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Learn How IRONSCALES Protects the Students and Staff of Ayrshire College From Phishing Attacks

Ayrshire College

⚗ Challenges

- An increase in phishing attempts targeting the education sector
- A busy employee base consisting of on-site and remote workers
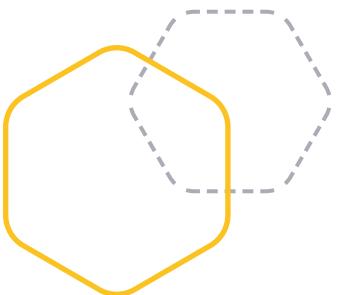
💡 Solution

- IRONSCALES- the AI-driven, self-learning email security platform
- Continuous rollout of phishing simulations

🎯 Results (In a 90 day period)

- 3,255 total remediated emails
- Up to 419 hours and 6 min analyst hours saved – This data is based on the average of 33 minutes that it takes an analyst to resolve a phishing attack (based on Osterman Research, 2020)

Company Intro

Ayrshire College provides further and higher education to students in the Ayrshire region of Scotland. The college has over 10,000 students and offers courses in a range of industries including Engineering & Construction, Creative, Business & Computing, Care & Early Years, and social sciences. Ayrshire's mixed offering of full-time, part-time, and evening courses means that students range from school pupils, to leavers preparing to start their career and professionals retraining after the COVID-19 pandemic. Ayrshire College has over 800 staff including a dedicated team responsible for IT security, servers, networks, and identity management.

The Problem

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) issued multiple alerts detailing ransomware attacks against schools, colleges, and universities in the UK throughout 2021, with a number of high-profile attacks causing damage in terms of lost data and access to critical services. After observing these alerts and establishing that phishing was one of their biggest risk vectors in the education sector, the Ayrshire College team wanted to ensure they had the right tools in place to combat sophisticated phishing threats.

The ongoing shift towards blended learning and working, expedited by the COVID-19 pandemic, contributed to Ayrshire College's growing cyber risk. Unlike when staff are working on-site at one of Ayrshire's three main campuses, home workers lack the protection of the college's firewalls. For these remote workers, malicious emails must be prevented from even entering mailboxes in the first place.

Beyond their curriculum, Ayrshire College wants to instill essential life skills, digital skills, and continuous cyber education into their employee base, allowing these skills to filter down to their student body. To protect the college from reputational damage, financial damage, and business disruption, the IT team wanted to boost the organization's security knowledge and cyber confidence, and inform staff on what to look for in terms of cyber attacks.

Although the college had successfully implemented an email gateway, phishing attempts were still entering their systems. The Ayrshire team wanted an additional layer of protection to work with their existing email gateway and secure Office 365, as well as help increase their organization's cyber awareness to prevent attacks in the long term.

"We reviewed our email system and agreed phishing was our number one security risk right now, so we wanted a product that helps us with that. We felt that IRONSCALES is the best one on the market, as it offers both phishing protection and phishing simulation tools." – Brad Johnstone, Head of ICT Services at Ayrshire College

Solution

Operationally, Ayrshire College was looking for a phishing solution to roll out to their large staff base that would be effective and efficient, keeping the college secure while being easy to use and manage. The team had also been looking to run phishing simulations for a long time, and after looking at separate phishing simulation services, decided they needed a continuously-running solution that could nurture a well-rounded education on cyber threats for their staff. The Ayshire College team discussed their email security requirements with their Managed Services Provider, Barrier Networks, who in turn recommended the IRONSCALES solution.

The ease of use and support that IRONSCALES offered made it a compelling solution to the Ayrshire College team, and the additional phishing simulation and education capabilities were a key selling point. IRONSCALES was set up for an initial proof of concept (POC) lasting 2 months, during which the Ayrshire College team was surprised at the number of malicious emails picked up.

