

## MailSite adds spam filters

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**W**indows mail server specialist Rockliffe shipped version 6 of its MailSite tool last week. The update adds anti-spam features that use a variety of techniques to dramatically reduce the number of spam messages that are accepted by the mail server.

Research by *IT Week* Labs indicates that about 90 percent of messages received by mail servers could be spam. This figure is based on observing traffic through the *IT Week* Labs mail server.

MailSite combines several filtering techniques to reduce spam. Some, such as the Bayesian filter, operate by calculating the probability that a message is spam based on the words or phrases within the message. However, statistical techniques occasionally generate false positives, where a genuine message is mistaken for spam. To reduce the number of false positives, MailSite overrides its filters with lists of good and bad addresses. In

particular, it rejects mail sent from servers that are known to send spam, and accepts mail from those known not to send spam. Rockliffe claims this combination is 98 percent effective.

Resource utilisation and staff workload are two important issues affecting mail systems. With up to 90 percent of messages being spam, firms could find their WAN links to the internet are bogged down by junk email and the associated delivery-failure reports. However, anti-spam technologies that place an extra administrative burden on IT staff may be too expensive for some firms to operate. Much of MailSite's anti-spam technology is maintained by third parties or end-users.

For example, end-users create and maintain their own lists of good senders. MailSite's Bayesian filter is developed and maintained by ActiveState, an independent specialist filtering supplier. ActiveState maintains and updates the Bayesian database that is used to identify spam. The database

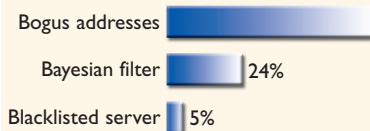
is sent to Rockliffe, which redistributes it to customers every 15 minutes.

Observers say interest in MailSite has increased recently because of the difficulty of upgrading servers that are currently running Microsoft Exchange 5.5 to newer versions of the messaging and groupware suite. According to Microsoft, mainstream support for Exchange 5.5 is due to end in December and extended support for the product will finish by 2006.

Upgrading to Exchange 2000 or Exchange 2003 is a particularly complex upgrade because it requires firms to implement Microsoft Active Directory. According to Microsoft, 55 percent of firms using Exchange are still running version 5.5.

### SPOTTING SPAM

Why messages are dropped by spam filters



Source: *IT Week* Labs