



**CASE STUDY**

# Sharks in the swim after virus purge

By **BRAD HOWARTH**

There's a saying in football that if you can get your defence working right, you can more easily create opportunities to attack. For Michael Wilkins, general manager of the Cronulla Sharks Leagues Club in southern Sydney, the same sentiment holds true for his club's technology infrastructure.

IT is essential to running the club's gaming and beverage systems. But by December last year a lack of IT management policies had left the network vulnerable to server overloads, spam and viruses.

"If we lose those systems, business stops, and a lot of us don't remember how to go back to doing things manually," Mr Wilkins says.

"The business was carrying that many daily blazes, there was always something falling over and someone doing a half-fix on it."

Rather than hire IT skills, the club followed the lead of an increasing number of mid-sized businesses and called for external assistance.

Tom Galeski is a consultant at Partner IT, which specialises in providing managed services to mid-tier companies.

His company's first scan of the Sharks' infrastructure found viruses across the network. Mr Galeski says no one had taken responsibility for maintaining the company's existing anti-virus software.

Partner IT switched the Sharks over to the CSM product from Trend Micro, which it could remotely manage.

It provides daily antivirus monitoring for 55 users at the



Off-field, technical shortcomings weakened Cronulla's defences. Picture: Craig Golding

club and is on site once or twice a week. Mr Galeski says the Trend product is also used to conduct vulnerability scans on the network, and for ongoing patch management for Microsoft Windows.

More mid-tier companies are seeking to hand over responsibility for tasks such as antivirus and operating system maintenance to outsource partners, Mr Galeski says.

"We're seeing a shift in the way companies look at their IT, away from hiring an IT manager," Mr Galeski says.

"We are picking up a lot more business being a pseudo IT department, where instead of them ringing the IT manager, they ring our 1300 number and we become their IT department."

"Over 12 months their IT

expenditure is less and they are getting maximum benefit."

Mr Wilkins says the improvement for the club has been significant, with no down time for essential systems being reported since February.

"We've been able to control our third-party suppliers a lot better, and our real costs in terms of what we are spending on a monthly basis have actually dropped by a good percentage, and will continue to drop through having the amount of control that we have," Mr Wilkins says.

The greater stability has enabled the Cronulla Sharks to make more sweeping changes with greater certainty, such as upgrading its desktop and notebook fleet and restructuring its network.

## NEXT LESSONS

**Problem**

■ The Cronulla Sharks' network was haphazard and largely unmanaged, vulnerable to viruses and frequent outages.

**Process**

■ The club considered hiring IT staff to manage its system but decided it could get better value from external assistance.

**Possibilities**

■ With its network back under control, the club can make more strategic IT investment decisions that benefit its operations.