SOPHOS

Sayfol International School Kuala Lumpur Embraces Sophos Intercept X for its Endpoint Protection and Overall Seamless IT Experience

SAYFOL INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN THE CITY

Customer-at-a-Glance

Sayfol International School Kuala Lumpur

Industry
Educational institution

Number of Users
2,000 students, teachers, and staff

Sophos Solutions
Sophos Central Endpoint Advanced
Sophos Intercept X

Sayfol International School Kuala Lumpur is an institution of learning in Malaysia. It provides education with high academic standards and places a strong focus on discipline and academic studies for over 2,000 students from 60 different countries around the world. The multi-layered institution turned to Sophos in July 2017 to improve its existing endpoint security as part of their ongoing efforts to improve the overall IT system and infrastructure for its students, teachers, and staff, as well as the parents of students.

'What's great about Intercept X is its root cause analysis, which provides my team the necessary visibility.'

Andrew Wong
IT Manager
Sayfol International
School Kuala Lumpur

Challenges

‣ Previous endpoint security products proved unreliable and inadequate, leaving the school susceptible to malware attacks and potential data loss

‣ Desire to expand user services, such as secure Wi-Fi, to students and staff while still protecting users from modern threats

‣ Need for increased time and effort spent on important, school-wide technology initiatives

What is the current state of end-to-end security?

IT Manager Andrew Wong is responsible for all aspects of IT and security across the institution, from managing student portals to ensuring the health of the overall IT infrastructure. Wong currently works with one other staff member in the IT department, and he places great importance in having reliable security control tools to help his team manage and monitor the overall state of security across the institution. Coming from a corporate background, Wong believes that deploying a 24/7 comprehensive security solution is crucial to allow the department to focus on other areas that fall under IT. This goal includes preparations to extend the current IT infrastructure to meet the expansion plans for the school's overall management system. Wong and his team are also responsible for providing their management with regular monitoring logs and reports, as well as proposals for upgrades and improvements to the current IT infrastructure.

When he first joined Sayfol International in mid 2017, Wong's first task was to find a solution to some of the fundamental security challenges the organization faced. Before the switch to Sophos, the institution deployed a competitor's home edition antivirus software for its endpoint protection, which provided limited features. According to Wong, the solution not only failed to run regular scans – it also did not detect or remove malware completely, which then compromised other PCs used by students. Some of the teachers were also at risk of losing valuable teaching materials as a result of using compromised devices.

"Our biggest issue stemmed from students using compromised USB drives. Malware was often not detected by the competitor's software despite supposedly regular scans," said Wong. "As a result, we had security issues across all the other PCs in our environment. It also affected our entire network, which also included the CCTVs. Additionally, we couldn't find the root cause and often ended up taking time to manually clean and reformat each PC. Unfortunately, the issue persisted. This became a daily issue for us and took away precious time from more important tasks."

On the front-end server and web gateway levels, the IT department uses a competitor firewall solution. However, the team is finding it hard to navigate its complicated user interface and management controls and so they intend to switch in the near future.

"I'm finding it a little complex," said Wong. "Every firewall is the same. However, different brands come with different interfaces. This particular one requires more steps than usual to carry out tasks. However, I believe that there are clear benefits in using both the endpoint protection and the network firewall security that come from the same provider. This may influence my decision on which firewall protection solution I will deploy next."

How do you make the switch to Sophos?

When he started working with Sayfol International, Wong knew his first priority was to tackle the security issues at the user level. When the school ordered more PCs and devices, he decided to switch the existing home edition software to Sophos Intercept X endpoint protection and Sophos Central Endpoint Advanced.

"When I first joined, I said there is no way this outdated process can continue. I refused to allow these issues to affect the rest of the IT infrastructure," explained Wong. "I've used many competitor brands in the past, but nothing comes close to my experience using Sophos, thanks to a recommendation from a Sophos vendor. It has been six years now and my opinion is still the same. In fact, the solution has become even more advanced over the years. Today, Intercept X comes with some of the most groundbreaking features, including the credential theft protection, ensuring students' and teachers' passwords are completely safe without the possibility of falling into the wrong hands."

For Wong, one of the most useful features in Sophos Central Endpoint Advanced solution was the Peripheral Control, as it helped manage access to removable media and mobile devices used by students. It blocks all compromised USB drives and devices and keeps the PCs malware free. Similarly, using the Cloud Edition of the endpoint solution keeps users away from malicious URLs and sends an alert to the IT department for immediate action when needed.

How does Sophos make everyone happier and more productive?

