

Hampshire County Council take the pressure off with ApplianSys DNSBOX

Challenge

- Lack of skilled resource to manage LINUX based DNS network
- Need to provide reliable ISP service to Borough Councils in the area

Solution

- 1 x **DNSBOX300** and 6 x **DNSBOX100** for managing internal and external DNS

Key Benefits

- Intuitive interface and 'plug and play' format has meant knowledge on managing DNS dispersed amongst team
 - Internet connectivity provided to the schools and councils in the area is much more stable
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Hampshire County Council is a large, dynamic and successful authority. With over 525,000 households and a population of 1.25m residents it is the third largest shire county in the UK. Hampshire has a mix of urban and rural areas; over 87% of the population live in urban areas such as Aldershot, Alton, Andover, Basingstoke, Eastleigh, Fareham, Farnborough, Gosport, Havant and Winchester.

Shrinking skill base

The County Council employs 32,000 members of staff, and of these nearly 15,000 use the council's IT systems every day. Since the council restructured, the number of staff involved in running the Internet-related areas of the IT infrastructure has increased. However many of these people were new to the systems, with less relevant technical background than previous members of staff. Prior to the restructuring only four members of staff had sufficient training in IP/Internet technologies. They merged into an existing team, increasing the size to 30 people.

Ian Marsh, IT consultant at Hampshire County Council, explained the impact this had on maintenance of the infrastructure: "An ongoing problem has been that those people coming into the team were less experienced in terms of the technology used for editing and maintaining our Domain Name Server (DNS) information. As a result, the management of DNS has been much less smooth as a whole, as the number of people who knew how to use it dropped."

Marsh couldn't expand the skilled user base for maintaining the DNS system, as it was too time consuming to get people up to speed on areas such as Linux. More staff were familiar with networks than servers, which meant there was a limited skill base to handle complex change to the DNS.

"We needed another way of managing the DNS to make it easier, and expand responsibility for it amongst everyone on the team, rather than the few who had the relevant skills", explained Marsh.

Another crucial element that Marsh had to consider was the fact that the council provides an IT infrastructure across the county. There are a large number of Borough Councils in the area, and a number of them get their Internet connectivity via Hampshire County Council's infrastructure. Technically it acts as an area ISP in its own right. It also provides Internet access to around 600 local schools, so the stability of the infrastructure was crucial.

Simple to use

Marsh reviewed several options, in line with local government policy, and decided to use the **DNSBOX** from ApplianSys.

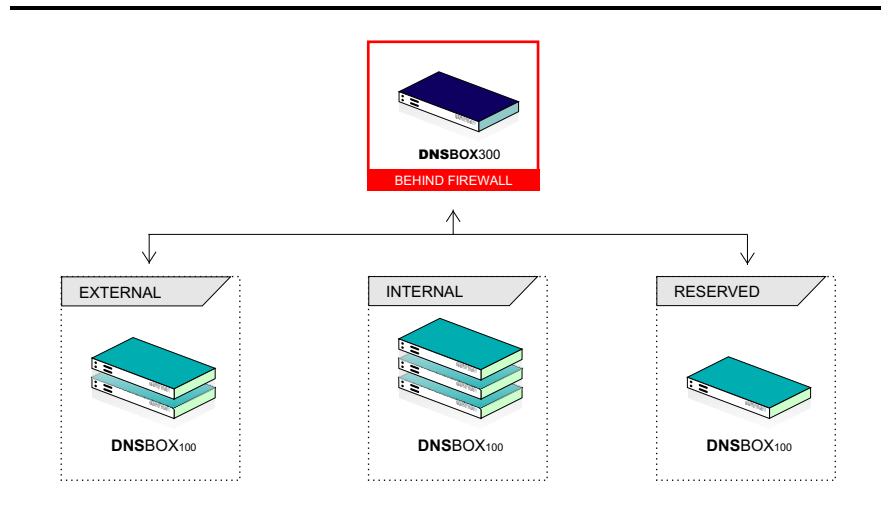
ApplianSys provided the council with one **DNSBOX300** management server, which configures and sends out information to six **DNSBOX100** slaves. The large number of slave appliances cover several different areas two are for external DNS resolution, three are for the internal network, and the last is for more select customers.

As a dedicated DNS appliance, **DNSBOX300** is based around NameSurfer software, a proven DNS management solution from Nixu, a leading DNS software specialist.

DNSBOX300 has a purpose-built Linux secure appliance architecture and an inbuilt firewall. It has no hard disk, using CompactFlash instead to increase reliability and security.

DNSBOX300 comes pre-installed, with a simple user interface. There is no need to install any software, or to patch the software for security vulnerabilities. Software upgrades are taken care of, eliminating more hassle for the network managers.

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Reducing the risks

The **DNSBOX** solution is easy to use and manage. Its simplicity and 'plug and play' format has meant that Marsh has been able to spread the knowledge on how to maintain the system to a greater number of people. Its intuitive, web-based interface has allowed the team of 30 to take the pressure off the original four staff that was trained in this area.

This has in turn reduced the risks associated with managing the DNS. The four original staff are no longer under as much pressure and are able to concentrate on other workloads in the department.

It has also ensured that the Internet connectivity provided to the schools and councils in the area is much more stable.



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