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Nick Brant  
Head of Information Technology  
Virgin Blue

## Virgin Blue

Virgin Blue is Australia's award winning low fare/high quality airline operating both domestic flights as well as Trans Tasman and South Pacific Island services. Flying over 1 million passengers a month, the airline was named OAG Best Low Cost Airline of the Year 2005, for the second year in a row, in recognition of its high standards within the global aviation industry.

Headquartered in Brisbane, the leading airline employs over 4,000 employees all with access to email via the Virgin Blue corporate network.

Virgin Blue's customers and suppliers are geographically widespread and include a high proportion of consumer customers, who often do not have the technology or knowledge to protect their systems from the rapidly increasing number of Internet threats such as viruses and spam.

Due to the high-risk nature of the airline industry for Internet threats, the availability of secure, safe and reliable email is critical to ensure business continuity and the integrity of all electronic communications, particularly in such a competitive market.

"As we increasingly use email to communicate with our customers, it was only a matter of time before we risked becoming a victim of some form of a virus attack, particularly considering 'the gap' between when a virus is identified and when the signatures become available," said Nick Brant, General Manager of Information Technology, Virgin Blue. "With virus writers and spammers getting smarter and smarter, we looked for options to help minimise our risks.

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Email security is no longer about installing software at the server and desktop levels – these solutions are only effective once a threat is known and by that time the damage may already have been done.

Virgin Blue implemented a defence-in-depth security strategy, providing multiple layers of protection at all entry points in and out of its network. The airline's focus was on its first line of defence - securing the integrity of all emails proactively at the Internet level, since this is where the bulk of threats come from.

"Since computer systems are such a critical part of our operations, we needed to be very vigilant in our approach. Therefore, we evaluated a number of options and recognised managed email security as the most effective method, as it protects us outside our network," continued Mr Brant.

It is great to have an external third party augment our email security services - there is a huge cost benefit as MessageLabs already has the infrastructure in place to protect us.

#### Protection where it counts

Based on recommendations from IBM, Virgin Blue became the first Australian airline to use MessageLabs' managed email security service to block virus and spam emails at the Internet level before they reach the airline's computer systems. It has been using MessageLabs' Anti-Virus and Anti-Spam services since 2004, providing a comprehensive barrier against unwanted threats.

Using a combination of patented and best-of-breed technology, MessageLabs monitors, tracks and combats threats, whether they have been seen before or not. Its services are based on the company's own unique predictive intelligence technology Skeptic™, scanning all incoming and outgoing emails at the Internet level, without the need for Virgin Blue to implement additional hardware or software. This delivers a low total cost of ownership (TCO).

Mr Brant said MessageLabs' unique advantage was the ability of its Anti-Virus service to handle the window of vulnerability - the delay between the appearance of a new email-borne virus and the availability of a signature from traditional anti-virus providers. By using MessageLabs Anti-Virus, Virgin Blue's protection is not subject to signature delay times, owing to the use of predictive technology capable of detecting previously unseen viruses.

MessageLabs Anti-Spam identifies and re-routes spam before it can reach Virgin Blue's infrastructure, providing administrators with multiple routing options and an end user quarantine service. The service uses a combination of Skeptic predictive technology, signature management and client configurable approved and blocked sender lists.

Managed email security services have given Virgin Blue control of the email content reaching its network. Filtering accuracy and management capabilities mean the airline can manage any size or type of email, for any user or group. The services ensure content sent and received supports its email acceptable usage policies.

#### Increased corporate security

The MessageLabs managed email security service has increased the level of Virgin Blue's corporate security and protects its Internet bandwidth and email infrastructure by reducing email volumes. It required no investment in additional hardware or software to implement the service.

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Traditional premise-based systems offer less control or protection against fast-breaking dynamic or blended email threats, require an ongoing investment in hardware, software or support and, in many cases, are more difficult to manage and keep up-to-date with the latest protective measures.

"MessageLabs' managed services are working very well for us and are an integral part of our online security strategy," said Mr Brant. "We now have added assurances protecting us, backed up by the required reporting capabilities and audit trails."