



Coventry University Group Safeguards Students and Faculty With Proofpoint Human-Centric Security



The Challenge

- Protect millions of student and faculty emails from evolving phishing and social engineering attacks
- Reduce burden on IT staff by consolidating disparate security solutions
- Equip users with tools and awareness to actively defend against threats

The Solution

Proofpoint Threat Protection platform

- Proofpoint Email Protection
- Proofpoint Email Fraud Defense
- Proofpoint Secure Email Relay

The Results

- Empowers users to identify and report threats, reducing spam emails by 30%
- Improves visibility into email threats for proactive security measures
- Provides a consolidated platform that simplifies management and saves IT staff time

The Organization

Coventry University has a long tradition of excellence, and it invests heavily in its people and facilities. Its IT team prioritizes user experience, and it wanted to ensure its security solutions did not become a burden for the university or its 36,000 students.

The Challenge

Building trusted student relationships

Like other top universities, Coventry University Group depends on keeping its users and infrastructure secure from quickly changing threats. When its existing security solutions began to show their limitations, the IT team became concerned that technical issues could impact student engagement and business operations, which would also impact brand perception.

“Our previous spam filter had a variety of capabilities, including attachment scanning and URL filtering,” said Steve Rogers, chief technology officer at Coventry University Group. “But we have several enrollment periods throughout the year that are vital to business, and on several occasions, our spam filter stopped working. That created a backlog of emails for us internally. Every one of those emails was an indication of how well we engage with our students. And that engagement might be the difference between a student attending Coventry University, one of the Coventry University Group brands, or choosing another university.”

What’s more, evolving threats such as ransomware demanded a proactive approach without increasing administrative burdens on the small IT team.

“Ransomware was a growing concern, and we wanted to avoid buying multiple products from different vendors to build a solution,” said Rogers. “Microsoft 365 provided us with some security functionality, but we had to look to our spam filter provider for others. And then we had to take time to align the different products to our security policies. That was when Proofpoint, with its human-centric approach to security and modular solutions, caught our interest.”

The Solution

A single solution for email security at scale

Coventry University Group relies on managed services from a trusted partner to help secure its network endpoints. So the group turned to them for advice on how to strengthen protection of its email communications.

“We rely on our strategic partners to provide us with informal advice on security,” said Rogers. “We considered some of our technology partner’s recommendations, and that’s when we really started to understand what Proofpoint can do for us.”

“Proofpoint human-centric security has dramatically improved how we manage threats. Users are more confident, and we have also witnessed a significant reduction in the number of ticket requests around suspicious emails, so there is less need to respond to cyberthreats directly.”

Steve Rogers, chief technology officer, Coventry University Group

Proofpoint Email Protection: This AI-powered solution defends against inbound threats, such as malware and phishing, adapting to ever-changing tactics. Its proprietary machine learning and multilayered detection techniques go deeper than other solutions to dynamically identify and block threats.

“We evaluated several competitive products, and we felt a lot of them still operate at the edge, without understanding the complexities of how email security technology protects business processes,” said Rogers. “We chose Proofpoint because of the tight integration into Microsoft 365. It wasn’t just protecting what was entering the organization from the outside but protecting internal email communications as well.”

Proofpoint Email Fraud Defense: Proofpoint Email Fraud Defense helps secure the email channel and restore trust to business communications. By simplifying DMARC authentication, it helps stop email fraud and safeguard the trusted domain. And it goes beyond DMARC to provide insight into the fraud risks posed by suppliers.

“We also selected the Email Fraud Defense modules,” said Rogers. “We are heavily transactional when it comes to staff and student communications, so we chose Proofpoint to meet the increasing business demands in this area.”

Proofpoint Secure Email Relay: An advanced solution for application email, Secure Email Relay protects against impersonation risks by letting the university separate its user email from application email. This ensures security without impacting user experience.

“During our peak academic periods, we are handling millions of emails a week from students alone, not to mention our core business platforms,” said Rogers. “Other providers did not easily offer a way to split business email and student activity. With Proofpoint, it was very clear how we could do that; the two worlds never collide. We’ve configured it in a way that the system is scaled and sized accordingly, and we can get clear reporting on each part of Proofpoint solution, its protection and the value it brings.”

Onboarding: Deployment was a smooth process, and it was made easier by the best practices and support provided by the Proofpoint team.

“The onboarding was fantastic—it was one of the strongest parts of the Proofpoint engagement,” said Rogers. “Our representative was brilliant, and the deployment is broken down into sessions. This makes you really understand the platform. It took about six weeks to install the main platform, with Proofpoint providing us with step-by-step guidance and making sure we scaled up properly. It was a sensible approach to bringing it into our environment, and that was refreshing.”

The Results

Powering more secure, efficient IT operations

With human-centric security from Proofpoint, Coventry University Group has dramatically strengthened its security posture. Now its users can be active participants in security. This saves its staff time from the manual tasks that hampered productivity.

“Proofpoint has definitely reduced the number of calls in this space,” said Rogers. “We have been tracking the volume of spam, and we’re seeing about 30 percent less reported.”

The reduced workload has also freed up the group staff to spend more time on strategic processes, and less time chasing down threats.

“We have a security operations center (SOC) team and having these security solutions means that we don’t have to extend that team,” said Rogers. “We can really focus on what value our internal staff can provide because we are trusting these platforms to continually improve our cybersecurity posture. And there is very little we’ve had to do since the onboarding, which is a good sign. Proofpoint has probably saved us the equivalent of two or three full-time employees within our internal security teams.”

Rogers also appreciates the simplicity of the solution. It provides protection without introducing additional points of friction for students and other end users.

“We are at the point where security is just expected,” said Rogers. “We shouldn’t be adding complexity for our users, and many security products do add that complexity. We prefer to start with the user and work our way backward, and let Proofpoint deal with the rest.”

To continue to enhance its solution, the group is evaluating Proofpoint Archive. This cloud-based solution provides a secure, searchable content repository, and it further strengthens their human-centric security posture.

“We explored the Proofpoint Archive module as part of our initial deployment, but we were taking on too many challenges projects at the time, so we decided to revisit it,” said Rogers. “We plan to add it as a Proofpoint service shortly to continually invest in the Proofpoint product portfolio.”

“Proofpoint human-centric security has dramatically improved how we manage threats. Users are more confident, and we don’t get calls for malicious emails anymore. We have also witnessed a significant reduction in the number of ticket requests around suspicious emails, so there is less need to respond to cyberthreats directly.”

With Proofpoint human-centric security, Coventry University Group has empowered its users, simplified IT operations and built a resilient security posture. And this protects its academic communities at scale.

LEARN MORE

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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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