

Direct Agents, Inc.



Defending Systems on a Wide-open Network with Symantec Endpoint Protection

Companies often provide first-line protection from viruses and malware at the network perimeter, but Direct Agents can't. As an advertising agency focused on interactive, online media, Direct Agents employees spend their workdays visiting websites and reading email that other companies might consider suspect. For that reason, protection at Direct Agents needs to occur at each individual computer. Because the company is growing rapidly, Direct Agents needs to manage that protection environment simply and easily. In 2008, the firm standardized on Symantec Endpoint Protection for all of its computers. Results include security-related time savings of up to 20 hours per week, a 40 percent reduction in licensing costs, and \$1,500 in monthly savings for outside IT support.

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Direct Agents, Inc. is an advertising agency that handles interactive marketing such as web ads and email campaigns. Founded in 2003 and located in New York City's SoHo neighborhood, Direct Agents provides services in affiliate marketing, lead generation, media buying, and search marketing. Lauded by Inc. Magazine in 2008 as one of the fastest growing companies in America, and honored by Entrepreneur Magazine as a "Hot 100" company, privately-held Direct Agents counts SnapFish, DirecTV, Fandango, and Experian among its global clientele. The 40+ employees at Direct Agents manage about 130 advertising campaigns at a time, delivered to more than 6,000 affiliate websites that generate hundreds of thousands of transactions monthly.

INDUSTRY

Advertising and Media

SOLUTION

Endpoint Security

“Symantec seems to have a real commitment not only to having the latest, greatest virus detection and signatures, but also to having a very thorough knowledge base. Even if you're using a competing product, you probably end up on Symantec's webpage trying to figure out what a virus is and what it does.”

Nate Schilling

Technology Manager
Direct Agents, Inc.

The Challenge

It's a technology manager's nightmare: a company network that is, by choice, entirely unfiltered. But that's the environment at Direct Agents. As an advertising agency that handles interactive marketing such as online banner ads, search engine links, and email campaigns, Direct Agents employees spend their workday visiting websites, clicking links, and opening email that most IT managers want their users to avoid. “We have to deliberately expose ourselves to some of the more malicious content on the Web,” says Nate Schilling, technology manager at Direct Agents and the company's sole dedicated IT resource. “We work with such a large universe of online web publishers that we cannot afford to miss any emails or communications. We simply cannot actively leave the spam filter on or avoid suspect URLs.”

To compound the challenge of a relatively unguarded network, Direct Agents had a loose company policy on antispam and anti-malware software. Individual users managed their own antivirus needs, purchasing or downloading a handful of different solutions including products from AVG, McAfee, Symantec, and Trend Micro. “We didn't manage things from a central location,” Schilling recalls.

Schilling found himself visiting each user's desk as often as once a week to deal with virus outbreaks, which sometimes would take two to three hours to control. The variety of antivirus products made outbreak control inefficient. “Because we wouldn't get consistent notification of what had been found, it was a headache,” Schilling says. “It was a real mess. It was obvious what needed to happen.” Direct Agents needed a single, consistent, centrally managed endpoint protection solution.

Symantec Endpoint Protection simplifies management and improves protection of computers at Direct Agents, freeing its employees to focus on serving its growing global client base.

The Solution

In 2008, Direct Agents licensed Symantec Endpoint Protection 11.0 for all computers on its network. The installation went smoothly, and within days Schilling eliminated the many one-off solutions and was managing antivirus protection for the 50-plus PCs and laptops via a single console.

Symantec was chosen from among several products that Schilling tested. “We tried each of the products on a handful of guinea pig machines—machines that would be considered very dirty—and Symantec just came up with more detection, more information on what it found, and easier removal,” Schilling says. He was impressed with how easy Symantec was to deploy to the client machines, and pleased with the virus-removal tools provided by Symantec Endpoint Protection.

The Results

Symantec Endpoint Protection saved Direct Agents time right from the start. Employees had fewer virus outbreaks, and infections that did occur were contained immediately and automatically. “Now, I almost don’t put any time or energy into it,” Schilling admits. “It’s something I can

easily deploy an intern to handle.” Schilling’s time is freed up for more important tasks, such as planning Direct Agents’ expansion to the west coast in early 2009. The company also hopes to open an office in the U.K., and Schilling expects to manage the antivirus environments at all three locations from his Symantec Endpoint Protection console in New York.

Purchasing a single solution for the entire company also saved Direct Agents money. It’s difficult for Schilling to calculate how much individual users had spent on point products for their machines, or how much they paid to keep those licenses current, but he estimates that buying a single volume license for Symantec Endpoint Protection saved the company 40 percent.

Other financial savings came from scaling back a contract with an outside IT vendor. “In a big part because of Symantec lifting the burden of endpoint protection, there is a direct savings,” he says. The contract had cost Direct Agents about \$1,500 per month, and Schilling estimates that half of the savings from eliminating the contract was a direct result of Symantec Endpoint Protection.

Months after the deployment of Symantec Endpoint Protection, Schilling is pleased with his choice. “Symantec seems to have a real commitment not only to having the latest, greatest virus detection and signatures, but also having a very thorough knowledgebase of not only what a virus is, but how it affects your computer.” Schilling says. “Even if you’re using a competing product, you probably end up on Symantec’s webpage trying to figure out what a virus is and what it does.”

And that’s a webpage that Schilling—or any IT manager—is comfortable having his users visit.

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

Key Challenges

- Protect computers that routinely access potentially harmful media
- Manage endpoint protection centrally
- Save money by eliminating multiple endpoint protection products

Solution

Endpoint Security

Partner

Zaphyr Technologies

Symantec Products

- Symantec Endpoint Protection 11.0

Technology Environment

- Applications: Microsoft Office Suite, Intuit QuickBooks, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, various FTP clients and web browsers
- Desktops and laptops: about 50 running Windows XP SP2; one Windows Vista
- Servers: 20, mostly cloud servers operated through Amazon Web Services; seven in-house servers, mostly Dell hardware running Microsoft Windows Server 2003 R2 and Red Hat Enterprise Linux operating systems

Business Results

- As many as 20 hours per week saved on virus- and malware-related tasks
- 40% savings in software licensing costs
- \$1,500 per month saved on outside IT support