

Spam Products and Services Summary Recommendations

I'd like to thank the many IT support and services companies who contributed to this summary of product recommendations below.

Mac

With OS X, Apple has added a junk mail filtering feature to the built in mail client. It is pretty decent at highlighting it, and with the rules, you can color it, put it in a different folder and such. It gets better with time and can be trained. www.apple.com/macosx/features/mail

PC

Small Office, Home Office

Outlook 2003 has a junkmail filter that is easy to use. I had varying reports on its effectiveness.

Cloudmark is recommended by several users with good results. "If I were to recommend a package, it would be Cloudmark's Spamnet - they're community-based, with users contributing to the pool of knowledge." www.cloudmark.com

SpamAssassin was recommended by several sources. Some cautioned to keep an eye on server space. "One downside is that it requires the server administrator to be fairly hands-on in the setup phase, and if not limited it can eat up a lot of server resources (we even had it take down a server once under a deluge of spam!)" www.spamassassin.apache.org

"We generally advise [users] to upgrade their current antivirus software with the appropriate upgrade for Spam filtering. We prefer McAfee and their product lines"

"For outlook Express there is a pretty good free program called Spamfighter, www.spamfighter.com, that I like. It is good at finding spam and you can also tell the program what is spam and what is not. Mostly I advise outlook express users to use Mozilla's Thunderbird, www.mozilla.com, as their email program. This comes bundled with a very nice anti spam program. "

Inboxer by Audiotrieve was recommended by some www.audiotrieve.com.

Business Hardware

From Message Harbor is a hardware device for small business as well as enterprise users. www.messageharbor.com

There is also a device called the barracuda that has been working well. It is a Network appliance that sits on the edge of your network and works with exchange to eliminate spam. www.barracudanetworks.com

Software

I had several recommendations for GFI Essentials:

"We use a very powerful product by GFI, called Mail essentials that includes many different options for spam prevention and most importantly is can be setup so the end user can manage

spam from outlook. The Mac's have some limitation, but by default removes about 95% of spam from our clients." www.gfi.com

For corporate offices hosting their own mail systems Symantec Brightmail was recommended.

<http://enterprisesecurity.symantec.com/products/products.cfm?ProductID=642%20>

Spam filter service

Message Labs is a filter service for which I had comments like this:

"There's also the hosted side of the equation with companies like MessageLabs who provide a 'scrub and forward' type service which claims 98%+ accuracy on SPAM which is pretty darn good."

New England Data Services' Spam filter service is another subscription service www.neds.com

What is not recommended

"I don't recommend any thing that takes control out of the hands of the end user. Even if you have something that is 99% accurate there are still going to be false positives. These can be catastrophic if it's a business related e-mail and users will quickly lose confidence in the system."

"I don't recommend going to an all OPT-IN program where every user must be verified before email is allowed from them. This can be annoying and also have many negative unintended consequences."

"I don't recommend the Symantec or McAfee client-based products, or the like, if they rely on the user to do something such as add mail addresses to a white or black list, constantly monitor a Junk Mail folder for false positives, review or score email for likelihood of spam, etc. These are esoteric things for users to do. I think spam should generally be stripped or flagged before it reaches the user so I go for solutions that do that. "

"We don't recommend devices that only use known SPAM lists for blocking, or that don't provide the user feedback on what's getting caught in the SPAM filter. This latter is called a "false positive". This is when someone calls you and tells you that they e-mailed you something, but you never got it. Most users need to personalize their settings to be specific to their needs. With only a centrally managed scenario, the benefit is minimal."

"In general, in today's environment, you can't think of SPAM by itself. You really have to focus on Anti-Virus/SpyWare/SPAM as a total strategy. Most products, like MacAfee offer these as bundled solutions. If a home user only addresses one of the 3 areas, they are still leaving themselves wide open. They need to have a strategy to deal with all 3, and although the ISPs and the software vendors are a bit late to the game, they are getting there and putting products and policies in place to deal with these issues."