

Rush Hour on the Internet: Oregon Department of Transportation Takes the High Road with 8e6 Internet Filtering & Reporting Solutions

Traveling the Information Highway

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) is recognized as one of the most progressive and innovative government agencies in the country. Responsible for providing a safe, efficient transportation system that enhances Oregon's economic competitiveness and livability, ODOT maintains a large staff of over 4,000 employees spread across more than ten different divisions.

The Internet is a mission-critical tool for ODOT, enabling its employees to effectively carry out their job functions. As a government agency, ODOT also has a responsibility to protect its employees from inadvertently viewing objectionable web sites. Should an employee choose to misuse the Internet, ODOT must protect itself from potential legal liabilities. To make Internet use as productive and safe as possible, ODOT needed a filtering solution that would: 1) allow fast, reliable, and uninterrupted Internet access, and 2) Effectively block inappropriate sites while keeping needed informational sites accessible.

Ineffective Filtering: The Challenges and the Costs

ODOT originally had a filtering solution integrated with its Unix-based firewall server. This approach, also known as "pass-through" filtering, is common practice in many companies, yet it can create problems in the areas of performance, system failures, and troubleshooting. Since ODOT's filter was integrated with the firewall, this resulted in two possible points of failure on their network: the first being the firewall server, the second being the filtering server.

An important job function of many of ODOT's departments is to visit vendor sites, technical sites and newsgroups. The installed filter "overblocked," preventing access to necessary sites. Additionally, the filter blocked only the domain and not the IP address, which meant that sites had to be manually unblocked. This resulted in more labor and increased support costs, as end users had to contact the IT staff to unblock needed sites on an individual basis. The extraction of a blocked site would typically take as long as one hour.

Internet logs are a key piece of company information and must be easily available. Reports with the installed filter took a long time to generate. Additionally, web access could not be tied back to particular individuals – a component that is necessary for companies to increase productivity and protect themselves from potential legal liabilities.

Blazing Through Network Traffic with Pass-By Filtering

In an effort to improve filtering effectiveness while reducing overhead costs and the burden on its IT staff, ODOT replaced its existing filter with the R2000 high volume filtering server from 8e6 Technologies.

“The R2000’s standalone appliance design was a very important consideration for us,” explains Marshall Wells, Manager of Security for ODOT. “It was easy to install and has been very simple to use. This saves us valuable time and resources since we do not have to devote our technical support staff to fixing problems. If a support issue arises, 8e6 is able to fix it over the Internet rather than deploying a technician to troubleshoot. The R2000 also provides effective blocking without overblocking. In instances where we do need to get sites unblocked, 8e6 is very efficient. It takes them only 10-15 minutes, where we were previously accustomed to waiting one hour or more.”

The implementation of the R2000 has also simplified ODOT’s existing infrastructure. Since the R2000 is not integrated with the firewall server, it does not create choke points, interfere with unfiltered web requests, or add another point of failure to the network.

ODOT also implemented 8e6’s Enterprise Reporter (ER), another standalone server appliance, to provide reporting capabilities.

“The Enterprise Reporter generates reports very quickly and easily, enabling us to identify potential problems early on,” continues Wells. “This is in sharp contrast to our previous filter, which took hours, days or even weeks to generate a single report because of its real-time processing. The combination of the R2000 and the Enterprise Reporter has enabled us to accomplish our original goals of protecting ourselves from legal liabilities, reducing administration and maintenance costs, and improving employee productivity. We are very pleased with the products’ performance and 8e6’s attention to our needs.”