

CASE STUDY

Organisation	Bedford School
The Problem	Required cost-effective, robust and scalable email software solution with anti-virus and anti-spam capability
Application	MDaemon email, MDAemon Anti-Virus running on Windows LAN
Client Category	Education



Bedford School

450-year old school becomes state-of-the-art in just 5 years

- Electronic communication, managed by MDAemon, is key for independent school
- 24/7 access required for 1500-user network as critical as any large corporate network
- Spam overtakes viruses as the number one email issue

Founded in 1552, Independent boys school, Bedford School, has in recent years implemented an ambitious IT plan to install a high speed 1500-user network to satisfy the huge growth in demand for electronic communication.

With an infrastructure that would rival many corporate networks, it runs over optical fibre laid underground with some

recently upgraded gigabit links that provide a high speed infrastructure throughout the school.

Most remote buildings are connected to the main building with a fast fibre link, but the school has invested in a wireless network where accessing some remote buildings with cable would have been difficult and not cost-effective - one is

across a main road and two others are up to a mile away. They also use wireless connectivity for other remote buildings where a single computer does not justify the expense of cabling, for example the head of rugby can email instructions to the groundsman in the pavilion on which pitches are required that afternoon, and the security hut has a wireless laptop to keep in the communications loop.

Bob Eadie, computer system manager at Bedford School, says: "The school buildings were networked over five years ago as we saw it as critical to get all 100+ staff and 1100 pupils working on the network. Now most buildings are on at least 100Mbit links, and even the wireless connected buildings are on 11Mbit and we are considering increasing this to 54Mbits."

Paper memos are becoming a thing of the

past as electronic communication within the school takes off. To take control of their email, the school installed MDAemon server software five years ago. Bob explains: "Email is a fundamental part of the school communication system. All staff now use emails as a standard, in some instances even primary, means of internal communication within the school and it is now school policy to check emails at least twice per day. We are working towards the same for the boys, where we can expect

them to read emails at least once per day."

The school made the decision in 1993 to employ full-time IT staff in-house as opposed to using external help. This was mainly due to the high cost of external contractors, an important consideration with school budgets in mind, but it also meant that they could pool a lot of IT knowledge in-house for implementing and administering critical systems.

Using Email

All staff work on site during the day in term time, but there is now heavy use remotely in the evenings, as most teachers carry out a significant amount of work in the evenings, and holidays. They have home access to the network via the school's intranet and they find the ability to access emails via MDAemon WorldClient very useful.

The school is also working towards using email as a main communication system to parents. Email is useful for

the Housemasters to communicate with the significant number of parents abroad on subjects such as times of flights home, and to discuss any pastoral issues. In particular, as many of the boarders are from foreign families, phone calls can sometimes be difficult due to the time difference.

Staff also find WorldClient indispensable for foreign travel, for example when the school's Marketing Manager travels to Europe or the Far

East on business, she can access her emails as easily as she can at home.

The boys also use email heavily in the evenings, as around a quarter are boarders it is important for them to communicate with their friends and families.



MDaemon - an Exchange alternative

Choosing an email server to effectively manage electronic communications is an important decision for any school. Bedford used Netscape Messenger until about five years ago when they had to upgrade to a new version, to avoid it acting as an open relay, and then costs escalated.

Bob says: "Email servers tend to be very expensive for schools, particularly as we needed 1,500 mailboxes. To a software supplier this looks like a big firm with 1,500 employees, whereas we have only about 100 or so employees. So the main reasons we went with MDAemon were low cost of ownership and the ease with which we could set it up. It is also both powerful and flexible."

The school looked at Microsoft Exchange but found it to be prohibitively expensive,

particularly as they charged per mail box, i.e. per pupil. "We find MDAemon particularly easy to manage, while Exchange was difficult to use even with our in-house technical knowledge," says Bob.

Additionally, as MDAemon offers a web-based WorldClient software, it removed the need for the school to set up client software for a very rapidly changing user-base. "We see around 150 pupils (users) come and go each year, again not typical for a firm. MDAemon also allowed easy access from multiple client PCs, unlike most firms where one person uses one PC, our pupils and staff move about," comments Bob.

Ease of use and back-up on an ongoing basis is a key consideration for network staff. MDAemon is arranged in easy to read files and back-up is designed to be a straightforward operation. Bob explains: "I like the

transparency of MDAemon, when compared to Exchange, I can clearly see the files I need to back up or which need restoring if, for example, I blunder with some setup, and need to replace some settings."

