

LANsultants Times

Your official Source for LANsultants News

Vol. 7 No.2

215-546-3124

February 2005

SPAM WARS & MALWARE STATUS REPORT

Both nationally and among LANsultants's clients, issues with spam have been largely contained. Symantec reports that spam has stabilized at 67 to 70% of all e-mail over the last few months after increasing throughout most of 2004. This implies that actions taken to control spam are having an impact. AOL and other major ISP's have successfully sued and shut-down various spammers. More significantly, the implementation of e-mail filtering services such as BeeNet's Postini Filter, MailCleaner and GFI Essentials has minimized the percentage of spam reaching our clients. If your firm does not currently use a commercial e-mail virus and spam filtering service, I strongly recommend that you consider implementing such a system. We typically realize an 80% reduction in spam reaching the desktop once a spam filter is implemented.

Control of Malware has been more problematic; there is no single solution for controlling all aspects of this problem. Malware, refers to any program which does malicious damage to your computer. This includes Browser Hijacks, popup advertisements, and spyware which attempts to recover passwords, login names and other critical information from your PC.

Currently our most effective defense is been to install Ad-Aware Se Plus and switch workstations to the more secure Firefox browser from IE. Ad-Aware Se Plus scans for malware similar to the manner in which anti-virus programs scan for viruses, but it's not quite as effective. While the Firefox browser is more secure, some clients may still require Internet Explorer for websites that only work with the latter product.

We're also evaluating other products such as ShadowSurfer and Sonicwall's spam filter. ShadowSurfer prevents any software (good or bad) from installing on a workstation by restoring it to it's original state when the user reboots. The Sonicwall spam filter promises to block spam at the firewall, which is an attractive but still unproven technology. Accordingly, it is LANsultants's recommendation to implement Ad-Aware Se on all our client's PC at a cost of \$30 for the software license plus installation time. Installation is as little as ¼ hr if a PC is clean to 3+ hours if a PC's operating system has already been compromised by the various forms of Malware.

Lavasoft, the developers of Ad-Aware, are in final, "beta", stages of testing their server based network product which will make implementing their product easier on larger networks.

Postscript: Recently Microsoft acquired GIANT, another developer of spyware blocking software. Microsoft is currently providing GIANT at no cost, but has hinted that they plan on changing that later on. This is probably a gambit to allow users to download the program for free and then charge them for updates. We have run comparative tests on GIANT and Ad-Aware and both work well, but GIANT does report some non-Microsoft utilities as spyware when they are not. Other Malware products that we are evaluating are CounterSpy, Webroot, Spysubtract and Pest Patrol.

If you would like to be removed from our email newsletter subscription, please send an e-mail to shirlean@lansultants.com.