



CASE STUDY

# Grand Valley State University Solves its Spam and Virus Problems by Switching to Proofpoint

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## ABOUT GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

Located in Allensdale, Michigan, Grand Valley State University is a four-year public university with more than 23,000 students with high quality programs and state-of-the-art facilities.

<http://www.gvsu.edu/>

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## PRODUCTS DEPLOYED

- Proofpoint Enterprise Protection™

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## DEPLOYMENT TYPE

- Appliance
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**BUSINESS SITUATION** Grand Valley State University had a big problem with spam and viruses on its hands. The school had deployed a McAfee Ironmail appliance solution to deal with the problem, but experienced issues with the performance, administrative burden and accuracy of the product. The system frequently misclassified legitimate messages as spam and vice versa. The anti-spam appliance also couldn't keep up with the university's growing volume of inbound email. The university needed a new solution that would work more accurately and require much less time to maintain.

**SOLUTION** Grand Valley State deployed the Proofpoint appliance as a replacement for its Ironmail solution. The university now uses Proofpoint Enterprise Protection to protect more than 20,000 student and faculty inboxes.

The Proofpoint appliance was easy to deploy, simple to configure and went to work right away, and it doesn't suffer from any of the restrictions that the school's Ironmail anti-spam appliance suffered from. Proofpoint's effectiveness proved to be much higher and the system's near-perfect accuracy eliminated the school's problems with misclassified email. Administration overhead dropped dramatically with IT staff going from spending several hours

per day ensuring email was running properly to near-zero administration time with Proofpoint. Students, faculty and staff have more control over their personal email preferences and their inboxes are free of spam and viruses.

## PREVIOUS ANTI-SPAM SOLUTION

**FLUNKED OUT** As with most universities, Grand Valley State is under constant assault from spam and viruses that, left unchecked, clog both student and faculty inboxes. The university had originally deployed McAfee's Ironmail messaging security appliance to rid its network of the thousands of spam messages that it received each day, but found the appliance could not keep up with the constantly changing nature of spam. As a result, it generated an unacceptably high level of false positives (legitimate email messages erroneously classified as spam) and let an unacceptable number of spam messages through to end users.

In addition, Grand Valley State kept all spam messages in a quarantine so that users could review the messages and release legitimate ones. However, the Ironmail appliance could only keep 400,000 emails in the quarantine at any one time, which meant that the university could only keep messages quarantined for a few days, greatly increasing the chances that a legitimate

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email trapped in the quarantine would go unnoticed.

“All in all, we had a very bad experience with McAfee and Ironmail,” said Tom Norman, email administrator for Grand Valley State University. “The product didn’t live up to what it promised and the customer support was lagging. We needed to find a new product that would excel at correctly identifying spam and viruses and reduce the amount of time IT staff spent on email administration. We were also looking for a vendor to provide a superior level of customer service and support.”

**PROOFPOINT GETS TOP GRADES FOR ACCURACY, EASE-OF-USE** Grand Valley State started to look for a new solution to rid its network of spam and viruses and looked at about half a dozen vendors in the messaging security space. After evaluating each product on its features and customer support, Grand Valley State selected Proofpoint after seeing a demonstration.

The Proofpoint Enterprise Protection appliance stops all spam and viruses at the network gateway, preventing them from ever reaching users’ inboxes. Norman said that Proofpoint stood out because of its accuracy at classifying spam and viruses and the user features that proved far superior to those of any other solution.

“Even during the first demonstration of the Proofpoint appliance, it quickly became clear that Proofpoint was a world-class enterprise solution to the problems we were experiencing,”

said Norman. “We really liked that Proofpoint gives our users control of how they receive their email. Our users can control the level of spam detection or even opt out of detection entirely. On the administrative side, Proofpoint provides a plethora of real-time reporting features and an intuitive interface that was far superior to the features in the solution we previously used.”

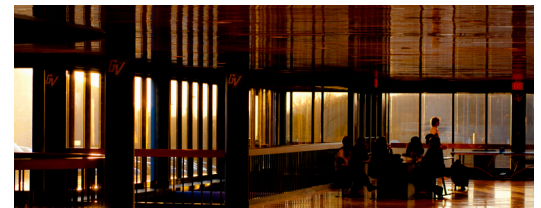
In addition, the Proofpoint appliance offers much higher performance than the Ironmail appliance. Norman says that the university’s inbound email volume is growing extremely rapidly and recently experienced record daily email volumes of over 900,000 inbound messages. But the Proofpoint appliance has easily kept up with the load and doesn’t have any of the quarantine limits or performance issues that plagued Grand Valley’s original anti-spam solution.

Proofpoint also helped Grand Valley simplify its gateway security architecture by providing gateway anti-spam and anti-virus on a single platform—replacing the university’s previously separate anti-spam and anti-virus systems with one easy-to-manage solution.

**PROOFPOINT CUSTOMER SERVICE EARNS EXTRA CREDIT** Norman noted that Proofpoint’s sales and customer support teams have been extremely responsive to the university’s needs and checked in with him every so often to make sure the deployment is running

smoothly. Norman also said that the Proofpoint deployment was very well received.

“The product’s effectiveness has been so good that we’ve gotten overwhelmingly positive feedback from our email users,” said Norman. “We’ve also noticed that we’re saving a ton of administration time. I used to spend more than two hours each day dealing with our old anti-spam product. With Proofpoint, I don’t even spend two minutes in administration. It just works.”



All in all, Norman said that Grand Valley State’s use of Proofpoint has far exceeded anyone’s expectations. “Proofpoint’s product is just miles ahead of our previous McAfee Ironmail anti-spam product. Proofpoint has just been a godsend to me because I’m now viewed as the ‘good guy’ for finally fixing our problem with spam and viruses.”

**ABOUT GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY** Grand Valley State University, established in 1960, is a four-year public university. It attracts more than 23,000 students with its high quality programs and state-of-the-art facilities. Grand Valley offers 69 undergraduate and 25 graduate degree programs. Grand Valley employs more than 1,700 people and is committed to providing a fair and equitable environment for the continued success of all.



**ABOUT PROOFPOINT** Proofpoint focuses exclusively on the art and science of cloud-based email security, eDiscovery and compliance solutions. Organizations around the world depend on Proofpoint’s expertise, patented technologies and on-demand delivery system to protect against spam and viruses, safeguard privacy, encrypt sensitive information, and archive messages for easier management and discovery. Proofpoint’s enterprise email solutions mitigate the challenges and amplify the benefits of enterprise messaging. Learn more at [www.proofpoint.com](http://www.proofpoint.com).

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