Respected Government Contractor Roots Out Ransomware For Good

How Atlas Research recovered from Cryptolocker with Barracuda Backup.

The beginning

Having worked in IT for nearly 30 years, Nels Benson thought he had seen it all. That is, right until accepting a director position with his current employer, Atlas Research. "While I was interviewing for the job, the company was exposed to a nasty ransomware attack, after a senior executive clicked on a legitimate-looking from what appeared to be a partner firm."

Because of this, Benson's onboarding was delayed for three weeks as the company struggled through the attack with little to no pre-emptive help. The problem was supposedly taken care of before he was officially hired. But after Benson was finally brought on, he couldn't get a straight answer on the state of the company's backup technology. "It's in the cloud," came the reply, with no other specifics. "I could tell they weren't really sure, so I did some digging and discovered only a couple of minimal backups on Dropbox and SharePoint."

Having worked with and even been certified on Barracuda firewalls, load balancers, backups, and web filters in the past, Benson prioritized his budget and got approval to purchase an on-premises Barracuda Backup 490, in addition to some trusted incremental cloud backups. "We brought in a contractor who'd been a colleague of mine, and who has since joined Atlas full-time, to help with installation and configuration."

Then the second attack came.

Profile

- Headquartered in Washington, D.C.

- Award-winning consulting firm to federal health and social service agencies

- Small but influential group of 75 employees

Challenges

- Beating a recent CryptoLocker attack, the world's most popular ransomware

- Preventing costly ransom fees and avoiding expensive employee downtime

- Fully cleaning all previously compromised files

Solution

Barracuda Backup

Results

- No ransom paid

- Avoided over $1 million estimated employee downtime

- Reduced recovery time from weeks to hours

The middle

Months after the supposed "clean up" of the first attack, a different employee inadvertently clicked on a still compromised but dormant ransomware file in Dropbox, while working from an older device. "Immediately we started noticing some erratic behavior," Benson says. "We quickly severed the Dropbox connection. Then we severed the workstation connection from our servers to mitigate some of the damage, but by then the ransomware had reinfected up to 75 percent of our company data."

That was better than the 100 percent infection sustained during the first attack, but it was still preventing employees from getting their work done. "The first attack—without Barracuda Backup— had taken three weeks to fix and still didn't clean everything, as we later learned," Benson explains. "By my estimation, that cost us over a million dollars in lost productivity."

With Barracuda installed and configured before the second attack, however, total downtime amounted to just four total hours, "or thirty thousand dollars in lost productivity compared to a million," Benson says. "After logging into the Barracuda Backup portal, we were able to restore our files in half a day," a feat that senior leadership commended the IT team for.

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The end

Although Atlas Research ultimately saw its happy ending after two separate but related ransomware attacks, "it was a difficult and good learning lesson for the company," Benson says. Most of all, he's grateful for the ease of use and peace of mind that Barracuda provides.

"I can go on and on and on about Barracuda because when you call, the technician on the other end always asks, 'What can I do to help you?' Barracuda never asks for a credit card before helping me. It might take some additional work or software upgrades later, but they always listen to me first, and don't always resort to upselling before helping me."

In short, "great service, great products, and not so aggressive with upsells and marketing."

Learn more about Barracuda Backup

barracuda.com/products/backup