

Impact

October 29, 1999

AV Support Pays Big Dividends for Smart IS Managers

Reconciling shrinking operations budgets with growing demands for new applications and services, Information Systems (IS) decision-makers are looking to stretch IS resources and cut expenses wherever possible. At first glance, reducing expenditures for enterprise-class support services appears logical. But, experienced decision-makers tell Aberdeen otherwise. Using anti-virus (AV) suppliers' top-tier support services provides ironclad, proactive protection against viruses — and stretches the operations budget.

Penny Wise, Pound Foolish

Charged with keeping the enterprise continuously online, many IS decision-makers watched in horror as the business came to a screeching halt during the recent Melissa and Trojan Worm virus outbreaks.

Seasoned executives held their breath, hoping that the enterprise-class support services from AV suppliers would deliver the protection necessary for the enterprise to ride through the storms.

The good news? The AV suppliers came through for subscribers of enterprise-class support services. The bad news? Cost-conscious decision-makers' rejection of support offerings prevented many enterprises from avoiding lost business, corrupted data, and destroyed PCs.

Extra Insurance Pays Big Dividends

Aberdeen's research indicates that most enterprises are tasking less skilled (and lower paid) IS staff with the responsibility for deploying and managing AV products, saving expensive, highly skilled staff for critical business projects.

IS decision-makers in large enterprises use enterprise-class support services from AV suppliers as backup for lower skilled administrators, preventing business disruption.

Decision-makers tell Aberdeen that the hidden benefit of enterprise-class AV support services is the personal attention needed to solve thorny problems before, during, and after virus invasions.

But IS decision-makers in small and midsize enterprises are unable, or unwilling, to spend budget monies for premium AV support services — until after a virus crisis leads to a career crisis.

The Value in AV Support Services

In return for a very modest fee, a few AV suppliers are delivering very high levels of service, including:

- Phone access to named supplier personnel with knowledge of the user's unique deployment;
- Proactive notification of risk assessments and recommended actions for avoiding downtime;

- Periodic and incident-specific updates of software pushed to the enterprise, with the right to redistribute software internally; and
- Internet access to supplier personnel capable of providing rapid and knowledgeable responses to user queries.

The virus outbreaks of the past few months were a stringent test of suppliers' abilities to meet users' needs. Almost all suppliers handled the outbreaks admirably, saving their enterprise-class support customers from destroyed PCs, lost data, and worse.

Network Associates Meets the Challenge

Network Associates' experience through the recent crises illustrates the immense challenge facing suppliers. During the Melissa outbreak, the company fielded an average of more than 30,000 support calls per day. At the peak of the Trojan Worm outbreak, the company serviced more than 9.5 million download requests per day on the product support Web site.

Despite the heavy burden the company shouldered during the crises, users of the company's Enterprise PrimeSupport services received early warning and protection against the viruses, earning the company high marks from its customers.

Aberdeen Conclusions

For battle-tested IS executives, AV suppliers' enterprise-class support services are seen and used as outsourced virus expertise. Decision-makers obviate the need to find and retain AV experts by relying on suppliers to assist IS staff.

Subscribers to AV suppliers' enterprise-class support services receive proactive guidance in avoiding virus issues. And, when seeking supplier assistance, users go straight to the front of the line, avoiding the waits for assistance often experienced by users bent on avoiding additional expense.

The ongoing need to bring new users, applications, and services online in dynamic environments makes the AV suppliers' expertise a pragmatic resource for lowering the risk of downtime. Compared to the cost of hiring and retaining AV experts on staff, the expense of enterprise-class support services is a bargain.

Network Associates has the largest installed base of AV users in the market, presenting unique challenges during virus outbreaks. In the recent epidemics the company withstood a savage trial by fire, meeting users' needs with an infrastructure and support team capable of scaling to meet exceptionally high demand. Network Associates' investment in support personnel and infrastructure shielded users from the challenges all suppliers face in a virus crisis.

From a budget perspective, decision-makers spending monies for enterprise-class support services such as Network Associates' PrimeSupport are getting the most protection for the lowest expenditure. Truly cost-conscious IS executives are prudently spending money now to prevent IS and career downtime later.

— Eric Hemmendinger