



Think less, not Moore

ESET CUSTOMER CASE STUDY





Date

12 August 2009

Company

Tait Radio Communications

Sector

High-tech voice and data communications

Senior Security Consultant

Frank Gebhardt

IS topography

600 + onsite and 200+ worldwide PCs; 150-200 laptops; running on Windows and Linux using Sun Messenger email service and a BaaN ERP system.

Security issues and needs

- Risk points: Internet gateways; email; web services; laptops with remote access; external hard drives; USB memory devices
- Compelling event: Changes to the existing anti virus system making it incompatible with key applications.
- Key requirements: Compatibility with Windows 2000 and 95 and a lightweight footprint delivering faster scanning and smaller security updates.

Solution

ESET NOD32 user since 2008

Location

Christchurch, New Zealand

Website

www.taitworld.com

Key insight

"NOD32 has a very small footprint. Not only is the engine that runs on the client significantly smaller than other antivirus vendors, but the virus scans themselves are less taxing," Frank Gebhardt, ICT Manager, Tait Radio Communications

Moore's Law describes the geometric increase in processing power of desktop computers. Historically, every 18 months, a given amount of computing power available at a particular price doubles, providing new computers packing twice the punch at about the same cost of the previous model. Software vendors have had a field day, churning out new features and ever-bigger applications supported by ballooning processing power.

However, things are changing and IT managers are showing more interest in keeping computers longer. The idea is fast ruling out software vendors whose applications have fattened on Moore's Law. These days, more IT managers seek best of breed software that obeys a new law: Less is Moore.

Christchurch electronics company Tait Radio Communications retains PCs longer than most. Lead-footed antivirus software was weighing it down. The company's ICT Manager, Frank Gebhardt, wanted the best of both worlds: intelligent protection without impeding PC performance. He chose ESET NOD32.





Frustratingly slow

New software and its increasing demand on systems resources is perhaps the biggest factor driving PC upgrades. Consequently, companies looking to extend the life of computer hardware will limit future software options.

Tait's Gebhardt says that while most companies work to a three-year PC lifecycle, Tait likes to get an additional two years out of its desktops. Accordingly, Windows 2000 and a scattering of Windows 95 reside on the majority of company computers.

However, security isn't as forgiving as operating systems, with the proliferation of new threats demanding perpetually updated software. But with relatively older machines having to cope with ever-larger security updates, the process of staying safe was slow and impractical. Poor internet connectivity and dependency of dialup internet connection for some mobile staff made matters worse. "Downloading the huge security patches, often at dialup speed, was slow, frustrating and highly impractical," Gebhardt says.

The need for speed

Eventually, Tait's old antivirus vendor discontinued support for its Windows operating systems. To find a new AV solution, Gebhardt turned to those most affected by past problems, drawing on their experiences. "We simply asked our staff what they thought; what tools they were using at home."

Reports of NOD32's dainty footprint and ultra low impact security upgrades were compelling. "NOD32 has a very small footprint. Not only is the engine that runs on the client significantly smaller than other antivirus vendors, but the virus scans themselves are less taxing," Gebhardt says. His assessment is supported by leading independent virus research authority Virus Bulletin Magazine [UK], who rates NOD32 with the lowest overhead of any security product (up to 75% less system overhead); fastest scan speed of any security product (2 to 50 times faster scanning performance); and smallest update files of any security product (typically 10–50 kb in size).

"We used to run an automatic scan of all clients every Thursday, during lunchtime. But, on some machines scans would run til four in the afternoon. They were unusable the whole time, which had a huge impact on users," Gebhardt says.





One-to-many

NOD32's console offers a single view of all client updates and a complete set of management and reporting tools. "We especially like the interface. We have a clear view of all users and can make changes and configurations to suit their demands," Gebhardt says. "The ability to manage individual clients was a key factor. We wanted to see whether or not clients were up-to-date and push out upgrades accordingly."

Deployment was completed in a day, with a script activating an automatic message alerting users to the 30-minute changeover.

Silence is golden

IT managers only ever hear from users when things go wrong or fail to perform to expectations. In larger organisations, service desk is a flashpoint, with incoming calls providing the best indicator of systems performance.

Gebhardt says the implementation of NOD32 has seen calls relating to security disappear. "We used to get regular calls about the old system," he says, highlighting past complications with firewalls, when remote laptop users worked on campus.

"We haven't had any calls about NOD32. No one has complained or given us grief, which is a good indicator that the system works, without interfering with users," Gebhardt says.

Gebhardt also spotlights NOD32's accuracy, saying that Tait has not experienced a single virus outbreak since installation, corroborating Virus Bulletin Magazine's assessment of NOD32's accuracy, which records NOD32 as the only security product never to have missed an in-the-wild virus in more than 45 tests over nine years.

However, it's not all just about software. Gebhardt says fast, accurate local support is crucial. "Many vendors don't have local support. So you can't expect fast answers. We've been extremely pleased with the support we've received from NOD32 distributor Chillisoft."