"With MDAemon if something goes wrong, such as emails going astray, they are easy to find. However, with Exchange that is more difficult. Additionally, Exchange is not straightforward to back-up and restore; it took a week to do a complete restore after a disastrous server failure."

When the server was recently upgraded, Bob found moving MDAemon across to the new hardware very simple and painless. Additionally, he has just upgraded to the new MDAemon version 7 which he found to be extremely easy, and the downtime of the server was under two minutes.



Bob Eadie
Computer System Manager
Bedford School

MDaemon GroupWare

The school uses MDAemon as the main server, but for historic reasons, the 40 administration staff still use Outlook connected to a Microsoft Exchange Server. MDAemon forwards any emails for those users to the Exchange server. The school is evaluating MDAemon GroupWare at the moment, with the aim of migrating everyone over to it soon.

"The school is planning to use MDAemon GroupWare on a wider scale for staff, particularly to share address

books and calendars. This is an important knowledge sharing tool for the school and we are just getting into it now. The developers at Alt-N are working hard and fast, and I can see us using it widely in the next few months," adds Bob.



Spam and Viruses



Spam has become a big problem for the school, taking over from the threat posed by viruses. Approximately 30% of incoming emails are now viruses or Spam trapped by MDAemon - of this, over 20% is spam and less than 10% viruses. Bob says: "The new MDAemon anti-spam is very good, and getting better. Spam is the main problem we encounter and anything a mailserver can do to help is invaluable. Also we are starting to use MDAemon's Bayesian learning to maximise its anti-spam potential.

"Two years ago the main problem was viruses but MDAemon has largely solved this. I now take it for granted that the anti-virus just works. It updates itself every two hours if necessary, so we are as well protected as I think we can be."

The school has a significant volume of emails going in and out of around 30,000 each month, excluding internal emails. "Scalability of an email server is important and MDAemon is fine for the quantity of emails we generate and store, it seems limitless. We have had no performance issues at all."

The school has a user base of around 2000 mail boxes as they tend to keep all boys on email for a year after they leave.

Bob is focused on the future to ensure the school is adequately prepared for

external changes in the technology environment and their internal systems are up to date, such as disaster recovery and back-up.

Network reliability and disaster recovery are critical areas for the school and they are considering installing an off-site gateway server on a different ADSL line that backs up the MDAemon server every night. Additionally, if their server or ADSL goes down, it automatically switches on to the secondary server and the gateway server without interruption to the network.

Bob says: "Email has become absolutely vital just in the past year. That puts an onus on us to keep the server up and running 24/7, even over the Christmas period. Also we are predicting that spam will increase in volume and we are learning how to keep on top of that.

"We have a sophisticated recovery system in place so, for example, we could completely rebuild MDAemon in just a few hours if a major fire occurred, which did happen in 1979 gutting the main building!"

MDaemon features:

- Easy control of corporate email services
- Can be used with dial-up, ISDN, broadband or private circuits
- Low platform requirements
- Easy to install, configure, use and administer
- MDaemon AntiVirus offers reliable virus protection
- Offers powerful spam filtering
- Security features outstrip the competition
- Powerful, comprehensive and yet easy to use, account management
- MDaemon GroupWare unlocks Outlook's collaborative features without Exchange Server
- IMAP service offers centralised and shared email
- Incorporates WorldClient webmail interface
- Supports all standard email clients
- Additional advanced features such as multiple domain support, content filtering and list serving

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The Customer

Founded in 1552, Bedford School is an independent boarding and day school for boys aged 7 to 18 years, where fundamental traditions combine with innovative educational thinking to provide a challenging environment. In addition to its long established reputation for academic excellence, the School is also known for strengths in music, drama, art and sport.

For further information visit www.bedfordschool.org.uk



The Supplier

Zen Software is the exclusive distributor for Alt-N's products in the UK and Ireland. In addition to MDAemon, Alt-N products distributed by Zen Software include MDAemon GroupWare, which enables the group sharing capabilities of Microsoft Outlook without the need for Exchange Server, MDAemon AntiVirus and RelayFax facsimile server.

For further information visit www.zensoftware.co.uk



The Developer

Alt-N is a software development company located in Arlington, Texas, USA. Alt-N specializes in developing cost-effective, Internet-enabled servers for enterprises needing speed, ease of use, reliability and security. In addition to MDAemon GroupWare, Alt-N products include MDAemon email server, MDAemon AntiVirus and RelayFax facsimile server, plus LDaemon, a free LDAP server.

For further information visit www.alt-n.com

