



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

MessageLabs



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MessageLabs is unequivocally a leader in managed email security services, so we’re glad to be associated with them. And we’re confident that, as new threats to email evolve, MessageLabs will continue to be ahead of the game.”

Christine Cooper
Technical Infrastructure
Manager
London School of Economics

IT professionals at the London School of Economics and Political Science were well aware that the volume of spam email entering the university’s mailboxes was becoming a major problem. However, the true extent of the problem was only revealed when the LSE signed up with MessageLabs managed Anti-Spam service. Indeed return on the investment was proved almost instantly, producing results which surprised even the IT team. In the first week alone, MessageLabs stopped a massive 350,000 spam messages heading for LSE inboxes.

Founded in 1895, the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) is the world’s leading social science institution for teaching and research. A ‘laboratory of the social sciences’, the school’s academic profile spans a wide range of disciplines from economics, international relations, government and law to sociology, information systems and accounting and finance.

Teaching and research are conducted through 19 departments and more than 30 research centres and institutes. LSE has nearly 7,500 full-time students and around 800 part-time students. Of these, 38% come from the UK, 18% from other European Union countries and 44% from more than 150 countries worldwide.

A HIGH-PROFILE ACADEMIC PRESCENCE

LSE staff are in constant demand as commentators and analysts in the media, act as advisers to governments, regularly serve on royal commissions and government inquiries, and are seconded to national and international organisations.

It is this high profile that explains, in part, the burgeoning quantities of spam mail being directed at LSE mailboxes, says Christine Cooper, the university’s Technical Infrastructure Manager. “Many of our people are internationally known specialists in their subjects,” she says. “So their email addresses tend to turn up on many different websites. This high visibility makes them – and the LSE domain – easily targeted by spammers trawling for contact addresses.”

Until recently, some email users at the LSE were receiving between 150 and 200 unsolicited emails a day, Christine tells us. Some were having to waste up to an hour a day just sorting out the unwanted rubbish in their inboxes. Moreover, existing anti-spam provision was proving to be quite inadequate in dealing with the growing problem.

“We were getting more and more complaints from users, so it was obviously time to address the spam menace. We evaluated a number of possible server or desktop-based systems over a six-month period but the MessageLabs offering came out the clear winner. For a similar cost to some other solutions, MessageLabs provides a far superior service, certainly more suited to our needs.”

MESSAGELABS PROTECTION FOR 12,000 USERS

LSE signed up for the MessageLabs Anti-Virus and Anti-Spam services early in 2004, adding the spam manager service shortly afterwards, covering all 12,000 users on the network.

“Staff and students alike were glad to see measures being taken to stem the tide of spam,” says Christine. “But we anticipated that there’d be concerns about the privacy issue for some people. So we headed that one off by offering all our users an email encryption facility. But it’s a measure of the effectiveness of the anti-spam service that not a single user has actually found reason to take up that offer.”

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“It was vital that the solution we chose had to be utterly reliable in differentiating between unwanted mail and genuine business email communications. It could be disastrous if emails carrying conference papers disappeared, for example, or if somebody’s grant application went astray. To date MessageLabs has been as good as its word and we’ve had virtually no complaints about false positives.”

For Christine’s team, a major bonus has been the addition of MessageLabs spam manager service. This quarantines messages identified as spam in a location accessible for review by the organisation’s employees. Users are able to view and release messages to their regular email inboxes, delete messages and manage individual notification, email address and password options.

With the MessageLabs services in place, the IT team has been gratified to see a 40% reduction in the load on LSE’s mail servers, freeing up precious bandwidth that would otherwise be hijacked by incoming spam. Christine also reports that, in just nine weeks, MessageLabs has scanned 9.2 million messages and identified 3.5 million as spam (38%) and 1.2 million as carrying viruses (13%).

Graeme Stewart, Head of Public Sector at MessageLabs comments: “The LSE’s experience provides a good example of how our services can benefit a large academic or public sector organisation. A 40% reduction in inbound traffic on the university’s mail servers tells its own story. And they’re also gaining the major productivity benefits through cutting out timeconsuming management of spam.”

Freedom from spam-management duties presents a visible benefit for Christine’s team too. “We are definitely less reactive and more productive now,” she says. “Nobody enjoys labourintensive chores like changing email addresses, so we’re glad to be spared that. Also one shouldn’t underestimate the effects on IT staff who have to work with spam that is often highly explicit and extremely distressing in content. Specifics aside, there are always more interesting things to do than dealing with viruses and spam!”

ENHANCING THE LSE BRAND IMAGE

As one of the world’s most respected academic institutions, LSE is acutely protective of its brand image. Says Christine: “We have some of the top people in information systems technology working here, so it’s important that our own IT infrastructure and selection of systems reflects the most advanced that the world has to offer.”

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Confidence in a connected world.