

Case Study

K-12 Education

CUSTOMER SUCCESS

Eliminate content filtering issues by prioritizing bandwidth, controlling content

CUSTOMER:

Llano Independent School District
Texas, USA
(1,900 users, 4 locations)

CYMPHONIX PRODUCT:

Network Composer DC30X



Situation

Llano Independent School District consists of four schools and approximately 1,900 students in Llano, Texas and has been rated by the Texas Education Agency as a Recognized District with exemplary status attained for each of its four campuses. Llano ISD operates under the belief that it's "technology infrastructure is the foundation on which future improvements to [its education] system will be built" and has been making efforts to improve its network to comply with future state requirements.

Operating on a fiber ring Internet connection, Llano ISD's network consists of approximately 850 PCs across its four campuses and is accessed by students, teachers and faculty alike. Operating on two separate content filtering systems, IT administrators were becoming increasingly frustrated with the two programs inability to maintain consistency between one another as well as their lack of functionality. Therefore, Llano ISD opted to upgrade its content filtering system in an attempt to streamline their filtering operations and provide more detailed visibility into the online activities of its students.

Challenge

Network administrators for the school district were faced with two major problems. The first being anonymous proxies. IT administrators knew that students were able to bypass content filters using the latest anonymous proxies and no matter how hard staff tried to keep its black list current, that without a robust solution they would not

be able to stop the anonymous proxy rat-race. The second major challenge lay within its network visibility. While many solutions offer content filtering and bandwidth control using a specific IP address, Llano ISD required a product that could provide insight on the most granular level and track all users on an individual basis.

Solution

Llano ISD's Technology Director, Jim Beasley, had been researching potential solutions and looked at everything from open and closed source solutions, appliances, as well as server-based products when he recalled reading a piece of literature regarding the Cymphonix product line that had previously dropped off by his value added reseller (VAR). Keen to the idea of installing an all-inclusive appliance to help eliminate the guess work, Beasley attended a Cymphonix webinar demonstration and found he could manage his network using a clean interface and could quickly generate easy-to-read, user-based reports.

Since the Network Composer is an in-line device utilizing layer-7 deep packet scanning technology, it has the ability

Reveal.
Optimize.
Protect.



to see all incoming Internet traffic and stop content accessed through an anonymous proxy. This maximum visibility would guarantee that students within the Llano district could no longer bypass its content filters and ultimately put an end to Jim Beasley's anonymous proxy rat race once and for all.

Beasley decided to move forward with the Cymphonix Network Composer DC30X and he immediately saw results. With the integration of the Network Composer, he was able to identify users who were employing the majority of his bandwidth by username and also identify which sites he or she was visiting to achieve such a high level of use. "All these users had been trying to access the Internet but certain sites that require an incredible amount of bandwidth like Myspace were slowing the speeds of the entire network. I needed a way to not only to control content, but also prioritize our web traffic so these sites were no longer bogging down the system. Cymphonix allowed me to do just that," commented Beasley.



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Jim Beasley,
Technology Director
Llano ISD



The Network Composer also allowed Llano ISD to create specific groups within its network so that administrators can control a student's ability to access the web based on the his or her historical Internet use and behavior. Beasley created a group he refers to

as "Jail", in which students who are caught misusing Internet privileges are temporarily moved into this group and experience access speeds similar to a modem. Beasley continued, "We needed a level of punitive measures that we could impose on students we considered regular Internet abusers. While we didn't want to completely eliminate the student's ability to access the web for fear of directly affecting school related projects, we are able to control which sites, as well what speeds, the offender can access material. It's great because I can quickly identify students who require disciplinary action by their user name instead of IP addresses, which obviously vary from one computer to the next. When you're dealing with hundreds of public access points, how can you beat that?"

Success

The Cymphonix Network Composer immediately revealed individual users on the Llano Independent School District's network who were using an abnormally high percentage of bandwidth. Once these users were identified, IT administrators had the ability to set up specific bandwidth controls and website prioritization schemes that ultimately extended the life and performance of the district's bandwidth. The Network Composer has also prevented students from bypassing the content filter configurations by providing complete visibility into all incoming and outgoing Internet traffic requests and even blocks attempted traffic accessed through an anonymous proxy. Additionally, administrators are now able to quickly and easily control students' access privileges with the use of group configurations, allowing faculty and staff to employ disciplinary action without hindering the educational process.

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.



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