

eCS Planet

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News from ECS Group



→ FEATURE

Anti-spam: a winning battle

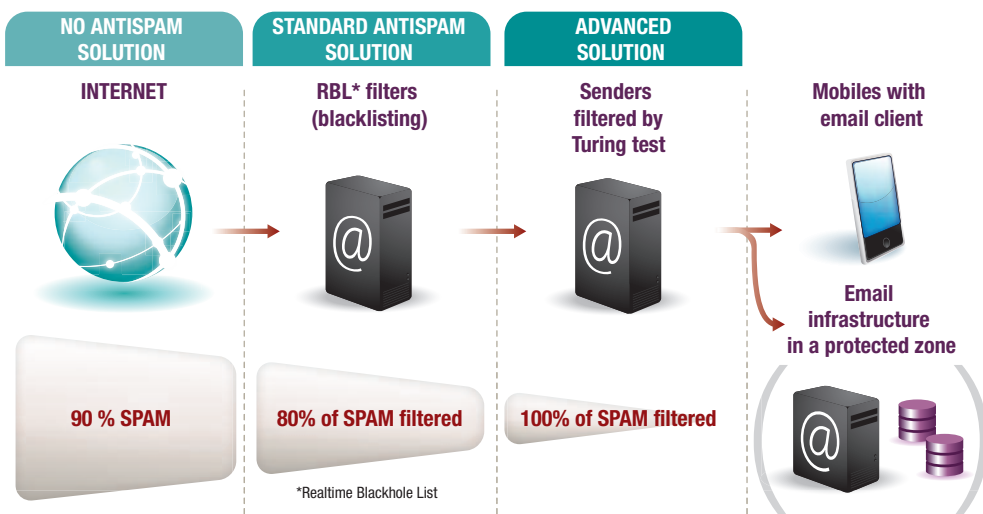
Given the mission-critical role of email within companies, the spam menace can seriously compromise business continuity. A plethora of anti-spam technologies are available on the market, but, in order to be effective, a change of attitude on the part of users is required.

More than a mere nuisance, spam has become a major threat to security. On a global level, between 90 and 93% of emails received in 2008 were unsolicited, around 5% more than the previous year. Europe is the number-

one target for spammers: according to the European Commission and other sources such as Gartner or IDC, almost half of all spams in circulation are sent to email servers in Europe. And spam attacks are not only becoming more widespread but also more

sophisticated, with spammers applying the same methodology and rationale as to any legitimate marketing campaign, with clearly-defined targets (company, industry, country). The risks for the company are proportional to the importance of email to their core business. Aside from the obvious inconvenience of email becoming saturated and malfunctioning, there is the more serious issue of identity theft, leading some companies to have their email blacklisted by Internet Service Providers, and thereby compromising their ability to send emails. →→

ANTI-SPAM: THE RIGHT ARCHITECTURE



The combination of these technologies can ensure optimal spam protection for email and mobile phones

➔➔ The importance of human decisions

For a long time, SMEs relied on their ISPs to provide an anti-spam solution. Yet as many legitimate messages were blocked whilst unwanted mails found their way into the in-box, the limitations of these anti-spams soon became obvious: only the recipient – be it a company or personal account – can decide which senders are desirable and which ones are not. Companies therefore decided to handle email themselves, using the various anti-spam products on the market.

Most of these solutions offer anti-spam functions based on signature and keyword detection, but their optimal efficiency requires ongoing monitoring and administration, for which companies don't necessarily have the available internal resources. The reason some companies are unable to cope with the deluge of unwanted and inappropriate emails is precisely because they have no option but to rely solely on automatic anti-spam devices, whereas only administrators and users can distinguish a legitimate email from a spam.

A combination of technology and judicious user behaviour

In order to implement a lasting anti-spam policy, companies need to begin by reinforcing the security of their email servers, which are now just as critical as business applications or databases. Current technology has the ability to filter emails and only send to the email server

ECS Solutions**Strategy**

ECS offers clients impartial advice independently from all hardware and software manufacturers and ISPs and strives to find the solution that is best suited to the company's email use and plans for change. ECS has selected a range of solutions that guarantee optimal email security for businesses.

Integration

With its expertise in IT security architecture and configuration, ECS is able to assist companies in integrating anti-spam techniques.

➔ INTERVIEW

Eric Boisneault,
Associate Director
TVH Consulting



« Our number one priority in the IT department, is to ensure our consultants total flexibility »

Founded in 2003, TVH Consulting is an independent company that provides enterprise resource planning consulting services. TVH Consulting has its own R & D centre and develops targeted vertical solutions chiefly in Europe but also all over the world via a global network of partners.

In order to ensure optimal visibility over its laptop fleet and track software licences, TVH Consulting turned to ECS for a remote inventory service.

What specific IT requirements does your business have?

The fleet of laptops is used by IT experts visiting clients. Our number one priority in the IT department is to ensure our consultants total flexibility and support: this means, for example, that they should be able to install whatever software they want. But

messages which have not been identified as spam. But again, such devices must ideally go hand-in-hand with a change in users' behaviour and email use. The good news is that recent technology makes it easier for users to filter unwanted emails: for example, anti-spam techniques allow users to whitelist or blacklist incoming messages. The bad news is of course that as antispam technology becomes increasingly advanced, so does spammers' skill at bypassing it.

