

Leading electrical and mechanical engineering company takes smart approach to outsmart scammers



Impersonation Attack Narrowly Thwarted

A well-known and reputable leader in providing comprehensive turnkey mechanical and engineering services, Pacific Sense Enterprise Limited has designed, installed, integrated, and serviced industrial systems in dozens of government departments, residential and commercial properties, and infrastructure projects across China, Hong Kong, and Macau.

Operating in a specialist field within the engineering sector, Pacific Sense has worked hard to build a reputation for excellent quality of service in design, procurement, installation, maintenance, and customer service.

Yet this hard won reputation was threatened after the discovery of a potentially disastrous cyberattack in progress; a sophisticated employee and company impersonation fraud.

Steve Leung, Technical Manager at Pacific Sense explains what first alerted him to the fraud. "We received a customer enquiry about an invoice that asked for payment to be transferred into a different bank account. With the cooperation of the customer, we discovered and terminated an attempted account takeover attack."

Although Leung and his team neutralised the attack, email threats have become commonplace with cybercriminals identifying their victim, harvesting information on them in the public domain then launching an account takeover. Often the targets are employees with access to sensitive data, financial information or security infrastructure and working in IT, human resources, finance or sales.

Profile

- Well-known electrical and mechanical engineering company
- Established in Hong Kong in 2012 with over 100 employees

Challenges

- Account takeover led to employees receiving targeted phishing emails and other sophisticated email-borne threats
- Domain spoofing attacks and unauthorized activities detected that could harm the brand

Solution

- Barracuda Sentinel
- Barracuda Essentials

Results

- Prevents business email compromise, account takeover, spear phishing and email-borne threats
- Detailed visibility on domain usage, email security complete with a daily analysis report
- Reduces IT administrative cost and time

In Pacific Sense's case in particular, there was more at stake than just their hard earned reputation and potential financial loss but a threat to their business as well. "Winning and maintaining customer trust is so important. If the email impersonation attack had been successful, there was a risk of this trust being broken."

Having narrowly thwarted an attack, Leung was keen to conduct a network audit to discover if there were any other hidden threats. "Discovering an intruder in our network and being so close to becoming a victim of email fraud was an unpleasant experience and we wanted to make sure that such incidents were prevented in the future. If one attacker had got in, what if others had too? What if there was another attack waiting to be triggered or, worse, in motion?"

"Barracuda Essentials is a fully automated email prevention and protection powerhouse requiring almost zero administrative time. Thanks to Barracuda, automation has meant the sixty percent of time we used to spend manually checking every suspicious email, can now be put to good use on other projects."

Steve Leung

Technical Manager, Pacific Sense Enterprises Limited

Barracuda Satisfies Tough Selection Criteria

Knowing it was time to call in the experts and speed was of the essence, Leung contacted Superhub, a leading cloud solution provider and security partner, to learn about email-threat prevention and protection providers.

Eager to find a vendor, Leung was adamant that a comprehensive list of criteria be met before any decision was made. "While we needed to find a solution quickly, the chosen vendor had to satisfy several conditions including full protection, customer support, and budget consideration. Finally, we had to have confidence in knowing every email that entered or left the network was clean." Rather than making vendor

selection harder, Leung's 'shopping list' of criteria had whittled the pool down to one: Barracuda.

Ten Million Reasons to Use Barracuda

Employees most at risk from phishing attacks are those with access to sensitive data, financial information and security infrastructure including IT, human resources, senior management or sales. Once successful, a criminal can access the corporate network to steal data, send out phishing emails, corrupt other accounts, disrupt operations and remain hidden within the network.

Knowing there were questions about how an attack had been triggered from inside, Superhub suggested Leung try out Barracuda's Email Threat Scanner; a tool used by 12,000 organizations worldwide leading to the discovery of ten million threats hiding in their mailboxes.

Anxious to find the root cause, Leung agreed to the test. "In under sixty seconds, the scan results came back with the discovery of a non-Hong Kong IP address hidden deep in the network and pinpointed exactly where the attack originated, among other email threats hiding in our employees' inboxes."

"Further investigation revealed the employee had been a spear phishing victim and had their email account compromised. The fact the attacker was still active within the network, was of great concern. Now I had to add one more criteria to add. Fast deployment."

Innovative and Future Approach to Email Threats

Leung deployed Barracuda Essentials and Barracuda Sentinel to cleanse the network of hidden threats, prevent email-borne threats from entering the network, guard against outbound attacks, reduce IT administrative time and protect employees.

Barracuda Essentials provides prevention and protection for inbound and outbound emails and combats phishing attempts by combining anti-fraud intelligence, behavioral and heuristic detection, protection against sender spoofing along with domain name validation. Every single email with or without attachment is subjected to powerful polymorphic virus scanning technologies before allowed to enter or depart the network.

Leung explains how automation made a big impact. "Barracuda Essentials is a fully automated email prevention and protection powerhouse requiring almost zero administrative time. Automation has meant the 60 percent of IT administration time we spent on manually checking every suspicious email before, can now be put to good use on other projects. "

As a cloud real time service combining artificial intelligence and DMARC authentication, Barracuda Sentinel protects businesses against spear phishing, impersonation attempts, business email compromise and other cyber fraud. Barracuda Sentinel uses an innovative technique to detect personalized fraud.

“Manually spotting a content-based email threat is hard enough for one email account. Multiply that by over a hundred staff email accounts, the chance of a phishing or spear phishing attack succeeding, skyrocket. Barracuda Sentinel learns and understands business communication patterns in emails and by doing so can identify content and behavioral oddities thus outsmarting scammers.”

World Class Products, Service and Support

Leung mentioned another reason for selecting Barracuda. “World class service. Barracuda’s team listened and were quick to provide a comprehensive solution designed to protect the network and prevent email borne threats. The solution came with a dashboard for detailed reports, regular security reviews with the Barracuda team, and 24/7 support. They had everything covered.”

After greenlighting the project, deployment was completed with minimal disruption and with maximum impact. “Once the solution went live, threats were neutralized, and every incoming and outgoing message checked, and threats quarantined or removed. Thanks to Barracuda, trust in our email is now restored.”

Now Pacific Sense has deployed Barracuda Essentials and Barracuda Sentinel to detect and prevent email-borne threats including business email compromise, spear phishing and other attacks, the Company’s customers, employees and reputation are protected.

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Learn more about
Barracuda Essentials and Barracuda Sentinel

barracuda.com/products/essentials

barracuda.com/products/sentinel

