

CASE STUDY

IT Security Enabled 2005 Election Campaign - Labour Party

On 5th May 2005, the Labour Party achieved a first in its history: a third consecutive term in government. In April 2005 Alan Milburn, the party's election coordinator, explained prior to the election the Party's aim was to bring the campaign closer to the people by using better ways of communicating than "traditional press conferences and media scrums".

This included a new technological approach that saw Tony Blair;

- Taking part in webchats
- Responding to e-mails while on the bus that was used for some of his travels
- Showing a personal video diary on Labour's website to discuss the day's campaigning

The whole approach helped the party to build up its database of e-mail addresses, which were used to encourage Labour voters to turn out on polling day. Alan Milburn said, "This time we want direct communication every single day. Our strategy is to move beyond the soundbite culture to using modern technology to go more direct."

The Labour Party's forward thinking standpoint on technology allowed them to make direct contact with more of the voting public than ever before via e-mail. The Labour Party reached out to sections of the electorate that they may not have otherwise touched - the e-mail route proved a huge success.

E-mail and Spam on the Increase

Knowing that e-mail was going to play an enormous part in the 2005 general election Labour Party IT staff realised that they would have to replace the e-mail content software solution that had served them so well for the past 4 1/2 years if it was to be a success.

Not only was the Prime Minister taking part in a range of e-mail based campaigning techniques, but the Labour Party also had a massive increase in e-mail traffic due to;

- More incoming e-mails requesting campaign information
- An increase in part time staff to deal with enquiries
- People registering to vote online

"The Labour Party, like any other organisation, had to deal with spam, but with the amount of publicity surrounding the election and with our positive stance on e-government we predicted that possible amounts of spam would cripple our current device," said Sean Robinson, Lotus Notes Systems Manager at the Labour Party.

Although the Labour Party had purchased their solution from another supplier, MIS Corporate Defence Solutions (MIS CDS) had been supporting it. Sean Robinson had been impressed with their technical knowledge and approached MIS CDS about finding an e-mail content solution that could cope with the amounts of e-mail traffic generated during the general election and deal with the spam that could threaten the Labour Party's precious bandwidth.

Researching the Requirement

MIS CDS spent one week monitoring the e-mail activity on the Labour Party's network using AffinitySECURE, a unique security management tool designed by MIS CDS. The report generated by AffinitySECURE contained detailed information on the internal and external e-mail activities of the Labour Party, most shockingly it found that they were being hit with a massive 8000 spam e-mails per day and it was clear that spammers could ruin their e-mail campaign.

A robust solution would be required to solve this problem and allow the Labour Party to successfully carry out the e-mail element of their campaign. MIS CDS is an independent security integrator and recommends only the most suitable tools to address every organisations needs.

The Labour Party requirements included;

- High Throughput
- Scalability
- Manageability
- E-mail profiling
- Traffic Prioritising
- Future Proof
- In Line with Government Standards

The Recommendation

After researching the tools available to the market MIS CDS advised the Labour Party to install the MXtreme Mail Firewall from BorderWare Technologies. The device is a dedicated mail solution that covers all of the Party's requirements, it functions reliably throughout the year and can cope with the peaks of e-mail traffic and in particular, spam, at election times.

"The MXtreme Mail Firewall is the only mail firewall appliance in the world to carry Common Criteria EAL 4+, bringing it in line with government standards. The device is a secure platform that provides quality of service by prioritising bandwidth and allows full reporting," said Etienne Greeff, Technical Director at MIS CDS. "It also recognises every international language allowing the Labour Party to work with every ethnicity in our multicultural nation."

The Solution

- Two MXtreme Mail Firewall's The Labour Party deployed a more robust solution by installing an additional MXtreme device for High Availability.
- Kaspersky Labs Anti-Virus
- Silver EssenceSUPPORT from MIS CDS 7am – 7pm, 7 days per week technical support with access to the MIS CDS Service Portal for logging and tracking support calls, conducting vulnerability assessments and receiving tailored vulnerability and patch alerts,.

The Future

The MXtreme device has not stopped every single spam mail, but it has considerably reduced it and spam is now at an easily manageable level. The Labour Party is currently considering the Brightmail add on to the MXtreme Mail Firewall as it offers a more intense spam list and will help to completely rid the Party of spam. "The importance of communicating with the electorate via e-mail has proven invaluable to the Labour Party and we will continue to work with MIS CDS to review all of our IT security in time for the next election," concluded Robinson.



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