"The AI that IRONSCALES uses is the most powerful in the phishing community. It takes a lot of the manpower out of our hands, and it does this 24/7. The fact that it removes malicious emails directly from the inboxes just shows the power behind it." – James Barnes, Infrastructure Team Leader at Ayrshire College

Following the POC, the IRONSCALES solution was already built and ready for Ayrshire College to start using, with no extra installation, configuration, or setup costs. With access to an online portal and a guide to connecting to their Office 365, Ayrshire College was able to connect their systems within an hour and start blocking emails within a morning, with dedicated assistance from IRONSCALES.

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HEAD OF ICT SERVICES AT
AYRSHIRE COLLEGE

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Outcomes

Since implementation, Ayrshire College has seen its cyber posture improve dramatically. The IRONSCALES solution immediately began blocking emails efficiently without requiring input from the Ayrshire College team. In a 90-day period, IRONSCALES automatically remediated a total of 3,255 potentially malicious emails, saving up to 420 analyst hours (based on research conducted by Osterman, which found that it takes an analyst an average of 33 minutes to resolve a phishing attempt).

IRONSCALES is AI-driven and self-learning, meaning it automatically seeks out and removes threats from the inboxes of Ayrshire College staff at scale. The Ayrshire team can then see exactly how many people an email has reached, recategorizing wherever necessary. By rolling out and educating staff on the 911 mailbox and IRONSCALES intuitive reporting button, Ayrshire College is also empowering staff to independently report phishing attempts that they identify.

"If one user identifies a phishing threat which has hit 100 mailboxes, we can remove it from all 100 mailboxes quickly and efficiently and remove the burden from someone who might not be as diligent as the person who identified it."
- Brad Johnstone, Head of ICT Services at Ayrshire College

IRONSCALES' single pane of glass monitoring and management gives the busy Ayrshire College team a simple, easy-to-digest view of the solution and enables quick and easy reporting. The college is also benefiting from being a part of IRONSCALES' global intelligence-sharing community, which keeps the team continuously updated on newly discovered threats from other IRONSCALES customers.

"When a phishing attack happens, we won't be naming and shaming individuals, instead we will be helping the member of staff to learn from this phishing attempt, turning the process into a positive one. Some view their staff as their main weakness when it comes to email security, but we think they should be our strength." - Brad Johnstone, Head of ICT Services at Ayrshire College

By implementing IRONSCALES, Ayrshire College have seen an increase in their cyber maturity, observing a huge increase in self-reporting by employees, thus saving a significant amount of time tracking down and deleting phishing attempts. And by committing to actively educate staff on phishing, the college is inspiring a culture of continuous learning for their student body.

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Looking Ahead

Ayrshire College is now beginning to run strategic phishing simulation campaigns using IRONSCALES' training and simulation features. Starting with smaller-scale campaigns to refine the process, the college will be running these simulations constantly to quantify their staff's cyber awareness and maturity. While IRONSCALES email security platform reinforces the first layer of protection in user inboxes, phishing training and education creates a second layer of protection against sophisticated attacks. With the full-scale, continuous rollout of phishing simulations planned over the next few months, the Ayrshire College team are on their way to using the IRONSCALES solution to its full potential.

"We're currently building our phishing simulation campaigns in IRONSCALES and the simulations are very realistic—they don't look botched at all. If you're going to do simulation phishing, it has to be convincing and based on what I've seen, these will be." - Brad Johnstone, Head of ICT Services at Ayrshire College

About IRONSCALES

Every day criminals launch billions of new phishing attacks. No company is immune. Legacy solutions can't keep up & cloud providers struggle to stop advanced attacks with native controls. IRONSCALES' powerfully simple email security solution helps you fight back fast and keeps your company safe in today's cloud-first world.

Incubated inside the world's top venture program for cybersecurity and founded by alumni of the Israeli Defense Forces' elite Intelligence Technology unit, we offer security professionals an AI-driven, self-learning email security platform that provides a comprehensive solution to proactively fight phishing attacks.

To learn more about IRONSCALES' award-winning anti-phishing solution, please sign up for a demo today at https://ironscales.com/get-a-demo/

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Learn how working with IRONSCALES makes us Safer Together. www.ironscales.com

Everything is just a click away, from initial installation to threat identification and removal.

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