

How to Get Control of Spam Without Compromising Performance

CASE STUDY

LIKE MOST COMPANIES, CompuCom saw its volume of spam explode exponentially—and its staff grow anxious for relief. But when Chris Odom and Travis Parker, members of CompuCom's network services team, went looking to upgrade their content filtering solution, they had more on their minds than blocking spam.

What they wanted was to improve users' experiences by reducing the volume of spam without compromising performance. What they needed was a solution that would enable them to get control of spam, reduce false positives, and be scalable as well as flexible. But to deliver, the solution had to address a number of issues. Even getting control of spam, it turns out, was not straightforward for the giant IT services and system integrator.

RULES AND FALSE POSITIVES

"Even with the strong anti-spam agents available in products today, none we found was powerful enough to block the amount of spam appearing daily at CompuCom's gateway," explains IT manager, Parker. "What we needed was the ability to develop customized rules that, when used in conjunction with the anti-spam agent, effectively blocked unwanted content."

Of course, solving the spam problem by creating additional rules often results in the generation of false positives—and most people, maintains director of network services, Odom, have "zero tolerance for false positives." The answer, of course, is to "rewrite the

rule to prevent the block. The problem is how to quickly identify what rule was violated in the first place."

PERFORMANCE AND SCALABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Performance and scalability were other considerations. Because CompuCom's volume of mail could fluctuate dramatically, Odom and Parker needed a solution that could easily scale to meet demand. And they were committed to maintaining performance, with "delay of the day's internet email unacceptable," adds Odom.

After evaluating five alternatives, including service-based arrangements, CompuCom selected SurfControl Web and E-mail Filters.

Today, CompuCom has a content filtering solution that effectively blocks 79.9% of spam on a volume of 85-90,000 messages daily, helps to reduce false positives via a message administrator function that makes it easy to find and analyze the reasons for blocked messages, is flexible enough to accommodate customized rules and rules changes, includes a centralized database functionality for quick scalability—and meets CompuCom's performance requirements.

"We were impressed with SurfControl's feature set, flexibility and its concise, understandable graphical user interface," adds Odom.