



McAfee's Risk Management Keeps Continental Airlines Flying High



Continental Airlines has the distinction of being the sixth largest airline in the world and, according to a 2005 Zagat survey, the top U.S. carrier in terms of customer satisfaction. The airline has been named Airline of the Year by the Official Airline Guide (OAG). And, in 2004, Continental celebrated its 70th anniversary. But accolades aside, with 3,000 daily departures, Continental has to make sure its operations run smoothly at all levels to stay at the top of its game. To support its employees and locations around the world, Continental's technical operations must run as efficiently and securely as possible.

Like companies across all industries, Continental must deal with the business challenges of regulatory compliance. Sarbanes-Oxley, the Payment Card Industry (PCI) data security standard, and other mandates force the company to keep thorough track of its IT assets, applications, and their associated risks. To meet these requirements as well as to maintain the confidence of its customers and business partners, Continental wanted to improve its security posture by proactively protecting its users and systems globally against threats such as viruses, adware, and spyware.

As one of the world's largest airlines, Continental has more than 40,000 employees spread everywhere the airline flies, including 6,000 at the worldwide headquarters in Houston, Texas. Continental has data centers in Houston and North Carolina, and three call centers.

With a far-flung network and many thousands of users, protection against internal and external threats is a top concern, according to Andre Gold, Continental's director of information security, who is in charge of global security initiatives, IT governance, and compliance.

Continental's previous anti-virus solution had different versions installed around the world, required five consoles to run it, and had five distinct administration groups. Gold and his team needed several days to deploy new anti-virus definition (DAT) files to all users, and IT had no easy way to centrally report that the task was complete. The IT department also lacked visibility into the entire user community. "We had unknown assets, unknown patch levels, and we didn't know what was at risk," Gold recalls.

In August 2005, Gold and his team were ready to make a change when their licensing contract with their anti-virus vendor was set to expire.

At a Glance

The industry
Airline

The customer
Continental Airlines

The network environment
Continental Airlines' IT environment spans 277 locations, including its worldwide headquarters in Houston, TX, and encompasses more than 40,000 employees, including 6,000 workers in Houston. The network includes data centers in Texas and North Carolina, and three call centers.

Business challenge
Continental Airlines needed to comply with government-mandated regulatory requirements such as Sarbanes-Oxley and the Payment Card Industry (PCI) data security standard, gain visibility into IP devices, and improve overall network security.



Technology solution

The airline chose an approach to security that is transparent to users with no impact to network or operations. Continental worked with security reseller Solid Border to deploy McAfee VirusScan Enterprise, which takes a proactive approach to protecting network systems. In addition to comprehensive anti-virus protection, VirusScan Enterprise detects potentially unwanted programs and includes firewall and intrusion prevention technology. McAfee ePolicy Orchestrator (ePO) provides comprehensive, centralized management, round-the-clock security monitoring, threat notification services, and automatic global updates.

Benefits gained from McAfee

- Centralized management reduced the number of security consoles from five to one
- IT administrators have an enterprise-wide view of all assets and what is at risk
- IT can roll out anti-virus DAT updates in hours rather than days

On Board with McAfee

Continental Airlines selected McAfee® as its new enterprise security provider because of McAfee's long-range view of the security market. "McAfee has a vision and a strategy that is synergistic with Continental's business goals," says Gold.

Continental selected McAfee VirusScan® Enterprise, which takes anti-virus protection to the next level by integrating elements of intrusion prevention and firewall technology into a single solution for PCs and file servers. It delivers proactive protection from the newest of today's threats—including buffer-overflow exploits and blended attacks—and features advanced outbreak management responses to reduce the damage and costs of outbreaks.

Moving beyond anti-virus, Gold was impressed with McAfee's layered approach to security, including proactive protection from buffer-overflow attacks, spyware, adware, and network attacks. Plus, with McAfee solutions, Gold could proactively enforce IT's security policies before allowing users to access Continental's network.

To assist with planning and deploying its new enterprise security solution, Continental selected Solid Border, a McAfee SecurityAlliance™ Elite Partner that specializes in displacing other anti-virus solutions with McAfee's suite of products.

"McAfee has a vision and a strategy that is synergistic to Continental's business goals."

—Andre Gold, director of information security, Continental Airlines

Continental had an extremely tight, four-week planning and implementation schedule. But Solid Border's Derek del Barrio, lead engineer on the project, says what made the situation so challenging was the airline's many locations and requirement for minimal impact on normal operations, because of the round-the-clock nature of worldwide air travel.

"McAfee's product flexibility allowed us to successfully deploy a complete anti-virus solution in more than 75 unique customer environments."

—Derek del Barrio, Solid Border's lead engineer

Based on his five years of working with McAfee's products and best practices, del Barrio formulated a method of deployment. Implementation was straightforward, thanks in large part to McAfee ePolicy Orchestrator® (ePO™), which the team uses to manage VirusScan Enterprise. ePO provides centralized management, scalable security policy compliance, and graphical reporting.

del Barrio adds that his team is very experienced with conducting anti-virus displacements, but he appreciated the resources Continental dedicated to the project as well as McAfee's superior technical support.

The fourth and final week of the Continental deployment involved training IT staff on system configuration and reporting. To ensure the system is running at peak efficiency, Solid Border will provide Continental with quarterly onsite visits for a year.



McAfee Anti-Virus Solution Ready for Takeoff

Continental Airlines experienced a number of improvements following the McAfee anti-virus software deployment. Decreasing the number of security consoles from five to one, and centralized reporting, policy management, and enforcement have increased security and productivity. Gold and his team now have an enterprise-wide view of network assets and visibility.

Continental significantly cut the time spent to update anti-virus files, a resource-consuming drain on any IT administrator's already full schedule. "ePO allows me to roll out DATs in hours, rather than days. With McAfee's proactive protection, I can install patches per the company's defined maintenance windows and not haphazardly," Gold says.

With a secure environment, the sky is still the limit for Continental.