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Postini Encryption Manager Safeguards Email Content for SEI and Security-Conscious Clients

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Joseph Stevenson, Technical Architect, Corporate Information Technology, SEI

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

- Policy-enforced TLS email encryption eliminates complexity for end-users and administrative overhead for IT staff
- Guaranteed secure email delivery offers peace of mind to clients as an important value-added service for the firm
- Cost-effective managed services deploy quickly without expensive hardware and software

THE PROBLEM

Clients Want Guaranteed Secure Email Delivery But Public Key Encryption Too Complex for Users

SEI helps corporations, financial institutions and advisors create and manage wealth through global asset management, investment technology and consulting services. Through its subsidiaries and partnerships last year, the firm administered \$334.3 billion in mutual fund and pooled assets and managed \$161.7 billion in assets. Headquartered in Oaks, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia, SEI serves clients in over a dozen countries throughout Europe, Asia and the Americas.

More than 2,800 SEI employees and consultants rely on email as their primary method of communicating with clients, vendors, partners, and co-workers. Three years ago, SEI chose Postini Perimeter Manager® managed service to protect its business-critical email system because of its demonstrated effectiveness in filtering spam, viruses and directory harvest attacks and for its flexible user capabilities.

SEI took advantage of Perimeter Manager’s built-in support for Transport Layer Security (TLS) email encryption when several clients requested secure email delivery. TLS is a widely adopted “domain-to-domain” encryption standard that doesn’t require end-user involvement and is compatible with message filtering. Most email servers today support TLS so SEI’s clients could easily turn on the security feature at no additional cost.

“Our clients told us they really liked the encryption capability and some were ready to take email security to the next level,” notes Joseph Stevenson, Technical Architect in Corporate Information Technology at SEI. Basic TLS encryption helps secure transmission of messages. However, if a TLS-enabled email

server cannot establish a secure connection with a recipient’s email server, TLS downgrades to an unsecured or plain-text connection. While this “best effort” approach worked for many of SEI’s clients, others required by law or industry regulation to guarantee email privacy needed a more fool-proof delivery method.

A small business group within SEI tried using a public key infrastructure (PKI) encryption program, but found it to be cumbersome. PKI is a system of digital certificates and third-party registration authorities that verify and authenticate participants engaged in secure transactions over the Internet. As Stevenson explains, “The different keys, certificates and passwords involved were very confusing for our end-users and required a lot of administration and management from our IT support group.”

THE SOLUTION

Postini Encryption Manager Policy-Enforced TLS Solves Clients’ Stricter Email Security Needs

SEI’s IT team realized that PKI encryption would be too complex and costly to employ as a company-wide solution and began to investigate other alternatives. When the team learned of Postini’s plans to introduce a guaranteed secure email service, they were eager to give it a try.

Postini Encryption Manager™ Policy-Enforced TLS enables SEI to establish secure connections with trusted partners and clients who have established TLS encryption servers. Messages are decrypted at Postini’s data centers in real time, screened for spam, viruses, directory harvest attacks, and compliance with company email content policies, then encrypted and forwarded on to recipients. Postini’s flow-through approach is a significant improvement over other managed services that must first store messages to disk before screening and encoding.

“It’s hard to put a dollar value on it, but Postini’s policy-enforced encryption certainly gives us and our clients peace of mind. We always mention our email encryption capability to prospective clients because it conveys the message that we understand their security concerns and have methods in place to meet them.”

Joseph Stevenson, Technical Architect, Corporate Information Technology, SEI

If a secure connection cannot be negotiated with the server of a recipient who must receive encrypted email, Postini Encryption Manager Policy-Enforced TLS does not downgrade and send the message. Instead, the service returns the email to the sender with an error message and alerts the email administrator. This approach effectively preserves the confidentiality of all sensitive messages.

Postini Encryption Manager gives SEI the flexibility and control to manage and enforce encryption policies without the cost and complexity typically associated with traditional PKI solutions. Using Postini’s easy-to-use web-based Admin Console, SEI email administrators can add and delete trusted domain names, configure the system to restrict connections that cannot be encrypted and generate alerts when TLS policies cannot be enforced. For maximum protection, SEI can choose to secure both inbound and outbound connections.

THE RESULTS

End-Users Rely on and Trust their Email System

Postini’s Encryption Manager Policy-Enforced TLS has successfully met SEI’s email security needs, protecting communications where they are most vulnerable—traversing the public Internet. “Postini’s policy-enforced email encryption was a natural extension to the TLS security we were already using,” Stevenson explains. “The service removes all complications for our end-users and delivers a ‘set it and forget it’ solution for us in the IT department.”

Employees like the service because the only thing they have to do is tell the IT staff what domains to add to SEI’s secure partners list. The company no longer worries about sensitive emails going over the Internet unprotected because employees didn’t realize or forgot that the messages required encryption, or failed to correctly complete the encryption steps.

At some point, Stevenson thinks that SEI may also need on-demand, message-level email encryption for individual clients who do not have access to TLS-supported mail servers. His team won’t have far to look; Postini also offers message-level email encryption with its Encryption Manager Message Security managed service.

Stevenson reports that SEI definitely sees secure email delivery growing in importance in the financial services industry, as companies strive to meet industry and government regulations. Meanwhile, it makes good business sense to implement encryption because clients want that assurance of confidentiality.

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ABOUT POSTINI

As the leader in Integrated Message Management, Postini protects businesses from a wide range of email, instant messaging (IM) and Web threats, provides message archiving and encryption, and enables the management and enforcement of enterprise policies to meet regulatory compliance requirements.

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