

Case Study

K-12 Education

CUSTOMER SUCCESS

Filter content

CUSTOMER:

Granite School District #9
Illinois, USA
(1500 users, 10 locations)

CYMPHONIX PRODUCT:

Network Composer DC40X

GRANITE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT #9
GCSD

Situation

Granite City School District #9, a large public school district located in Granite City IL, is home to about 7300 student Warriors. Spread out in 10 different buildings, GCSD has one high school, 2 middle schools, and 7 different elementary school buildings. The district has grown quickly over the last few years, and as the district has grown, so has their computer network; the whole district hosts about 1500 computers and 17 network servers. The networking staff works relentlessly not only to provide a safe environment for their students to learn and grow, but also to keep their computer network clean and appropriate for students and faculty alike.

Challenge

As Granite City School District has matured in size, so have their needs for better content filtering. According to Zach Suhre, the Director of Information Systems and Technology, their old content filter had been in place for over 6 years and desperately needed an upgrade. Not only was it outdated and easily bypassed by students on a daily basis, but it also was eating their entire budget in costs to maintain. The reports that the old filter produced were old, outdated, and many times worthless. The biggest problem the district faced with the old content filter was not the reporting and the budget however; it was keeping students away from inappropriate websites and from using anonymous proxies to bypass the filter. While the staff tried to maintain and update black lists on a regular

basis, the students seem to spend all of their free time finding new proxy sites that constantly helped them tunnel past the filter. The filter ultimately became ineffective at performing its main job; to keep the students safe and the network clean. When costs for the previous filter rose again, Granite finally decided that it was time to find a new solution. The networking staff was tired of spending their entire budget just to keep their filter up to date; they felt that it was time to start looking at other filters. They needed to find something that managed their network a little more aggressively and had better reporting, and they also wanted to find a filter that didn't eat their entire budget. It was time for them to give Cymphonix a try.

Solution

After researching several content filters, Granite purchased a DC40X from Cymphonix. The DC40X handles larger schools and businesses with connections up to 45Mbps throughput. Granite's network administrators noticed a difference right away with their new filter. For one thing, the reporting tools gave administrators much more visibility into their network;

Reveal.
Optimize.
Protect.



which made managing the network much easier. Having the ability to look at reports in real time made a huge difference for Granite. They also loved other simple reports that the Composer generates that their old filter didn't; such as the ability to look at top user activity, group activity, and IM chat logs. Zach Suhre, the Director of Information Systems and Technology, also found the capability of assigning different logins for different techs on his team very useful. He feels that his Network Composer is "phenomenal" and "much easier to manage" than his old filter. He also loves that the Network Composer is affordable; Zach loves that his whole budget isn't eaten up in content filter costs.



"I love that they went out of their way to help my team resolve any issues that we've had". "They've always resolved issues the same day, and have stayed late to work with us. We think they do a great job".

Zach Suhre
Director of IS and Technology
Granite City School District



When asked about his experience with the technical support team at Cymphonix, Zach said that he loved that they went out of their way to help his team resolve any issues that they've had. "They've always resolved issues the same day, and have stayed late to work with us. We think they do a great job".

Success

The best thing about Granite's Network Composer was not the reporting, or the budget, or the tech team. The Granite's biggest concern, the safety of their students, is now explicitly solved by the Network Composer. The Network Composer protects students by blocking anonymous proxies, something other content filters are not always equipped to handle. Because Network Composer is an in-line device,

it has the ability to scan deep into the packet, providing secure filtering for traffic that can easily undermine other filters, such as HTTPS, SSL and other URLs. Since the Network Composer has been installed on their network, the Granite networking staff now is confident because they know they have full visibility into their network. They can quickly identify and handle abusers. They know their network is safe.

Not only is the Network Composer by Cymphonix great for stopping students from using anonymous proxies to bypass traditional filters, but it's also remarkable at shaping bandwidth and prioritization. Bandwidth can easily be allocated to specific applications, and priority can be given to those sites that are more conducive to learning. Granite uses the shaping and prioritization tools to shape down sites such as Myspace and Youtube that are fun for students to surf, but may not be as important to their education as other sites. They also love being able to monitor applications by watching them in real time or historically to figure out which sites require more resources, and which don't.



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.



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