Business Continuity

ECS' support team offers clients ongoing assistance and monitoring to ensure their internet infrastructure functions 24/7.

Upgradeability

As part of a lease contract, ECS' solutions and services ensure businesses optimal anti-spam protection and access to the latest technologies.

ECS Solutions

this of course means we have to keep track of licences.

What were you looking for in a remote inventory solution?

Our main criterion was choosing a well-known product. The one we opted for, EasyVista Discovery, is presented on the website of the Business Software Alliance. We also wanted an online application (Application Service Provider), which means there are no hidden infrastructure and administration costs. ECS had the requisite expertise to roll

out the solution on all our laptops, even for the consultants who only come to head office once or twice a year. Our main concerns were flexibility and time: we needed the solution to be rolled out as quickly as possible.

What kind of solution did ECS offer you?

ECS provided a remote inventory service in SaaS (Software as a Service) mode from Staff and Line. During the implementation phase, the ECS team carried out a customised deployment via the

web, enabling consultants to install the solution remotely and automatically simply by logging onto a web page. The solution is easy to use and can be accessed by all our staff, wherever they are. So that met our requirements in terms of flexibility. As for the timeframe: it took ECS just 5 weeks to implement the solution, from the decision-making stage to the collection of the results from the first inventory on 100% of the laptops.

What the expert says



MARC LE DAIN

As Head of Security Solutions at ECS' Competence Centre, Marc Le Dain is in charge of the technical development of the group's security offering and offers both ECS' support teams and end-clients the benefit of his expertise. Marc le Dain joined ECS' expertise centre in 2000 after spending several years in the mainframe and telecoms sector.

Turing tests to protect mobiles from SPAM

The spam phenomenon has inevitably also spread to mobile phones, and faster than the necessary security measures. By their very nature, mobile phones are more vulnerable to spams than email and as such are an ideal target for address book hackers. With limited bandwidth, (3G), mobile phones are more likely to get "spammed up" more quickly. In many cases, the problem can be solved by adjusting the message architecture. One such solution is the "reverse Turing test", or the CAPTCHA (Completely

Automated Public Turing Test to Tell Computers and Humans Apart) challenge-response test. By responding correctly to the challenge (this typically involves the user's typing letters or digits from a distorted image that appears on the screen), the sender is automatically added to the recipient's whitelist. Administrated by ECS' support service, MailinBlack uses this technique to combat spams: only messages from senders authorised by the recipient are let through to the mailbox and mobile peripheral.

→ For more info: www.ecs-group.com/solutions

INTERVIEW



Coping with the credit crunch: turn your IT investments into variable costs

In the current economic climate, an operating lease is not only a viable, low-risk alternative to bank loans, but also a means for companies to streamline and reduce technology costs.

In response to the credit crunch, SMEs may be tempted to cut back on technology costs in favour of "higher priority" investments in an attempt to avoid running out of bank funding for the business – a risk that is higher than ever in the current economic climate. Banks are more selective in their lending, and grant loans in line with their own market strategy. Yet the issue of whether to defer IT investments in order to maintain the company's investment capacity is hardly a new one: the financial crisis should, ideally, urge SMEs – regardless of their size and area of business – to make optimal use of the budget management tools they have at their disposal.

Financial flexibility

Leasing is a tried-and-tested method for managing IT budgets. When leasing IT assets, the IT costs become variable costs, or, in other words, costs which are proportional

to the length of time for which they are used. Furthermore, an international company such as ECS offers a wide range of refinancing solutions via its network of 25 partners across Europe. ECS' combination of financial and technical expertise can offer SMEs the advice and assistance to optimise their technology budget management. In these times of financial crisis, one of companies' top priorities is streamlining their infrastructures whilst achieving more flexibility in their IT investments in order to remain competitive and prepare for when the economy picks up again.

One way of making IT cost savings is by consolidating server and storage infrastructures, or improving control and visibility of the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) of desktops and servers via outsourced IT budget management. With its combined expertise in both leasing and IT services, ECS is ideally positioned to assist companies in these areas.

New European iSeries and AS/400 Services Centre

ECS has acquired EDS' iSeries and AS/400 Services Centre in France. This iSeries and AS/400 outsourcing services facility provides business continuity solutions for 167 environments and over 120,000 users in 35 countries. This acquisition will enable ECS to enhance its server outsourcing service offering for its 12,000 SME customers across Europe, 20% of which have iSeries equipment. It will also consolidate ECS' position as Europe's leading independent service provider for iSeries and AS/400 (leasing, business continuity, outsourcing and housing services).

ECS awarded the highest level of VMware accreditation



ECS has obtained VAC (VMware Authorized Consultant) certification, the highest level of certification for VMware virtualisation

solutions. This prestigious accreditation was awarded to ECS in France and Italy in 2008 and will be extended to Germany and Spain in 2009. ECS will now be able to offer companies the benefit of its expertise in designing and implementing virtualisation projects with VMware technologies.

ECS increases its logistics and roll-out capabilities in Europe



Located near Paris, ECS' new 7300 m² Service Centre will enable the group to expand its service activity in France,

Benelux, Germany, Italy and Spain. The new logistics and technical service facility has a stock of over 20,000 spare parts to ensure business continuity for servers and desktops. The new premises will also be able to handle major imaging, integration and roll-out projects for up to 1000 workstations a day, and refurbish equipment collected at the end of leases with a view to reselling it on the second-hand market.