AVL Improves its own Safety and That of its Customers and Partners

Drive Expert Relies on Comprehensive Proofpoint Solution for Email Security

AVL

THE CHALLENGE

- Replace the existing security solution with one that's able to filter out potentially dangerous emails
- Add missing functionality, such as sandboxing
- Gain quicker access to new functionalities than the previous provider could deliver

THE SOLUTION

- Proofpoint Email Protection
- Proofpoint Targeted Attack Protection
- Proofpoint Threat Response Auto Pull
- Proofpoint Email Fraud Defense

THE RESULTS

- Significantly improved detection rate of potentially dangerous emails
- Increased employee productivity
- Reduced costs of email security
- Better service for AVL as a customer

The Organization

With more than 11,500 employees, AVL List GmbH is the world's largest independent company for the development, simulation and testing of drive systems for cars, commercial vehicles, construction machinery, large engines and their integration into vehicles. The company was founded in 1948 and is based in Graz, Austria. It offers complete, integrated development environments, measuring and testing systems and state-of-the-art simulation methods. It's also a driver of innovation in the field of drives—especially in the area of electromobility. This makes the company particularly attractive to attackers. This includes those who may, for example, want to steal inventions or blackmail the company. Digital security is therefore not an option; it's a prerequisite for AVL's success.

The Challenge

AVL's prior email security solution had been in use for several years. But the development of the platform couldn't keep pace with the technical developments in the market. This included both the developments of others solutions, as well as the evolving capabilities of cyber criminals. And as one of the world's largest suppliers to automobile manufacturers, AVL depends on having the highest security standards. And this holds true for both the protection of its own company and that of other companies in its supply chain.

"Over time, we found that the detection rate of potentially dangerous emails no longer met our requirements," explained Michael Sebekovsky, team leader infrastructure applications at AVL. This was an avoidable threat to the company. And it also meant that the IT team had to spend considerable time on manual intervention in email security.

The second problem they faced was the lack of functionality, especially in the area of sandboxing. "We talked to our manufacturer at that time about new functions in the security solution. But unfortunately, the company wasn't able to deliver these urgently needed functional enhancements in the time we had planned," said Sebekovsky. So the team needed to quickly find a better alternative.

The Solution

As a first step, the team looked into current email security offerings. And they took into account the latest assessments of well-known market research companies. Their strategy was to implement the IT system that delivered the best results for the defined task—a so-called best-of-breed approach. After a thorough search, the team agreed on the requirements of the new solution and very quickly decided on two suppliers for a proof of concept.

> "The Proofpoint solution gives us options, such as the subsequent removal of potentially dangerous emails. This significantly improves our security capabilities in an emergency."
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> **Michael Sebekovsky**, team leader infrastructure Applications, AVL List GmbH

"The results of the test were very satisfactory," reports Sebekovsky. "But in the end, the Proofpoint solution was able to deliver better results than the other solution under consideration." In the PoC, the Proofpoint solution blocked the delivery of a large number of emails that hadn't t been filtered out by the previous solution used in this test.

Auto-Pull increases safety

In addition to the significantly higher hit rate, the ability to subsequently remove emails from the recipients' mailboxes was also an important point for AVL. This auto-pull function meant additional security for AVL. This is because cyber criminals repeatedly send emails with URLs that link to a website without malware at the time of sending. This is done so that the security systems don't block the email. Then once the emails have reached the inboxes of potential victims, a website with malware is uploaded under the corresponding URL. The Proofpoint solution detects and subsequently removes emails with links to initially harmless but later infected websites from the inboxes of all recipients. "For AVL, Auto-Pull is an important feature because it also helps us to react quickly to attacks initiated with a time delay and to protect our users," explained Sebekvosky.

The implementation went very quickly. Within only three months, the trio of AVL, Proofpoint and partner Anovis had implemented the new system. And the commitment of the Proofpoint team is particularly noteworthy. "The project was also pushed forward between years," recalls Sebekovsky. "We were able to access our contacts in sales and technology at Proofpoint at any time between Christmas and New Year, a clear commitment to us as customers. You don't see that every day."

The Results

AVL has been very satisfied with the Proofpoint solution, as it filters out almost all potentially dangerous emails. "The very good detection rate ensures that our users are much safer than in the past," said Sebekovsky happily. The probability of becoming a victim of a cyber attack has thus been significantly reduced.

The AVL team was ready for even more protection—for them and for other companies—from cyber attacks trying to abuse AVL's good name. Accordingly, AVL now has a DMARC record showing a reject policy through Proofpoint Email Fraud Defense. "This way, we also ensure that our partners, customers and suppliers are better protected," said Sebekovsky. And now cyber criminals can no longer imitate the sender address of an attack mail that—supposedly—originated from AVL.

"Both the measurable improvement in security and Proofpoint's investment in working with us and Anovis as our partner before, during and after implementation is what convinced us," Sebekovsky summarized. "And the results show that our decision to choose Proofpoint for email security is exactly the right path for AVL."

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