



Australian Football League Scores Major Security Goals With Proofpoint Solutions

The Challenge

- Ensure safe email interaction with fans and media
- Support and enable IT team to work more efficiently
- Safeguard brand reputation

The Solution

- Proofpoint Secure Email Relay (SER)
- Proofpoint Email Fraud Defense (EFD)
- Proofpoint Email Protection
- Proofpoint Targeted Attack Protection (TAP)
- Proofpoint Threat Response Auto-Pull (TRAP)
- Proofpoint Security Awareness Training (PSAT)

The Results

- Secures email messages and helps guarantee delivery of key communications
- Strengthens infrastructure security
- Cost-effective solution helps staff do more with less

The Organization

The Australian Football League (AFL) oversees the most popular professional sport in the country, and promoting and protecting its brand is key to its game. Fan and media outreach via email are top priorities, and to help keep them safe and dependable, the company relies on Proofpoint.

The Challenge

Ensuring reliable outreach to fans and the media

Since its founding in 1896 as the Victorian Football League, the AFL has operated Australian rules football, the AFL Women's league, and other professional competitions. Today, the organization oversees 18 teams across five of Australia's six states. Like most every company, the AFL depends on a secure, reliable infrastructure to support communications and other business operations.

"We're Australia's most popular sport, we attract a lot of attention, and that makes us a high-profile target," said Cam Spark, systems and infrastructure manager, Australian Football League. "We're constantly aware of that when we are addressing cybersecurity issues. I've got a team of six who look after all our infrastructure systems, including security. We're a very lean crew, so we need solutions that are extremely effective but are low maintenance. That's exactly what we've found with the Proofpoint solutions we've implemented."

The AFL regularly communicates with fans and media organizations through email, but as its existing systems aged, the IT team realized that it needed to further strengthen its email processes to ensure that its messages reached their audience.

“We had a legacy Linux system that was using Sendmail, and as email security requirements have increased, that system became less reliable,” said Spark. “Emails were being rejected by certain email gateways, so we weren’t getting a great percentage of success. We needed to find a solution that aligned us with modern email security standards so that we could guarantee delivery of emails through that platform.”

Spark and his group were already familiar with Proofpoint solutions, so they engaged the Proofpoint team to help address their new challenges.

“We had engaged Proofpoint and successfully deployed several solutions, including Email Protection, Threat Response Auto-Pull (TRAP), Closed-Loop Email Analysis and Response (CLEAR) and other solutions. I asked Proofpoint if they had a solution to this new issue that we faced, and they recommended Proofpoint Secure Email Relay, which is great.”

“Our quarterly catch-ups with Proofpoint help us understand where business email compromise attacks are coming from, and who they are targeting. We can see that we’re doing the utmost we can to protect our end users from threats, which gives us a lot of comfort.”

Cam Spark, systems and infrastructure manager, Australian Football League

The Solution

Protecting a diverse range of email use cases

The AFL chose Proofpoint Secure Email Relay to consolidate and secure its transactional emails, including regular media announcements and communications. The solution replaces the organization’s previous SMTP email relay with a more secure, cloud-based alternative. With Proofpoint Secure Email Relay, the AFL can apply security best practices to its email, and take control of its email identity. This ensures that its audience only receives authentic email.

The deployment went smoothly, and Spark was especially impressed by the support that Proofpoint provided to align the solution with the AFL’s specific needs.

“The engagement with Proofpoint, the way that our consultant worked through the issues we had, and the amount of work they did within the Secure Email Relay environment to make this happen and to get it working as we wanted to was unbelievable,” said Spark. “There were some rules and policies that needed to be set up within the Secure Email Relay environment, and our Proofpoint consultant helped configure and test the solution to ensure that it was configured correctly.”

The Proofpoint Secure Email Relay not only enhances the security of the organization’s media communications, but also several other business processes.

“We have many other use cases throughout our organization that Proofpoint helps us protect, such as scan to email and print to email,” said Spark. “Some of our clubs use Microsoft Dynamics 365 for Finance and Operations as a shared service, and we needed a way to ensure that emails that they sent from the software were being delivered and were secure. Proofpoint Secure Email Relay was the solution to that problem as well. Across the organization there are about half a dozen solutions that we’ve identified where Secure Email Relay has added extra security, as well as improved and guaranteed the delivery of email.”

The Results

Improved email security and enhanced efficiency

By adding Proofpoint Secure Email Relay to its existing solutions, the AFL has achieved improved security, and a guaranteed mail delivery system that Spark is confident is secure. The reports from the Proofpoint Targeted Attack Protection (TAP) dashboard enable the organization to measure its success, and share its positive results with the company’s leaders.

“The amount of email that was being filtered through Proofpoint was quite staggering,” said Spark. “In a three-month period, we were getting 14 million emails, of which one million were actually being sent to end users. The protection demonstrated by those numbers has helped us justify our investment to executives—and make a stronger business case for security funding.”

Proofpoint augments its technology with regular presentations that help Spark and his team better understand the state of their security and improve their strategy to address vulnerabilities.

“We have really good quarterly catch-up meetings with our Proofpoint team,” said Spark. “Their presentations show us where attacks are coming from, what sort of attacks they are, and which end users are most vulnerable. It gives us really good insight into what’s happening in our email environment.”

Proofpoint has also helped Spark and his team achieve efficiency improvements, saving staff time by helping them understand the root cause of email issues faster, with less manual detective work.

“We’ve saved around five hours a week,” says Spark. “In the past, if a malicious email did get through to an end user and that account was compromised, then it was quite a bit of work to identify what had happened, what the issues were, and then trying to remediate it from there. Proofpoint gives us that transparency of who within the organization is most vulnerable to those attacks, as well as the technical details as to what those types of attacks are.”

With its Proofpoint solution and ongoing collaboration with Proofpoint professionals, Spark is confident in his ability to protect his brand’s reputation, as well as end users throughout the AFL.

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Proofpoint, Inc. is a leading cybersecurity and compliance company that protects organizations’ greatest assets and biggest risks: their people. With an integrated suite of cloud-based solutions, Proofpoint helps companies around the world stop targeted threats, safeguard their data, and make their users more resilient against cyber attacks. Leading organizations of all sizes, including 75 percent of the Fortune 100, rely on Proofpoint for people-centric security and compliance solutions that mitigate their most critical risks across email, the cloud, social media, and the web. More information is available at www.proofpoint.com.

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