Large Texas school district boosts security and slashes costs.

Judson ISD chooses Barracuda for email security,

data protection, and network firewalls.

Customer

- School district in San Antonio, TX comprising 31 schools
- Serving approximately 26,000 students
- 5,000 – 6,000 employees

Challenges

- Ransomware attack exposed inadequate email security
- Microsoft 365 adoption required new security and data protection
- Legacy tape-based backup system was vulnerable to ransomware

Solutions

Barracuda
Email Protection™

Barracuda
Cloud-to-Cloud Backup™

Barracuda
Backup™

Benefits

- Dramatic reduction in phishing attacks reaching inboxes
- Automated backup and incident response reduced IT overhead
- Immutable backups ensure compliance with cyber insurance requirements

When Lacey Gosch joined Judson ISD in May 2021 as the district's new Assistant Superintendent of Technology, she barely had time to get her desk organized before she found herself managing the response to a major crisis. "I had been in the job for twenty days when we got hit with a major ransomware attack," Gosch says. "It really knocked us down. Even after initial recovery efforts and the verification that our data loss was limited to only a few days, it took us months to recover. We were barely ready for the start of the fall term, and there was a lot of lost data and equipment that was simply not recoverable."

That certainly wasn't the ideal way to start off in her new role, but it did have an upside. "After that ransomware attack, there was no debate about the fact that we needed to make some major upgrades to our IT infrastructure, including security and data protection," says Gosch. "I frankly took it as an opportunity to push through some major changes, including a complete migration to Microsoft 365 and a significant redeployment of workloads to the Azure cloud."

Getting email security right

Gosch quickly learned that Judson's on-prem Exchange email system was protected by a Barracuda Email Security Gateway appliance — and that the product license had been renewed even though it was an older model that lacked any advanced anti-phishing and other capabilities that by then were standard for Barracuda email-security solutions.

"The network services director had renewed the license ten days before the attack, without checking on the product's status or discussing potential risks of the renewal with me," says Gosch. "When we called the Barracuda rep, he told me he'd been trying to contact us about it, but his calls hadn't been returned."

Barracuda stood out for its willingness to accommodate Judson's situation and help get them up and running again. "Our Barracuda rep was happy to roll back our license and apply what we'd already paid to our new Barracuda Email Protection subscription," says Gosch. "And with all our servers down, we couldn't even generate a proper order or process payments, but Barracuda was willing to help us get everything set up and worry about billing on the backside. There were not many vendors willing to work with us like that."

Getting reliable email service back up and running was the first order of business, and within a month of the attack, Gosch's team had everyone on Microsoft 365 protected by the full Barracuda Email Protection solution — including AI-powered phishing detection, Cloud-to-Cloud Backup for data in Microsoft 365, and advanced security awareness training and simulation.

Proper backup: critical ransomware protection

With email restored and secured, Gosch's team turned to rebuilding the rest of their infrastructure — including upgraded protection for Judson's on-prem data stores and for their new Microsoft Azure deployment.

"During the initial hours of the ransomware attack, the team discovered the real time deletion of our tape-based backup system," says Gosch. "It was at this point we knew we needed to move to a more advanced system. By January 2022 we were ready to put that in place, and Barracuda Backup was the obvious solution for us. It had all the features we wanted — including immutable backups, cloud replication, granular recovery, and protection across our hybrid infrastructure. And our experience with Barracuda's outstanding service and support meant that we had no reservations about giving them our backup business as well."

> "With the advanced anti-phishing protection and security awareness training, we have built the best security against ransomware getting in. Going with the Barracuda Backup system means that even if the worst should happen, we can recover quickly and completely without any threat to our data security."
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> **Lacey Gosch, Assistant Superintendent of Technology**
> Judson Independent School District

Spreading the word

"So now we have what we feel is state-of-the-art protection against ransomware, and we're confident that we won't face another situation like that attack that took us down," says Gosch. "With the advanced anti-phishing protection and security awareness training, we have built the best security against ransomware getting in. Going with the Barracuda Backup system means that even if the worst should happen, we can recover quickly and completely without any threat to our data security."

Gosch realized that, before the attack, she hadn't really understood how devastating and disruptive a major ransomware incident could be for schools. So she set out to spread the word among her peers.

"I didn't want any other school system to have to go through what we'd experienced," says Gosch. "So along with other team members, we always stress the importance of Barracuda. I started giving presentations all over the state for other K-12 IT administrators. I tell them about what we went through, and I share everything we've learned about what it takes to effectively protect a school system against that kind of incident."

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> **Lacey Gosch, Assistant Superintendent of Technology**
> Judson Independent School District

As part of her presentations, Gosch always makes sure to mention Barracuda. "I always make a big point of sharing how helpful Barracuda has been, and how reliable and effective the solutions are," she says. "And I especially stress how incredibly helpful and responsive they are from a customer service and support perspective. I basically tell them that Barracuda is a top vendor that they should absolutely take a good look at as they get into upgrading their security."

Next steps

A recent bond issue made it possible for Judson to upgrade their network firewalls. "Our existing firewalls were outdated and excluded some really important features like zero trust access controls. So, we knew a full replacement was needed" Gosch continues. "After going through the evaluation process to select the best option for Judson, we chose Barracuda CloudGen Firewall because it provided us with interoperability and a unified interface for our whole security infrastructure."

"Look, nobody wants to get hit by ransomware," says Gosch. "But having gone through it once, I'm pretty confident that if it happens again I'll be out of a job, so I guess I have that extra motivation to get security right. And I am very happy to say that I trust Barracuda to be Judson's security partner for the long term — you could say I trust them with both our cybersecurity and my job security!"

Learn more:

Barracuda Email Protection™

For organizations that want to protect their businesses, brands, and people against the most advanced email-borne threats, Barracuda Email Protection is a comprehensive, easy-to-use solution that delivers gateway defense, API-based impersonation and phishing protection, incident response, data protection, and compliance capabilities.

Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup™

Barracuda Cloud-to-Cloud Backup provides easy-to-use SaaS backup for your Microsoft 365 data, including Teams, Exchange Online, SharePoint and OneDrive, including OneNote, with unlimited storage and retention.

Barracuda Backup™

Barracuda Backup offers complete, flexible backup for your on-premises and virtual data, including Hyper-V, VMware, Windows Server, Linux, Exchange, SQL, and MacOS.

About Barracuda

At Barracuda we strive to make the world a safer place. We believe every business deserves access to cloud-first, enterprise-grade security solutions that are easy to buy, deploy, and use. We protect email, networks, data, and applications with innovative solutions that grow and adapt with our customers' journey. More than 200,000 organizations worldwide trust Barracuda to protect them — in ways they may not even know they are at risk — so they can focus on taking their business to the next level. For more information, visit barracuda.com.