Center's leadership, including the CEO and CIO, are strong advocates for Mimecast. They value the solution's reliability and the support provided by the Mimecast team. John advises other organizations considering Mimecast to take a holistic view of their security stack and prioritize vendor relationships. “Build the relationships now so they are there when you need help,” he says.

The Bottom Line

Under John Cooper's leadership, the Woodruff Arts Center has transformed its cybersecurity posture with the help of Mimecast. From email security and data retention to future plans for AI and advanced threat detection, Mimecast has proven to be an invaluable partner. As the organization continues to evolve, its commitment to security and innovation ensures that it remains a safe and inspiring space for art, culture, and community.

About Mimecast

Secure human risk with a unified platform.

Mimecast's connected human risk management platform prevents sophisticated threats that target human error. By gaining visibility into human risk across your collaboration landscape, you can protect your organization, safeguard critical data, and actively engage employees to reduce risk and enhance productivity.