

TC CASE STUDY – POSTBANK

Successes In Practice



Postbank signs customer e-mails with team certificates from TC TrustCenter, thereby protecting its customers against phishing.

Phishing e-mails have now established themselves as unwelcome side effects of the Internet. They mainly target the big online banks such as Postbank. The company is the first large German bank to introduce digital mail certificates to clearly show its customers, whether the e-mail they have received in its name is really trustworthy and from the bank.

Postbank – An Innovative Financial Service Provider

Postbank has always led the industry in online banking, and was one of the first banks to introduce the service in 1983. Listed on the DAX-30, the bank takes a leading role in online banking in Germany - Postbank customers already service more than 2.4 million current accounts, around 500,000 deposit accounts and some 300,000 savings accounts online.

» Our customers respect our efforts in the battle against phishing e-mails. The use of signatures was very much welcomed by Postbank's customers, who could once again trust the bank's e-mails. «

*Georg Szabó, Leiter Security Management
bei der Postbank AG*

Rising Crime on the Internet Threatens Online Communication

The spread of Internet use has also made the network increasingly attractive for criminals. „Phishing“ above all has spread rapidly. The problem with phishing mails is that although they bear the bank's logo and are deceptively similar in wording they originate from a criminal sender. There is always a danger that customers will follow the instructions in the e-mail and enter their PIN and TAN and so give criminals access to their online banking account. Regardless of the personal risk to each customer, phishing e-mails also damage the bank's reputation and lead to critical recipients completely losing their trust in its electronic messages.

After phishing mails with the Postbank logo also began circulating increasingly in Germany, the bank decided in 2005 to bundle a comprehensive security package for its customers. The e-mail signature in its customer communications formed one of the cornerstones of this move, as they guarantee the sender's authenticity.

The Electronic Signature Provides the Solution

To win back its customers' faith in e-mails, Postbank arranged to sign all e-mails sent to customers with certificates of the highest security class (Class 3). Firstly, the financial service provider wanted the best possible protection against incorrect certificates and secondly, the highest level of authenticity. Because the e-mails frequently contained the addresses of whole teams, such as: direkt@postbank.de, geldwert@newsletter.postbank.de and business@postbank.de, a solution was required that could also sign and process e-mails sent by several people from the same e-mail account. In order to ensure

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» The team certificates from TC TrustCenter give us precisely the solution for our concrete problem. Since implementing our security package we have seen a strong reduction in phishing mails with the Postbank logo. This shows that our measures have raised the bar for criminals. «

*Georg Szabó, Leiter Security Management
bei der Postbank AG*

uncomplicated communication with the customer, Postbank was also on the lookout for a provider whose root certificates were already preinstalled in all common browsers and mail clients and were thus widely recognised and considered trustworthy.

TC TrustCenter Was Selected Following an Evaluation

Following a thorough evaluation phase and examination of solutions from several certificate service providers, Postbank finally came out in favour of the team certificates from TC TrustCenter, which met all set requirements. In addition, the offer from TC TrustCenter gave the Postbank the benefit of the highest possible trustworthiness since the Hamburg-based company is accredited with the Federal Network Agency according to the German Signature Act.

Drastic Fall in Phishing Mails

To begin with, 40 team certificates were installed on the Postbank's e-mail gateway, to be followed by 80 more soon after. In January 2006 the Postbank began signing its e-mails to customers. The first newsletters with digital signature were sent out in May 2006. To inform customers about the signed messages, the bank explained the background to the innovation on its homepage and in its newsletters. It outlined the problems it wanted to solve and how the customer can easily check an e-mail for authenticity based on the certificate. To ensure that as many people as possible were made aware of the change, the bank also informed its approximately 22,000 employees in „Bankpost“, its internal magazine.

The Postbank is extending its network of signed e-mails. Every new team e-mail address introduced by the bank is given certificates that would henceforth be valid for two years and subject to regular renewal to ensure overarching protection.

Postbank customers now know that their bank only sends signed e-mails, and that they can check whether the certificate is the right one at the click of a mouse. They can delete all other mails apparently from the Postbank without a second thought. These, though, have become very rare.

TC TrustCenter – our expertise

TC TrustCenter GmbH is one of the leading specialists in certificates and security solutions along the entire identity verification value chain. The portfolio covers everything from Web security services to protecting e-commerce transactions, Managed Security Services, right through to PKI solutions.

TC TrustCenter has more than ten years' experience in national and international projects of various sizes in a wide range of industries. TC TrustCenter is accredited as a certification authority according to the German Signature Act, European Signature Act and Identrust.