

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

MessageLabs


Langham Hotels International

SPAM-FREE EMAIL NO LUXURY FOR LANGHAM HOTELS INTERNATIONAL – THANKS TO SYMANTEC HOSTED SERVICES

Possessing a legendary heritage that dates back to the opening of Europe's first 'Grand Hotel' in 1865, Langham Hotels International blends timeless tradition with modern hospitality industry standards and practices. The Group's network of luxury hotels around the globe has become a benchmark for elegance and innovation, and the Group is committed to maintaining its fine reputation and distinguished clientele.

Undoubtedly one of the key reasons for Langham's success is the way it has integrated technology into its business. The Group's initiatives in this regard include a solid, worldwide network infrastructure and comprehensive electronic capabilities such as online booking functions and a dedicated mobile phone application. Indeed, Langham takes the safeguarding of these mission-critical areas very seriously.

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Perry Lai
Vice President
IT of Langham Hotels
International

CLEANING UP THE COMMUNICATIONS CHANNEL

Founded in 2003 by one of Hong Kong's leading property developers, the Great Eagle Group, Langham Hotels International has a three-tiered property portfolio, with different brands serving different customer segments.

The Langham is the Group's premium brand, offering guests truly enchanting six-star service. Langham Place features distinctly contemporary, stimulating hospitality while Eaton offers a surprisingly attractive mix of comfort and value.

Langham currently owns nine properties and manages two others under its own brands. The Group plans to accelerate its expansion and open 50 more hotels around the world in the next 10 years.

Given such an ambitious goal, Langham recognises that the use of technology for smooth management and seamless communications is absolutely critical. Thus the Group has established a data centre in Hong Kong, with highly reliable communication links to keep its worldwide properties connected, internally with Langham headquarters and externally with Langham business partners, suppliers and, of course, customers.

Things were not always smooth on this front, though. In the early days, more than 70 per cent of all the company's email traffic was either junk or spam, or contained malware.

"We tried to halt the flood with a variety of solutions, including hardware-based systems, new software and so on. However, nothing seemed to work very well," says Mr Perry Lai, Vice President – IT of Langham Hotels International. "A lot of the bad mail still got through, which generated more work for the IT team and upset everyone who received it – from management to Front Desk staff."

"We outsourced it all to MessageLabs' hosted email security services five years ago, and haven't looked back since."

For Lai and the rest of the Langham organisation, the answer to cleaning up its communications channels lay in farming out the job to experts. "We outsourced it all to MessageLabs' hosted email security services five years ago, and haven't looked back since," says Lai.

To date, the spam level at Langham is consistently very low and no viruses through email have made it far enough to cause any problems. Moreover, Lai doesn't recall a single complaint from any of his hotel customers. "Not a single one," he stresses.

While the majority of Langham's bookings these days come from agents or web portals, according to Lai there are still a lot of reservations that come in by email from individual or corporate customers.

"That's where false positives – incorrectly identifying a good message as spam or one containing malware – could cause serious problems," says Lai. "MessageLabs ensures that every message is delivered, promptly and reliably, so there's no room for error or disappointment. After all, many of these emails have a dollar value attached to them. The importance of receiving the proper messages therefore cannot be overemphasised."

LEAN IT TEAM CALLS FOR SIMPLE, SCALABLE SOLUTIONS

Langham Hotels International has a lean IT team of just six persons at its head office and one or two at each of its hotels.

According to Lai, "The key to keeping resources under control is a heavy focus on outsourcing. For example, other hotel companies do a lot of in-house IT development. We don't do any, preferring instead to partner with best-of-breed solution providers such as Symantec Hosted Services."



Confidence in a connected world.

“For a start, there is no capital expenditure for a SaaS security solution such as MessageLabs’ Email-Hosted AntiVirus and AntiSpam service, which makes it a very attractive solution from an investment perspective.”

The team nevertheless remains fully involved in keeping Langham’s IT capabilities in tip-top shape, particularly in the pre-opening stages of a hotel. With such a lean IT force, the benefits of SaaS security are not lost on the organisation.

Lai expounds: “For a start, there is no capital expenditure for a SaaS security solution such as MessageLabs Email Hosted AntiVirus and AntiSpam service, which makes it a very attractive solution from an investment perspective.”

SaaS security is highly scalable and easy to deploy. There is no software to set up or hardware to plug in. Whenever the company adds a new hotel to its collection, they simply notify MessageLabs and the latter simply ‘turns on’ the service.

Lai adds: “We pay for what we use, just like any other utility such as water or power. Best of all, there is no need to train anyone. Most users don’t even notice it’s there. They take spam-free email boxes for granted, but I see the reports, so I know exactly what MessageLabs is keeping out.”

THE RIGHT PARTNER CAN OFFER UNEXPECTED BENEFITS

When Langham Hotels International started looking into the possibility of outsourcing their email protection, there really wasn’t a lot of discussion. MessageLabs as it was then called was the clear expert in the field.

“They offered global coverage – a critical factor for us, given our ambitious expansion plans,” says Lai. “Plus, they had an excellent track record and a first-class customer portfolio.”

“We were also very impressed with the level of performance that Symantec Hosted Services offers in its SLAs.”

MessageLabs proved its real value in 2006 when the Taiwan earthquake severed numerous undersea cable links on which global electronic communications depended.

“Regional Internet connectivity was crippled after the quake, and many businesses were very hard hit,” Lai recalls. “But thanks to the fact that all of our email is routed through MessageLabs’ data centres, we didn’t lose a single message. Every mail was delivered, so for us the overall impact of the quake was minimal.... What it showcased was a MessageLabs benefit we never expected – global mail disaster protection.”



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Solution at a glance

Business Drivers

- Business efficiency
- Maintaining staff productivity
- Efficient internal and external communications

Technology Challenges

- Keeping spam and virus protection up-to-date
- Supporting 50 new hotels over the next 10 years

Solution

- MessageLabs Email Hosted AntiVirus and AntiSpam service

Size of Organisation

- 4,400 employees
- 11 hotel properties worldwide, with several more already in the pipeline
- Six-person IT team at HQ, plus one/two IT staff members per hotel

Business Value and Technical Benefits

- Clean communication channels
- No false positives or lost emails from customers or partners
- Speedy roll-out as new hotels come online
- Email disaster protection



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