



Bentley College

Peer-to-peer (P2P) file trading was causing two concerns at Bentley College. First, P2P software clients were proliferating viruses and spyware, which in turn generated up to 75% of all help desk calls. Second, it was suspected that new students were arriving with ever-larger digital music libraries, and they might be tempted to share those libraries illegally. Applying their own best practices as a business school, Bentley executed a file sharing behaviors study. Their conclusions led to a multi-prong strategy that included installing the CopySense® Network Appliance to manage P2P on their network.

“Ample evidence suggests this generation views the curtailment of music sharing as an infringement on its rights. We need solutions that demonstrate we’re working together with students. The CopySense Appliance is part of that mix.”

– Traci Logan, Vice Provost & Vice President for Information Technology

Overview

Industry

- Education / University

Challenges

- Students generally viewed illegal file sharing as a socially acceptable practice
- Viruses and spyware proliferated by P2P clients generated up to 75% of help desk calls
- The university wanted to protect privacy and demonstrate flexibility in working with students toward a solution

Solution

- Block P2P Internet transactions with the CopySense® Network Appliance
- Employ another CopySense Appliance to randomly monitor internal network segments
- Offer a campus music service as a legitimate download alternative

Benefits

- CopySense Appliance is effective controlling a broad range of P2P clients
- CopySense Appliance allows the most flexibility in implementation
- Approach demonstrates ability to collaborate with users

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Bentley is a business university with an enrollment of over 4000 undergraduate and 1300 graduate students located in Waltham, Massachusetts. Their mission includes a commitment to information technology integration as a domain of distinction. Every full-time freshman is supplied a notebook computer, and each computer is refreshed in the student’s junior year. Bentley has also implemented a number of sophisticated electronic teaching facilities to simulate real world environments, allowing students to apply classroom concepts in trading, accounting, business measurement, marketing, design and usability, and international collaboration.

By surveying file-trading behaviors and attitudes, Bentley examined the finer points of their P2P issue. According to Traci Logan, Vice Provost & Vice President for Information Technology, “We have a delicate job of teaching business ethics to a generation that has grown up technically enabled.” Surveys indicated that the majority of P2P content traded was illegal, and the practice was considered socially acceptable in this peer group. The threat of media industry lawsuits had limited and short term impact on the survey group. Those who had directly experienced legal penalties changed their behaviors, while their immediate friends on average slowed down temporarily. In the broader peer group, the influence of lawsuits quickly dissipated.

“However, we found that in a climate of collaboration and trust, students respond to fair use policies,” said Logan. Bentley studied a group of 1000 students offered a legitimate music download service compared to 1000 students without the service. The data collected suggested widespread interest among students to access a legal music service. It further predicted that a legal service would lead to a decrease in aggregate P2P traffic and have a positive impact on future intentions regarding trading copyright protected files. As a result, Bentley chose to offer the music service to all students on campus. They further selected the CopySense Appliance to curtail illegal trading on the network.

Logan commented, “Our primary objective is to protect the rights of students, and this includes privacy. We’re not interested in examining content and are reluctant to assume the role of enforcer.” One CopySense Appliance is installed at the firewall. It blocks all P2P traffic in or out of the network. Another CopySense appliance is randomly moved between network switches and identifies file-sharing violators without identifying content. A ‘three strikes you’re out’ disciplinary approach is then employed with offenders.

While Bentley uses the CopySense Appliance to block all Internet P2P traffic, the device can also selectively allow P2P use at specific network addresses. “Should someone present a legitimate need for P2P,” said Logan, “we can allow that. We did have one game manufacturer using P2P to provide updates, but they’ve since changed that method. So far, no one is complaining about lack of access to legitimate content. Ultimately, we need to demonstrate that we’re all working together.”

Bentley found that the CopySense Appliance was more effective against a broader spectrum of P2P applications than the Packeteer Packetshaper. Further, they found the management of the CopySense Appliance to be very user friendly and intuitive. Logan adds, “It has been very helpful and useful. The CopySense Appliance does what it is designed to do very well, and it’s a terrific addition to our network management tool box.”