Customer Case Study

Forsyth County Takes a Proactive Stance on Data and Operational Security

Security team implements Abnormal to prevent advanced attacks targeting local governments nationwide.

Forsyth County administers more than two dozen community and government services on behalf of the Winston-Salem, North Carolina area. Effectively supporting and communicating with 385,000+ citizens creates extensive security and compliance requirements.

"Citizen engagement, employee engagement, and productivity all depend on secure digital communications, and maintaining the integrity of our data is our top priority," said Gary Koontz, CIO.

The Forsyth County Email Security Challenge

Koontz knew that local governments with small budgets and legacy security tools are frequent targets for email-based attacks that erode public trust and waste taxpayer dollars. In 2022, government agencies suffered more than 2,700 successful data compromise attacks—and the average public sector data breach costs more than $2 million.

"It only takes one event to damage an organization's reputation," he said. "A lot of our counterparts around the state have unfortunately taken a beating on reputation because of cyber incidents, and a majority of those were initiated through email. We wanted to strengthen the security of our email communications to prevent losing integrity in the eyes of our citizens."

Industry
Government Administration

Headquarters
Winston-Salem, NC

Employees
2,500+

Protected Mailboxes
2,300+

Customer Key Challenges

- Detect and prevent advanced credential phishing and BEC attacks evading existing security solutions.
- Provide optimal security value for taxpayers' dollars.
- Minimize security team time spent on email investigations and remediation.

Abnormal Products

- Inbound Email Security
- Email Account Takeover Protection
- Abuse Mailbox Automation

"We could put all the technology, hardware, software, people, and intelligence in place. But we were still one click away from somebody executing on a bad link in an email and exposing our network. Abnormal's behavioral AI approach prevents that."

Jason Ring
Technology Manager

Customer Case Study

75%
Reduction in time spent on email investigations

15K+
Total attacks stopped in the past 6 months

88
High-risk compromised vendors found by VendorBase

The Abnormal Security Solution

Forsyth County wanted an email security solution that would block advanced threats their existing security platform missed and give the security team more time to focus on other tasks. They also sought a future-proof solution that would deliver the best possible value now and in the future, as new threats emerge.

Because Abnormal uses behavioral AI, it quickly learns what is normal activity in an email ecosystem. Deviations from that baseline indicate advanced threats—the kinds that make it past legacy defenses. This fine-grained detection, combined with automatic remediation and superb visibility into threats and email activity, set Abnormal apart from rules-based threat detection systems.

Why Forsyth County Chose Abnormal

Abnormal proved much easier to set up and use than other solutions Forsyth County had worked with. “It was up and going extremely fast, with no disruption at all,” said Jason Ring, Technology Manager.

Soon after the Proof of Value was initiated, Abnormal detected an attempted BEC scam against elected officials in progress. “The message impersonated one commissioner, urging another commissioner to rush out and buy gift cards for employee rewards. Our Abnormal account team alerted us and we were able to interrupt that active conversation. We felt it was a good example of how Abnormal would help us protect the county.”

The Abnormal dashboard’s threat visibility tools also make security awareness training easier. “I can see which users are marking suspect emails as phishing, and which are just deleting them, so I know where to focus my training,” said Ring.

Conclusion: Greater Security, Enhanced Value

With fewer worries about advanced email threats, less time spent on manual remediation, and more up-to-date and precise resources for staff security awareness training, Abnormal has provided the kind of value and support Forsyth County was looking for to protect their public trust. “I like to work with what I call ‘true partners’—folks who will be part of your team and adopt your mission,” Koontz said. “Abnormal saw where we were and helped us get to where we needed to be.”

> “Abnormal has brought a whole new level of security to our email flows. The product does what it says it will do. It doesn’t create additional burdens for our staff. And it has enhanced our security posture at a good price point. Abnormal has been a good investment of public funds, because of the value it provides.”
>
> Gary Koontz
> CIO

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Abnormal

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