



Postini Perimeter Manager Helps Orbitz Eliminate Spam, Accelerate Customer Service and Cut Costs

“Since starting the Postini service, we’re turning customer email requests around faster, and we don’t need as many customer care staff to process the email. It’s like doubling our staff while cutting our processing expenses in half.”

Jim Kerr,
Manager of Support Systems,
Orbitz

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

- Processing of email had required up to 30 minutes, which now has been reduced to less than a minute and a half.
- Postini seemed easy to administer, while offering more flexibility for individual users
- The ROI for the Postini service was immediate and substantial

THE PROBLEM

Spam Deluge Threatens to Overwhelm Customer Service

Orbitz is a leading online travel company offering leisure and business travelers a wide selection of low fares, as well as deals on lodging, car rentals, cruises, vacation packages and other travel. The Orbitz web site is designed to satisfy the consumer’s need for an unbiased, comprehensive display of fares and rates in a single, convenient online location. At Orbitz, however, the customer relationship doesn’t end when the customer hits the “purchase” button.

Orbitz is the first and only travel web site with a seasoned Customer Care Team that monitors nationwide travel conditions around the clock. At the Orbitz command center, the Care Team gathers and interprets FAA, National Weather Service and other data to provide customers with real-time travel intelligence including automated travel alerts and flight updates via mobile phone, pager, PDA or email.

Over the past few years, Orbitz found itself deluged with spam and unwanted emails that threatened to overwhelm its world-class Customer Service Center. Prior to this dramatic increase in spam and viruses, Orbitz had been using a combination of Spam Assassin, Procmail and Symantec to filter its email messages. But with spam and unwanted email soon making up 50-60 percent of all messages, the existing combination of products simply wasn’t up to the task.

“It was an administrative nightmare trying to keep up with managing multiple anti-spam and virus devices,” according to Jim Kerr, Manager of Support Systems for Orbitz.

Orbitz had to constantly add hardware to keep up with the growing influx of unwanted email. In addition to spam and viruses, Kerr said Orbitz also found itself a constant target for

denial of service (DoS) and directory harvest attacks (DHAs) because of its large customer base and highly visible presence on the Web. As the problem grew worse, Orbitz’s email system was soon requiring full-time IT staffers to manage the flood.

Kerr noted that as a 24/7 environment, Orbitz required high email availability as a business-critical component of its service to customers. “Junk email was causing latency in processing our customer service messages. Our mail servers were so busy trying to filter the spam that it slowed down the legitimate mail,” he said. “During heavy traffic periods, we were seeing a 15-minute delay in email delivery from our external servers into Orbitz.”

Such delays had a major impact on Orbitz customer service, according to Kerr, since its service level agreement promises that Orbitz will respond to customer inquiries within two hours. “If you burn 15-minutes on messages moving in and out of the company,” Kerr pointed out, “that’s a 30-minute loss—leaving only 90-minutes to process customer requests.” It was a situation that demanded a quick and effective solution.

THE SOLUTION

Postini’s Preemptive Anti-Spam and Anti-Virus Email Protection

Orbitz conducted extensive research analyzing pricing and administrative costs for various anti-spam and email security approaches. “We initially considered an in-house solution such as Brightmail, where we would pay for a commercial service but then host the infrastructure ourselves,” Kerr recalled, “We ruled out the Brightmail approach because we’d still have to devote a 24/7 IT staff to manage our email infrastructure.” Kerr decided that he would rather spend valuable IT staff time “doing things that continue to keep us #1

“It was literally like flipping a light switch and the spam was immediately turned off. We’re like rock stars at this place now.”

Jim Kerr,
Manager of Support Systems,
Orbitz

in customer service.”

“Orbitz is a travel company, not an anti-spam expert,” he emphasized. “Why would we want to spend our bandwidth and very talented, highly paid resources fighting something that’s not a core competency of our company?”

Orbitz then examined the managed service approach that screens emails for the customer. “We researched managed service companies using analyst and magazine ratings,” Kerr noted, “and Postini® just kept showing up as the top solution.”

He noted that Postini Perimeter Manager® seemed easy to administer, while offering more flexibility for individual users to fine-tune their own email settings. He also appreciated Postini’s reporting capability that allowed him to view email traffic in real time.

Kerr said he was also reassured that Postini, with its 3,500 plus customer base, had the experience and expertise he expected from an enterprise solution.

“What we pay for the Postini service is nowhere near what it would cost us to dedicate even one person to the spam problem, let alone three,” says Kerr. “With Postini, we don’t need to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional hardware to process our email—and we don’t get called in the middle of the night because of an email server outage!”

THE RESULTS

Immediate ROI and “A Fortune in Savings”

Thanks to Postini, Orbitz can now handle its customer email traffic without worrying about spam or email-borne viruses. Processing of

inbound and outbound email that had required up to 30-minutes during high volume times has been reduced to less than a minute and a half.

“After activating the Postini service, we’ve been able cut our actual workload in half. We can now either reduce the number of customer care staff on each shift or we can reduce our response times to customers,” Kerr said. “Either way, we’re able to beat our customer service expectations.”

Kerr also appreciates Postini’s streamlined administration and ease of use. “We’re really not taxed at all, because the Postini administration is easy. Spam, viruses, mail bombs, and directory harvest attacks never even hit our servers,” he says.

If Orbitz experiences an email server problem, Postini provides real-time analysis and alerting by pager or email to system administrators. Postini can also automatically load balance the email flow to avoid overloading any one server.

The ROI for the Postini service was immediate and substantial according to Kerr. “We’re saving huge amounts of money in customer service costs and we’re turning customer email requests around faster,” he said. “It’s a fortune in savings.”

Kerr noted that activating Postini’s service was an amazingly simple process. “It’s almost idiot proof,” he commented. “We just changed our DNS record and that’s about it. We were able to get the service implemented in about 24 hours for the whole company.”

The switch to Postini’s unique managed service has more than paid for itself. “From an Orbitz perspective everything’s been great—our people love it,” he concluded. “It was literally like flipping a light switch and the spam was



ABOUT POSTINI

As the leader in Integrated Message Management, Postini protects businesses from a wide range of email, instant messaging 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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