



Saintgits adds more power to its cybersecurity posture with Sophos

The Saintgits Group of Institutions is one of the leading education brands in Kerala, a southern state in India. Under the Saintgits brand, there are four distinct entities: Saintgits College of Engineering, Saintgits Institute of Management, Saintgits Institute of Computer Applications and Saintgits College of Applied Sciences.

Since its inception in 2002, the group has established a reputation for providing quality education to students. The college consistently ranks high for its infrastructure, faculty and academics. Affiliated to the APJ Abdul Kalam Technological University, it has been approved by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). In 2016, it was accredited by the National Board of Accreditation (NBA).

CUSTOMER-AT-A-GLANCE



Saintgits

Industry
Education

Website
www.saintgits.org

Number of Users
3,000

Sophos Solutions
XG 210
XG 550
AP55C 30

Challenges

- › Inability to track internet usage or generate usage reports
- › Difficulty in blocking unproductive websites and establishing customized usage patterns
- › Inability to control bandwidth and usage for different level of users

Can the same firewall be customized differently for different users?

"In today's connected world, good internet speed is a basic prerequisite. In a college or educational set-up like ours, it becomes the basis for preliminary research and the pursuit of knowledge. Students need to be able to access what they want quickly and move on to other tasks. Not being able to do this can slow down the pace of the entire college."

Apart from connectivity, the college also struggled with visibility into usage. With different types of devices being plugged into the network, it was important to understand the source of traffic. Generating customized reports on internet activity and usage was critical.

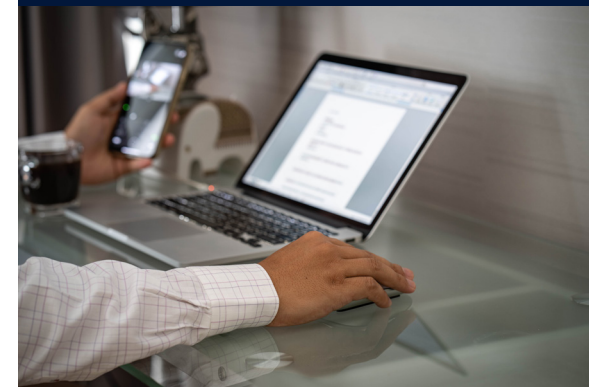
Saintgits Group of Institutions further needed to be able to define accessibility. "As an educational institute, we wanted to ensure that students visit only productive websites and do not misuse internet privileges. However, our legacy solution made it impossible to customize access. Often, a number of students would still be able to access sites that our team had blacklisted," says Chacko.

Controlling bandwidth and limiting internet access during exams were also important. During online exams, high bandwidth was required to enable students to finish their exams within the stipulated time. However, access to search engines and unproductive websites needed to be restricted. High bandwidth was also required for online classes to help students stream lectures without interruption. The college therefore needed a solution with strong bandwidth management and web-filter application capabilities.

Since the group had several colleges under the Saintgits umbrella, they needed to be able to offer each entity a different set of privileges. This meant that separate zones needed to be set up within one firewall.

'Prior to using Sophos, the college faced a series of challenges. One of the biggest struggles was seamless internet connectivity.'

Abraham Cha
System Admin Manager,
Saintgits Group of Institutions.



What made Sophos the final choice?

The college evaluated several leading vendors, including Sophos. The Sophos solution was the best fit as it offered several functionalities that would address all of Saintgits' problem areas. Based on a Proof Of Concept, Saintgits finalized Sophos, implementing CR 2500iNG in 2014. In 2018, the college upgraded to Sophos XG 550 and now they use the firewall at the university with 30 access points.

Additionally, the college has a small office with 50 to 60 users to manage administrative and operational aspects. This setup uses XG 210.

"The solution was implemented by Sophos' partner Comtech Systems," says Chacko. "They were extremely professional and implemented the solution with minimal downtime. They have also been helping to maintain the firewall."

How did the Sophos solution impact the quality of education?

"Taken enforcement and firewall policy to a whole new level." The technology allows user level controls over applications, bandwidth and other network resources, regardless of IP-address, location, network or device.

