Amerinet enlists Sprint to help eliminate spam, address HIPAA requirements

Challenge
Amerinet is one of the nation’s largest healthcare group purchasing organizations, with $6 billion in annual purchases for more than 23,000 hospitals, clinics and other member facilities. In order to maintain communications with members as well as four network companies, two subsidiaries, dozens of regional affiliates and more than 1000 vendors, Amerinet relied on e-mail as an essential business tool for daily operations. Spam and other malicious content continuously affected productivity and performance, so despite the complexity of HIPAA compliance issues, Amerinet set up an in-house e-mail filtering system. Unfortunately, the system was costly and time-consuming to maintain, employees were still bombarded with spam, and many legitimate messages were falsely identified as spam and never delivered.

Solution
Amerinet conducted a 30-day trial of Sprint Message Security Management™ Solutions — E-mail Protection Filtering Services and achieved results far exceeding its expectations. E-mail Protection Filtering Services provided all of the benefits of sophisticated spam filtering and virus protection without the need to purchase or maintain any equipment or software on-site. The solution’s network-based triple-layer spam filtering and multi-engine virus scanning dramatically reduced the amount of malicious e-mail Amerinet employees received, and not a single legitimate message was misrouted.

Two months after the Sprint solution was implemented, Amerinet headquarters experienced a sudden and total power outage for three days when the local electric company cut lines to the building. Because the Sprint solution was network-based rather than dependent on site-specific components, it continued to receive and store all incoming messages for delivery once power was restored. In addition, senders received an automatic reply informing them of the situation and recommending a phone call to address any urgent matters. These features helped Amerinet demonstrate compliance with HIPAA requirements for disaster recovery and emergency mode operations.

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Amerinet is one of the country’s largest and most successful healthcare group purchasing organizations, with more than $6 billion in annual purchases. Amerinet’s four network companies, two subsidiaries, and numerous regional affiliates serve more than 23,000 hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities, and other healthcare institutions throughout the United States. Through a diverse portfolio of products and services, Amerinet helps members improve operating margins while maintaining exceptional quality standards.

Headquartered in St. Louis, the Amerinet network includes companies and subsidiaries based in Pennsylvania, Utah, Rhode Island, and Missouri, as well as regional affiliates throughout the country.

For more information, visit amerinet-gpo.com.
**Bottom line**

E-mail Protection Filtering Services had an immediate and dramatic impact, reducing spam by more than 32,000 messages in the first four months. The solution also prevented a major virus outbreak by automatically diverting more than 56,000 infected messages that could have crippled communications for the entire company. As the blackout demonstrated, Sprint also provided Amerinet with an affordable, effective way to address HIPAA security standards for administrative procedures such as contingency planning. Based on the success of the solution, Amerinet explored ways that additional services such as E-mail Encryption could provide similar ease of implementation for HIPAA access, communication and media control requirements.

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“Without this service from Sprint, Amerinet’s headquarters would have lost critical communications. We received all our communications when the system was restored as well as notifying the senders that our e-mail system was down and if messages were critical to follow-up immediately via phone.”

Todd Ebert, President, Operations Amerinet