

Crippled by Spam, Lexington Convention and Visitors' Bureau Turns to IMail Server

Lexington Convention and Visitors' Bureau, an affiliate of the Kentucky state government, is responsible for promoting the greater Lexington area for tourism. The bureau competes heavily with other cities to attract organizations from around the world, as well as within the region, to bring their conventions to Lexington, thus drawing people—and revenues—into hotels, restaurants, and other venues. Annual revenues are approximately \$6 million.

The bureau had been using the same legacy mail server product, Novell Netmail, for almost nine years. For the past four years, however, the program had an open relay, causing a rapidly increasing influx of spam. The problem got so bad that at times, no mail was delivered except for spam. Some weekends, 200,000 e-mail messages crowded the server—none of them to or from the bureau.



Company: Lexington Convention and Visitors' Bureau [Kentucky]
Industry: Tourism
Business challenge: Open relay in existing mail server product was clogging system with spam and resulted in blacklisting
Outcome: IMail Server installed immediately, eliminated open relay problem, and allowed resumption of normal business

The issue was more than a logistical hassle. It was becoming a public relations nightmare. Customers and clients were unable to send e-mail to the bureau or receive e-mail from the bureau's approximately 100 employees. "This was a really big problem," explained IT Manager Robert Hempel. "The open relay was impeding all our productivity. We work with lots of people across the world—and if they can't communicate with us via e-mail, it makes it difficult for us to do business." Compounding the matter: The organization was beginning to be blacklisted.

The challenge: find immediate resolution

Hempel was charged with finding an immediate solution to the problem—and quickly getting the bureau removed from the blacklists before its reputation was damaged. Having already spent two unsuccessful weeks trying to shut down the open relay by making modifications and upgrades to the existing mail product, he made the decision to switch to another product.

The challenge was to find something appropriate to the size of the organization (approximately 100 internal users), both in terms of functionality and cost, and that could be implemented and up and running very quickly. "Microsoft Exchange and Lotus Notes were too expensive and unwieldy for our organization—we're not that big," said Hempel. "We needed to find something more our size that would give us the option to expand if we needed to do so later."

Ipswitch's IMail Server was identified as a possible candidate: It was designed for small- and medium-sized companies, offered a full-featured, easy-to-install-and-

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use e-mail solution, and was appropriately priced. Furthermore, it was immediately available for free trial via download. Hempel was already familiar and comfortable with the Ipswitch brand, having previously used WS_FTP Pro from Ipswitch. Colleagues in other organizations shared their similar positive experiences with Ipswitch. With virtually no time left to find a solution, Hempel decided to give IMail Server a try.

Online availability, helpful support is key

"It was Friday afternoon. We'd been down for a week, so I had to get a solution in by the end of the weekend. I had the hardware all ready, I needed software. I went out to the Ipswitch website and looked at the IMail Server offering. I liked the features and functions, and I really liked the fact that I had the ability to get a download and test immediately," Hempel recalled.

Hempel downloaded the IMail Server trial software and then called Ipswitch Customer Service to ask questions. "I wasn't even a paying customer yet. Even so, they were really helpful and answered a few basic questions so I could get started," Hempel said. "That said a lot about the company and its reputation."

By Friday night, the product was installed and working. Extensive testing over the weekend turned up no flaws, and the open relays were gone. On Monday, the bureau was once again able to send and receive e-mails, with virtually no spam. Hempel immediately purchased the product along with support.



"What a great experience I had with the Ipswitch sales and support team. They turned my Friday before a holiday weekend from a disaster to a peaceful Memorial Day holiday. Instead of spending all weekend in the data center fighting with an antiquated mail server product, I spent it at family picnics."

—Robert Hempel, IT manager

IMail Server restores normal e-mail exchange

With successful resolution of the open relay problem, the bureau was able to quickly get itself removed from all blackmail lists, and resume business as normal. Now, users are able to take advantage of other features of IMail Server such as its Webmail client, which allows users to send and receive e-mail from any location using any standards-based client. This feature has been popular among the many bureau users who travel extensively around the globe.

The anti-spam functionality is also highly valued, especially with the addition of a log analyzer that has narrowed the amount of log pages to be reviewed each day (in order to identify people that need to be blocked at the firewall level) from 600 pages to 25 pages.

Client satisfaction high

"I am very happy—with the product, and with customer and technical support," said Hempel. "The product is very straightforward, and implementation is very simple. I just reloaded it on the server, and from that point forward, had it up and running in as little as 35-40 minutes, sending and receiving mail. Operation is very easy. And the scalability is there if we need it."

"IMail Server is also at the right price point, compared to larger solutions. Our annual expenditures and recurring costs, including a support contract, are very low. This has proved to be a great product—one that I can definitely recommend to other IT professionals."