

## WESTON COLLEGE

## CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

**INDUSTRY:**  
Education

**WEBSENSE INTEGRATION:**  
Cisco PIX Firewall Edition

*"We needed a solution that offered us more flexible and granular control over how the students and staff use the computing facilities, which we recognise as a valuable learning resource. The key is that we wanted to create a safe and secure environment for our users, without blocking legitimate content. This is what Websense delivered, and most vendors simply fall short of providing this high level of accuracy."*

Mark Hill, Head of IT, Weston College



### **Weston College deploys Websense® to protect student records and guard against Internet threats**

Today Weston College is one of the fastest growing Further Education Colleges in the UK, offering more than 800 full and part-time academic, work related and leisure courses to students from Weston-super-Mare and North Somerset.

Courses are delivered in Weston and at more than 50 community locations across North Somerset. With more than 19,000 students, there is a rich mix of people studying at the College, many from other parts of the UK as well as from abroad, on a wide range of full and part-time courses.

#### **The Problem**

Mark Hill, Head of IT at Weston College, says that a range of IT security threats including spyware, instant messaging attachments and removable media had become a concern, and that he was struggling to find a solution that would address the problem without disrupting staff and students in their legitimate day-to-day use of college PCs. "We had become aware of the widespread use of removable storage devices, so one of our greatest priorities was to properly secure private or sensitive data in the light of new threats. We maintain staff and student records on computers here, which is a key motivator for wanting closer control over the use of removable media such as memory sticks, CD burners and even iPods with their phenomenal storage capacity. But we also wanted to protect the integrity of students' work and ensure that malware wasn't unwittingly brought in to the College on these devices by students and staff."

He continues: "We already had traditional security systems in place to protect our networks from being attacked. IDS and anti-virus were already in place, but we found that students were downloading programs that enabled them to bypass existing security settings. We wanted to prevent students from downloading illegal material, for example copyrighted material such as MP3 files, because the College, as well as the individual concerned, might be held legally accountable and fined for this kind of activity. But we also wanted to prevent students from inadvertently downloading potentially harmful applications, such as spyware. There is a good chance that material downloaded from, say, a P2P file-sharing website, will contain malware."

Hill explains that the use of instant messaging by students and staff was an additional vehicle for harmful malware. "We had no visibility of the content that was being distributed or received by this method. What's more, there doesn't have to be malicious intent on the part of the user for damage to be caused. People won't know if they are opening or forwarding attachments that have been infected with spyware, because Internet threats are designed to be invisible to the user. So we needed a way of controlling this kind of application. A student may be under the impression that they are opening something innocent from a friend, when in reality they may be infecting the machine with all manner of harmful malware, including worms, viruses or keyloggers."

He adds: "Although we finally decided to block IM completely for certain user groups, with Websense we had the option of allowing instant messaging applications, but blocking attachments. So again, Websense offered a level of flexibility well above and beyond what turned out to be our bare minimum requirements."

## The Solution

From the beginning of 2006 Weston College has been using Websense on over 800 computers. "With Websense we now have a control system in place at the desktop to control application usage and rogue software. As providers of an educational service, the appeal of Websense stems from the fact that we didn't want to be simplistic or draconian and lock down everything. We needed a compromise that offered us more flexibility and granular control over how the students and staff use the computing facilities, which we recognise as a valuable learning resource. The key is that we wanted to create a safe environment for our users, without blocking legitimate content. Most vendors simply fall short of providing this high level of accuracy."

Hill says that Websense has enabled Weston College to meet guidelines set by the advisory body Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). "It has helped us to more clearly define the relationship between the student and education provider, and also to automate the enforcement of policy and blocking of harmful content from entering our network. We have been able to demonstrate to users what constitutes acceptable use, and monitor all activity that falls outside that boundary."

Websense has also helped Weston College to address the threat posed by removable media. "The popularity and ready accessibility of USB memory sticks and other portable storage devices had been a source of concern, because there are many confidential details and records on our systems here," said Hill. "But it would have inconvenienced us if we disabled all the USB ports on each and every computer. There are certain trusted groups, for example lecturers who wish to take work home with them, who could be treated differently and justifiably so. Websense allowed us to apply detailed policies to different user groups or departments rather than having to enforce a blanket ban."

He also says that he was mindful of the need to control management overhead. "The rival products we reviewed would have required much greater investment. More training would have been necessary, and for a separate system that worked independently from our existing infrastructure. By contrast, Websense made for an obvious choice because it integrated perfectly with the existing software."

Hill identifies usability as a strong benefit of Websense. "Compared to the other packages we looked at, the user interface is very simple to understand and manage. In the event that more technically-minded or qualified specialist staff are unavailable, the day-to-day management of the software can be handled by line staff."

## About Websense

**Websense, Inc. (NASDAQ: WBSN) is the worldwide leader of web filtering, and premier provider of web security and desktop security software. Websense software is preferred by leading Fortune 500 and FTSE customers, as well as government agencies and educational institutions. Websense software increases employee internet productivity and secures organisations from emerging internet threats by providing a proactive web security component that compliments traditional security solutions. Only Websense delivers flexible, integrated policy enforcement at the internet gateway, network, desktop and remotely with over 24.5 million seats under subscription, ranging in size from 100-person firms to many of the world's largest corporations.**

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