

STONESOFT



Case Study – Grant Joint Union

StoneGate Meets the Security and Availability Demands of Expansive Network to Improve Education

StoneGate reduces network complexities, downtime and IT costs

Grant Joint Union High School District based in Sacramento, Calif. supports an expansive network of educational sites ranging from junior high schools to adult education centers. Recognized for its innovation, Grant Joint Union has been at the forefront of using technology to enhance communications and learning for students, teachers and parents. Previously Grant Joint Union High School District had implemented several products that created a complex network that was challenging to manage and increased their total cost of ownership (TCO). In addition, they were challenged with the inadequate vendor support and product performance. After deploying the StoneGate solutions, the district was able to immediately eliminate multiple products, reduce network downtime and decrease IT costs. The district also significantly improved its efficiency in managing and updating its expansive network.

Technologies to keep pace with education requirements

As technology plays a larger role in learning, security and Internet reliability have become increasingly critical to the education market. However, Grant needed to ensure that its IT infrastructure enabled the schools it supports to keep pace with today's learning demands – despite limited resources.

“Our goal is to provide the district's students with a solid education that will prepare them for the changing economy. This includes a rich curriculum, which relies on the latest technological advancements,” said Jim Chapman, IT director for Grant.

With one of the most technologically complex networks of any high school district in California, Grant's IT department has its hands full with maintaining a network that supports nine comprehensive school sites, two adult education centers, two alternative high schools, an independent study program, a special education center and seven charter schools. Across the entire infrastructure, there are approximately 12,500 students and about 1,400 employees that require always-on access to the various sites Grant supports.

Expansive network support calls for flexible security solutions

To guarantee reliable access, Grant had implemented not only multiple ISP connections, but also multiple clustered security devices to eliminate single points of failure. Initially, Grant attempted to cluster CheckPoint firewalls, including a geographically dispersed four-node cluster and Rainfinity for their multiple ISP connections. However, once the solution was in place, Grant's IT department had to struggle to get the products to work as claimed. Disappointed with the vendors' product support, Grant began evaluating new technologies.

Top on the list of priorities was to find a solution that offered: 1) clustering technology, 2) enhanced network redundancy, 3) flexible deployment, and 4) cost-effective pricing. This product criteria led Grant to evaluate three firewall technologies,

including Stonesoft's integrated StoneGate Firewall/VPN solution.

“We were immediately excited by Stonesoft's solution,” said Chapman. “By deploying the StoneGate Firewall/VPN software, we could test how the solution would run in our environment first without the need to immediately replace the CheckPoint firewalls. Not only did StoneGate offer us a best-of-breed approach to maintaining Internet connectivity and network redundancy, but the solution also offered a flexible platform that fit our needs to a T.”

Superior clustering technology ensures multiple network entry points

Stonesoft's engineers worked with Grant during a testing phase to install the solution and demonstrate the real-world performance of its clustering technology. During the critical evaluation period, Stonesoft's award-winning solutions proved their capability to secure and support multiple network entry points.

With StoneGate's combined security and high availability features, Grant was able to transparently load balance traffic between multiple firewall clusters – including their geographically dispersed four-node cluster – thereby greatly improving their network performance. Also, by using StoneGate's patented Multi-Link™ technology, which provides automatic failover and load balancing capabilities for multiple ISPs, the district could ensure Internet redundancy and the fastest connections across its expansive infrastructure to provide its users with 24x7 network access.

“Stonesoft met every security and clustering requirement we had,” said Dave Marcum, enterprise systems manager for Grant. “We deployed the StoneGate Firewall/VPN as the district's end-to-end solution to provide a unified layered security solution that supports nonstop network uptime.”

Additionally, Grant tested Stonesoft's SSL VPN solution to extend the security and scalability to its wired and wireless networks and to provide improved mobile access to its users.

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Jim Chapman - IT Director - Grant Joint Union High School District



The district is currently rolling out the solution across its network community to ensure that staff and students have secure wireless access to its networks from any entry point.

Centralized management increases overall network efficiencies

Throughout the testing phase, Grant was impressed by the ease of management of StoneGate solutions offered by StoneGate Management Center. With a single management interface, Grant's IT administrators could see what was happening across its entire network and easily apply changes to all or a selected group of systems.

