

Case Study

K-12 Education

CUSTOMER SUCCESS

Control bandwidth, filter content

CUSTOMER:

Columbus Independent School District, Texas

CYMPHONIX PRODUCT:

Network Composer DC30X

COLUMBUS
INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Situation

Columbus Independent School District is located in Columbus Texas and consists of three schools an elementary, junior high, and high school. Between the institutions, the district's network operates on three T1 connections (4.5Mbps), is accessed daily by 750 computers and connects teachers, administrators, faculty and students spread out across various locations on campus. The schools also provide wireless access for personal computers, should students choose to bring them into the classroom environment. The teaching faculty at Columbus ISD access educational web-based resources on a daily basis, all of which typically require a large amount of bandwidth to deliver uninterrupted media for classroom use.

Challenge

As more and more educational resources become web-based and the number of students who have web-enabled cell phones rapidly grows, Columbus ISD Network Administrator, Lance Portwood, recognized the need for a product that could not only filter the content students would have access to online, but also manage the amount of bandwidth non-education related browsing could consume on the district's network.

Portwood explained, "Every student, from seniors down through the grade school level, essentially live online. What's interesting about this generation is that access to the Internet is not always through a traditional PC or laptop. A large percentage of students

have web-enabled cell phones with the ability to connect to the school's Internet through our wireless access points. These alternative means of accessing content demand our network infrastructure to provide a solid content filtering platform—and also protect the learning environment by limiting the effects recreational browsing can have on our network speed."

Due to the Child Internet Protection Act (CIPA), all schools are required by law to provide Internet content filtering for students. Previously, Columbus ISD used a proxy-based software solution as the primary content filter, but found that the solution was extremely slow and did not allow Portwood to prioritize the content traversing his network.

"With our previous solution, I discovered that if I were to turn off the software the network speed became extremely fast, but the second I turned the filter back on, the Internet would slow to a crawl. Additionally, we had no control over bandwidth or visibility into the network," said Portwood. "It was extremely difficult to manage content our students accessed because they were constantly looking

Reveal.
Optimize.
Protect.



for ways around our filter. I found myself wasting valuable time trying to circumvent students' bypass attempts unsuccessfully. You lock a door on a student and he or she is going to find a window. It was a never-ending battle."

Eventually, Portwood learned that the manufacturer of his content filter was closing its doors and he immediately began looking into replacement solutions for Columbus ISD.

Solution

As Portwood's search for a replacement content filter grew, he considered multiple products, but found that none were robust enough to provide an appropriate solution to meet the needs of Columbus ISD.

"I argued that if we were going to make an investment in our infrastructure, we needed to get the most effective and comprehensive product for our dollar," commented Portwood.

Portwood was then introduced to the Cymphonix Network Composer by Value-Added Reseller (VAR) Flexile Systems.

"What I found most appealing about the Network Composer was its ability to shape bandwidth. I knew our schools needed something to help speed up our Internet while still providing superior content filtering and the Cymphonix device stood up to our demands," said Portwood.

Success

Portwood decided to move forward with the Cymphonix Network Composer and was able to integrate the solution into Columbus ISD's network in less than 20 minutes. He explained, "Right out of the box, the product was fantastic and the installation was much easier than I anticipated. Cymphonix tech support has been extremely responsive and helpful as I've developed my governing policies and become more familiar with the device.

With Cymphonix's Network Composer in place, Columbus ISD gained unprecedented visibility into their users' online activities and are now able to quickly develop and tweak policies based on ever-changing trends in Internet use.



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Lance Portwood
Network Administrator
Columbus ISD



"I was shocked to see where the majority of my bandwidth was going throughout the day," said Portwood. "We saw that certain music sites containing streaming videos were our biggest bandwidth-hogs and were able to quickly limit the effects of those activities by only granting teachers access to these particular sites after 3pm each day. With the reporting capabilities of the Network Composer, I am now able to regularly review my top 10 bandwidth consumers and further drill into the data to see what activities these users are engaged in at the time their bandwidth consumption peaked. Having this information at my fingertips has really helped improve the overall performance and security of our district's network and I'm very impressed with the performance of the Cymphonix solution."

See for Yourself

See how Network Composer delivers visibility, security, and performance in one reliable package. Contact your Authorized Cymphonix Reseller for an online demonstration or call or email Cymphonix at 866-511-1155 or sales@cymphonix.com



About Cymphonix

Cymphonix Corporation, headquartered in Sandy, Utah, uses patentpending Cross-Layer Intelligence™ (XLi™) technology to provide unmatched network threat protection and resource optimization. With the powerful XLi engine, Cymphonix products seamlessly integrate network protection, application performance, and traffic visibility into a single, easily managed solution. Leading the Cymphonix product line is Network Composer, a smart gateway appliance that helps organizations understand at a glance who is abusing network resources and with what applications - enabling problems to be corrected instantly through a clear, easy-to-manage interface.



Cymphonix Corporation
8871 S. Sandy Parkway, Suite 150
Sandy, Utah 84070-6408

801-938-1500 Tel
801-938-1501 Fax
866-511-1155 Sales

www.cymphonix.com