Saskatoon Public Schools Displaces SEG, Improves Email Security and Value

Saskatchewan's largest school division uses Abnormal to detect and auto-remediate advanced attacks, reclaim time, and save money.

Saskatoon Public Schools serves more than 25,000 students attending 60 schools, with the goal of inspiring "academic, personal, and social/cultural growth" through challenging, relevant learning experiences. The division stands out for its wide range of innovative learning programs dedicated to advanced placement coursework, Montessori pedagogy, creative arts, wilderness ecology studies, Indigenous languages and cultures, apprenticeships, and more.

Saskatoon Public Schools' Security Challenge

Like many public education entities, Saskatoon Public Schools must protect its email system on a limited budget. "We're a small public organization, so the people here who are interested in security are the ones implementing it," said Systems Programmer Peter Mueller, who manages the organization's cybersecurity in addition to his other responsibilities.

When the division recently prepared to move its email from on-premises Microsoft Exchange to Exchange Online, Mueller took the opportunity to look for alternatives to Proofpoint—the SEG that SPS had been using for several years. "We didn't want to pay for a secure email gateway to do the same security functions that Microsoft would do. If we were going to pay for email security, we wanted to get more from the solution."

Industry
Education

Employees
4,200+

Headquarters
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

Protected Mailboxes
4,700+
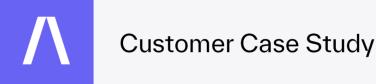
Customer Key Challenges

- Needed a cost-effective cloud email security upgrade as part of migration to Microsoft Exchange Online.

- SEG unable to auto-remediate phishing and internal email account takeover attacks.

- Security team of one responsible for all manual investigations and remediation.

Abnormal Products

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

"Abnormal provides a new level of precision with insights on email categorization based on the language in the email, whether it's someone we've worked with before, and the request they're making. It's been eye-opening compared to the static methods a lot of SEG vendors use."

Peter Mueller
Systems Programmer

25K+
Attacks detected and auto-remediated in 180 days.

163
Employee email account takeover attacks stopped in 180 days.

840+
Employee hours saved on graymail management in 90 days.

The Abnormal Security Solution

During his research phase, Mueller attended a webinar in which Abnormal clients Air Canada and Choice Hotels discussed their moves from a SEG to an API-based email security approach. "That started me down the path of looking for API-based vendors, and Abnormal just stood out."

The ease of setting up a proof of value via API appealed to Mueller. "It was click, click, boom in terms of implementation, versus the old method of changing MX records and monitoring email flows," Mueller said. The results of the proof of value confirmed the types of attacks that most often targeted Saskatoon Public Schools. But how Abnormal handled those attacks made a major difference in terms of security and value compared to Proofpoint.

Why Saskatoon Public Schools Chose Abnormal

Saskatoon Public Schools regularly receives phishing and spearphishing attempts, and employee account takeover attacks account for 17% of all threats. Proofpoint would send an alert when a bad email made it through, which would result in Mueller spending half a day or more manually remediating the attack. Now, Abnormal's AI-driven Inbound Email Security and Email Account Takeover Protection detect and mitigate attacks in real time.

Abnormal also frees Mueller from manually managing spam and graymail rules. Abnormal Email Productivity works with Exchange Online to accurately quarantine spam and graymail by learning each user's preferences. By automating graymail management, it saves employees the extra step of a separate login to check their quarantine portal. Over the past three months, Abnormal has saved the division's employees and VIPs more than 840 hours—on top of the time Mueller saves on threat remediation.

Stronger Security, Better Value for Security Spend

With Abnormal and Microsoft, Mueller now has fewer worries about email security for Saskatoon Public Schools. He also has more freedom to address other responsibilities. "Abnormal has taken a lot of things off my plate, so I have time to address other security needs." As a result of his experience, Mueller recommends Abnormal to other school divisions. "If you're using a traditional SEG, tweaking dials, checking buckets, and manually remediating things, Abnormal provides modern email security built to work with today's cloud platforms on a budget."

"I received an email from Abnormal on a Sunday about a compromised employee email account. Once the account was compromised the bad actor accessed the account and quickly tried to send a credential phishing email to 500 internal inboxes. With Proofpoint, I would have had to grab a computer and spend hours manually remediating. But Abnormal had already logged out and disabled the user's account, reset the account password, and pulled the phishing emails from the recipients' mailboxes. I was very pleased."

Peter Mueller
Systems Programmer

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Abnormal