

Global provider and awarding body of British education consigns archaic data backup to history books.

Cloud-based solution transforms data storage and security capabilities, AI-powered Sentinel thwarts new breed of spear-phishing attacks.



A week is a long time in data backup

Steven Bettoni was growing increasingly concerned about the single points of failure he faced daily in protecting NCC Education's data and emails. Bettoni, who serves as IT Support Manager for NCC and leads a small team of four, knew that time wasn't on his side. Top of the list was replacing the organisation's archaic backup solution which relied on the weekly drudge of sending tapes to an offsite storage facility.

Bettoni explained: "The main driver for me was to make backup more efficient. Our existing solution was old, antiquated and expensive to duplicate. Getting backup into the cloud was really important. It just hadn't been looked at for so long."

NCC had already installed an older Barracuda software application on the server to run back up jobs but the physical kit was a real limitation and costly. "We were paying a company to take the tapes away off site to their storage facility just in case we ever wanted to get them back to do a restore. There was cost to that as well, every second week we had to buy a pack of 5 tapes which came to around £90," continued Bettoni.

The worst part was worrying about what his team would do if a disaster like a fire happened. "We would be looking at a whole week to restore a full server. Someone with the right permissions would have to call the tape storage facility and we then would have wait for the tapes to arrive by van. That's assuming that our tape machine hadn't been damaged. We would also have to source new tapes and get a new server to back it up. It would be a nightmare."

Additionally, rapid growth had meant that the organisation now has 90 users working across the globe in China, Africa and

Profile

- Awarding body and global provider of British education, offering business and IT qualifications worldwide
- Offices and remote workers in China, Africa and South-East Asia

Challenges

- Replace physical tape backup with cloud-based solution
- No email archiving and retrieval in place
- Persistent threat of spear-phishing attacks without malicious code

Solution

- Essentials Complete
- Cloud-to-Cloud Backup
- Cloud Archiving
- Barracuda Backup
- Barracuda Sentinel
- Barracuda Web Security Gateway

Results

- Five minutes to retrieve an email
- Increase in number of malicious emails detected
- Ability to react to and remediate spear-phishing attacks within minutes
- Multiple applications effortlessly managed in single pane of glass
- Gained valuable working time back thanks to seamless cloud backup solution

South-East Asia. They rely on Office 365 to deliver the often critical, time-sensitive course materials and qualifications that teachers and academic providers expect.

But, Bettoni could only go back 30 days if he ever needed to retrieve anything. "Microsoft doesn't have to look after emails or files after 30 days so it's on us to make sure we are backing up correctly – they provide the platform and the application and we have to look after our own product. We urgently needed the right cloud backup," he said.

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NCC is governed by Ofqual and it was also critical that the organisation was not only GDPR compliant but BCDR compliant too. "We must ensure that our Backup, Continuity and Disaster Recovery plan is secure, stable and efficient and that we're able to recover files within a certain period of time, because people are relying on us to take exams and earn qualifications. We need to be able to provide that service all the time. The goal was to get a solution that would allow us to restore from anywhere with an internet connection, which is where Barracuda Essentials came into its own."

Bettoni was also worried about the growing threat of sophisticated spear-phishing attacks. "With such a globally diverse user base, the risk of social engineering based email attacks was a very real one for us. We wanted to ensure that we were able to detect these more advanced attacks. For example, our business is very popular in Africa and South-East Asia and we noticed that our users in India especially were being targeted."

Time for change

When partner Altnet suggested Barracuda Essentials, Bettoni decided to take a look. Barracuda was one of four providers on his shortlist and quickly set up a proof of concept trial. "Barracuda was the only company to send an appliance to site which we tested extensively over the month. From the get go functionality and ease of use was also very apparent."

Implementation was effortless and took less than a day. "The good thing is we've still got the same appliance in the server rack – we just went into full license mode once it was all paid for. Deployment was seamless," added Bettoni.

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Time is now on my side

No more tapes. Office365 data is retrieved at the click of a button. "We now have data from OneDrive, SharePoint and email all backed up by Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup with unlimited storage and retention. If someone leaves the company and deletes all their OneDrive and SharePoint information it is still securely stored in Barracuda's cloud and we can pull it back at any time. If we lose somebody's OneDrive information we can just click a button to get it back. The user doesn't have to do anything," said Bettoni.

"We've now got a physical appliance on site that does local backups, but if that was to fail we know that the data is secure in the cloud. I can get it back in minutes. Backup used to take an hour whereas now, once we've set up initial schedules, it just goes off to the cloud, there's nothing to do. With the time we save, we now do training or something."

Barracuda Archiver stores emails away from the server, and with a quick search emails can be retrieved from any time period. “If we need to run an audit, or for HR purposes, we can get an email back without going through the user’s account. We can do this even if they have left the company. We can retrieve emails without a time limit. It takes five minutes,” he added.

Co-termining individual product licences means no surprises when it comes to budgeting. Bettoni continued: “We pay one licence fee at the same time every year. This has reduced a couple of headaches. We’re on a five-year deal so it’s in place and it’s staying in place and what we pay we can plan into budgets.”

Thanks to another layer of security from Barracuda Sentinel, malicious emails are quarantined and any attack is remediated within the hour. “If this happens we can set up a case in Sentinel and it will email everyone who received the message to warn them not to click on the link. It’s like an all-in one tool to let us spot, quarantine and then remediate.”

“Because Sentinel is powered by AI it learns through communication what is, and what isn’t, malicious wording or a threat say for a ransom or an account takeover attempt. It’s belt and braces. It’s an extra layer of safety for us. If these emails were going into people’s inboxes in would be quite scary.”

Managing the solution is effortless. Bettoni explained: “The good thing about Barracuda’s solution is it’s in a single pane of glass so to speak. Once it’s turned on it’s ready to go. Each of the products we turn on just appear in the same web portal which is great for us as IT staff because it really cuts down on all the disparate applications we had to manage. One of our team can quickly run our daily checks in one application and that’s it.”

“We would happily recommend Barracuda. Every part has been seamless. It’s just there running in one place and the benefits are just unbelievable they really are.”

What’s next?

NCC has agreed to purchase Barracuda Web Security to protect its users from malicious websites or inappropriate content, and allow HR to report on general usage. “Many of our users work from home and we need to protect them and their children from any harmful content too,” said Bettoni.

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