In the past, Wong and his team spent hours reformatting, plugging, and unplugging devices on a daily basis. However, since the institution started using Sophos endpoint solutions, all systems have been stable, showing zero slowness or lag time. Even the school's bandwidth performance has improved overall.

"Our management team is extremely happy now. The teachers are pleased with the increased productivity. Sophos has proven to all of us to be the most effective solution. In fact, I can't remember the last time I stepped into the computer lab, unless it has to do with power failure or hardware malfunction," declares Wong.

Since switching to Sophos, Sayfol International School experienced improvement beyond their expectations. Since their Sophos deployment, the school has seen almost a 100% decrease in IT issues.

"Sophos has even brought down any issues we experienced on the network level, which is huge relief. There has not been a single incident of down time or lag since we switched to Sophos. We are quite

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IT Manager
Sayfol International School Kuala Lumpur

impressed with the benefits we've experienced thus far," explains Wong. "The improvements we've made to our endpoint protection has improved our entire school infrastructure. And, we are glad to be using an endpoint protection solution that has received some of the highest performance scores ever seen in third-party testing. Sophos is definitely the right security for us."

Sayfol currently has 68 licenses of Sophos Intercept X and Sophos Central Endpoint Advanced and is looking to increase to 100 by end of the year. Unlike previous security solutions used by the school, Sophos has all the functionality the organization needs in one place: the ability to check internet connections in real time to block known threats, out-of-the-box policy controls to minimize risk of infection from malware, and antivirus for swift detection and removal of viruses.

Why does choosing the right protection solution matter?

Wong believes that it is important for corporations to consider their options wisely when it comes to choosing the right protection. According to him, choosing the most affordable solution may please the management, but it may not guarantee a smooth IT journey.

"It's always important to allow time to try and test the product before purchasing it. That's my approach and it has worked well. It is also helpful to show your management the benefits and ROI from their investment. It's time to do away with the 'this is better than nothing' mindset and decide thoroughly on the solution that can deliver unparalleled defense against threats," states Wong.

According to Wong, the back-end support from Sophos is just as important as the solution itself. In the past, he has had his concerns about the level of support he would receive based on certain issues he faced reaching out to his former security vendor. However, Wong is now more confident after working with this distributor and Sophos Support. He knows that with Sophos he will get the proper support and follow-up when he needs it.

"When I first deployed Sophos, I ran into some unfamiliar issues. Sophos sent their principal engineer directly to our office to help us understand the solution better and showed us around the software so that we were more confident using it. It's the little gestures that make a big difference," clarifies Wong.

According to Wong and his team, with fewer end-user issues on his plate, he is able to spend more time on upcoming initiatives, including implementing top-up value on microchipped smart cards for upcoming technology. Sophos is a win for the students and for the teaching staff as well. The IT team is able to provide users improved protection and access to upgraded services, both with greater convenience. This includes guest Wi-Fi for the parents to access their children's student portal to review performance, subjects, and feedback from teachers.

"In future, the full features of the school system will allow students and parents to access the respective portal as well as the Wi-Fi for assignments and research. Thanks to Sophos, we are able to provide them seamless, problem-free experience when using the computer labs and Wi-Fi. What's great about Intercept X is its root cause analysis provides my team with the necessary visibility into threats, along instant malware removal, to ensure no attack remnants remain. I couldn't ask for a better solution," verbalizes Wong.

What's next?

The school is currently looking into centralizing its IT infrastructure further and may consider engaging a single vendor for its endpoint and network levels. With Sophos' excellent track record at the school so far, Wong is confident in his ability to persuade his management on the benefits of switching its current competitor firewall brand to Sophos XG Firewall. Planning for the future, Wong and his team see value in Sophos Security Heartbeat™, which enables endpoints and firewalls to share intelligence in real time across a trusted channel, allowing for stronger and more effective protection against advanced malware and targeted attacks.

Wong is also looking to secure 80 to 100 additional licenses for Sophos Intercept X and Central Endpoint Protection to cater to upcoming expansions. He is confident with Intercept X, with its unique combination of advanced techniques that stop the widest range of attacks necessary to keep the organization's current devices protected. It also stops active breaches while eliminating hacker safe havens, online extortion, and the latest ransomware attacks. With Wong and his IT team leading the way, Sayfol International School is at the forefront of security.

"We are excited for what's next, because now we are using cutting-edge technology. With Sophos, we can confidently head into the future regardless of what it brings," concludes Wong.

'We are quite impressed with the benefits we've experienced with Sophos. The improvements we've made to our endpoint protection have improved our entire school infrastructure.'

Andrew Wong
IT Manager
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Start your free trial of Sophos Intercept X today.

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