In addition to clustering and redundancy, StoneGate's platform offered Grant's IT administrators a new level of management flexibility that will help them to become more proactive in managing their networks. "The StoneGate solution offered us the management simplicity and performance reliability to effectively maintain the district's multiple sites," said Marcum. "The solution enables us to efficiently route traffic, cluster multiple firewalls while load-balancing traffic across the cluster, easily configure new policies, and make changes as network needs shift." The StoneGate Management Center also offered Grant remote management capabilities that enable IT to quickly administer routine updates across multiple networks without the need to travel on-site to each location.

Grant leverages E-rate funding to decrease capital costs

After seeing immediate improvements in network performance during the testing phase, Grant purchased the StoneGate Firewall/VPN and SSL VPN hardware solutions for their superior overall performance. The installations were a seamless process since Grant had already installed the StoneGate software for the demonstration.

"It was as simple as taking the configuration from the software solution and moving it onto the hardware solution – done," said Marcum. "I've received lots of compliments from my lead network guys who work with the StoneGate solution. They said it was such a breeze to migrate the platforms."

Grant used **E-rate funding** to aid in the purchase of the solutions. As a trusted security vendor to the education industry, Stonesoft is certified by the federally funded program that helps qualified educational institutions to get technology grants.

The Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund, commonly known as "E-rate," is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under the direction of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and provides discounts to assist most schools and libraries in the United States to obtain affordable telecommunications, Internet access and associated networking infrastructure. The aim of the program is to ensure that schools and libraries have access to affordable data and telecommunications services.

Grant Joint Union High School District challenges

- Multiple insufficient products for firewall clustering and ISP failover capabilities
- Poor product support
- Unreliable network performance
- Difficult deployment
- Limited ability to efficiently manage expansive network

Results with Stonesoft

- Ability to failover firewalls across multiple sites, including an active four-node cluster and multiple ISPs
- Enhanced network performance from active load balancing of clustered firewalls and multiple ISPs
- Superior vendor support
- Patented technologies to ensure network performance
- Easy product installation with expert technical support
- Centralized management and flexible platform increases IT efficiencies
- Leveraged E-rate eligibility to decrease capital costs

About Grant Joint Union High School District

The Grant Joint Union High School District, established July 28, 1931, is located in Sacramento, Calif. The district serves approximately 12,500 students in grades 7–12. There are nine comprehensive school sites – five junior high schools and four senior high schools. During the 2006-2007 school year, Grant unveiled a new state-of-the-art 1-to-1 Computer Project at Martin Luther King Jr. Technology Academy. Every student has access to an individualized “thin client” workstation in their core classes. Approximately 30 classrooms are equipped with the workstations to provide instructional technology with cutting-edge practices to reach today’s digital savvy students. The district also has two adult education centers, two alternative high schools, an independent study program, a special education center, and seven charter schools. With approximately 1,400 employees, Grant is proud of their many accomplishments, including a 2003 California Teacher of the Year and a 2008 Sacramento County Teacher of the Year.

About Stonesoft

Stonesoft Corporation (OMX: SFT1V) is an innovative provider of integrated network security solutions to secure the information flow of distributed organizations. Stonesoft customers include enterprises with growing business needs requiring advanced network security and always-on business connectivity.

StoneGate™ Secure Connectivity Solution unifies firewall, VPN, IPS and SSL VPN blending network security, end-to-end availability and award-winning load balancing into a centrally managed system. The key benefits of StoneGate Secure Connectivity Solution include low TCO, excellent price-performance ratio and high ROI.

StoneGate Management Center provides unified management for StoneGate Firewall with VPN, IPS and SSL VPN. StoneGate Firewall and IPS work together to provide intelligent defense throughout the enterprise network while StoneGate SSL VPN provides enhanced security for mobile and remote use.

Founded in 1990, Stonesoft Corporation is a global company with corporate headquarters in Helsinki, Finland and Americas headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. For more information, visit www.stonesoft.com.

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www.stonesoft.com

Stonesoft Corporation International Headquarters

Itälahdenkatu 22 A
FI-00210 Helsinki
Finland
tel. +358 9 476 711
fax. +358 9 4767 1234

Stonesoft Inc. Americas Headquarters

1050 Crown Pointe Parkway
Suite 900
Atlanta, GA 30338
tel. +1 866 869 4075
fax. +1 770 668 1131