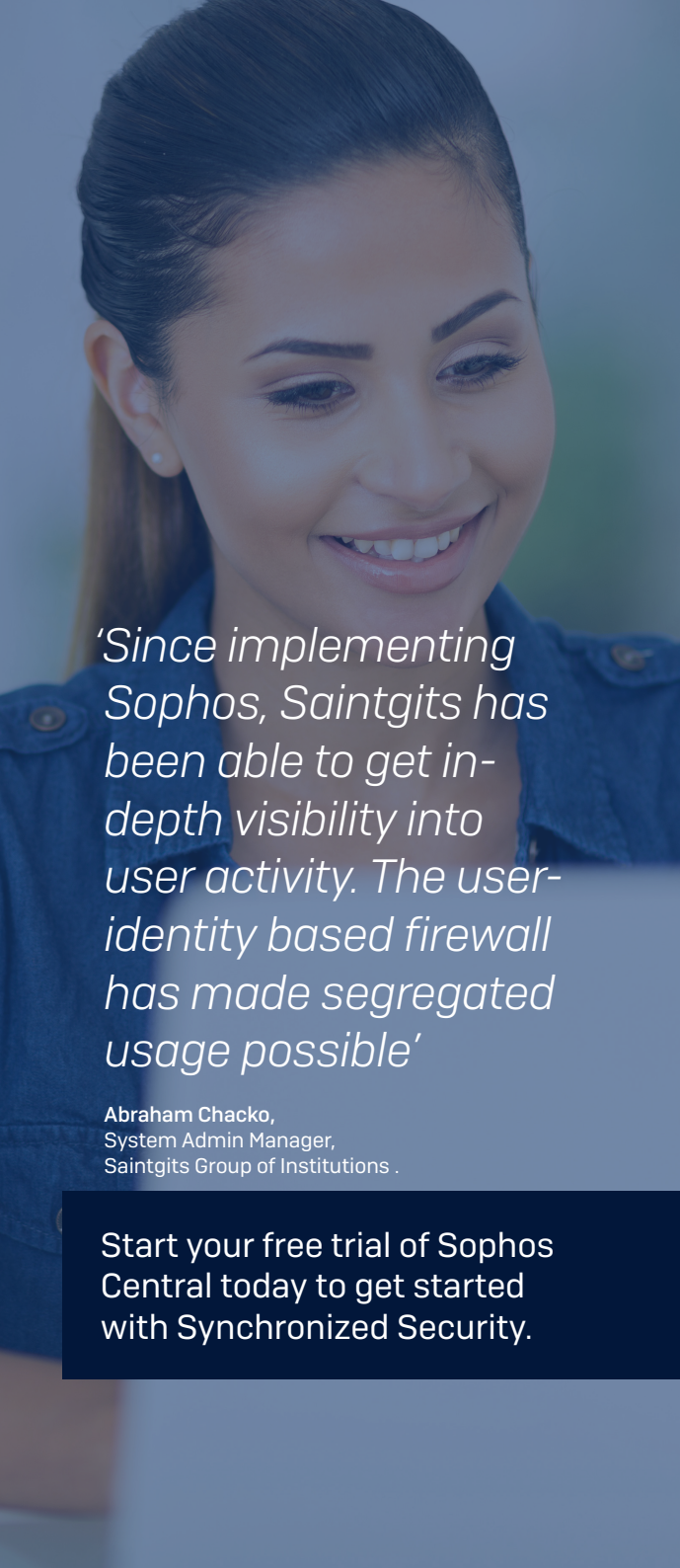
The management can apply different rules and enable different levels of access based on users and departments. They have also been able to create, modify and authenticate user groups as batches, simply deleting the group when done.

Application and website filtering policies can be easily set, and these have proved to be successful in blocking unproductive applications and websites. Customized reports can also be generated effortlessly, enabling management to keep a tab on websites visited by each IP and tracking deviant users based on the time of visit.

Another major advantage, says Chacko, is the active directory authentication with single sign on. "This feature allows us to map users and groups from the active directory to the Sophos firewall for authentication."

End users no longer need to manage multiple user IDs and passwords to access web software applications. Besides improving convenience and efficiency, it has also boost access and user adoption. Weekly backups ensure that even in the case of issues, the system can get up and running with minimal data loss and downtime.

In the future, the institute plans to deploy protection across a larger number of endpoints.



'Since implementing Sophos, Saintgits has been able to get in-depth visibility into user activity. The user-identity based firewall has made segregated usage possible'

Abraham Chacko,
System Admin Manager,
Saintgits Group of Institutions .

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