Online Internet Security from Netintelligence

Enforcing security policies to users of the corporate network mostly is simple enough, but once the user moves outside of these boundaries, those polices can be very difficult to control. Netintelligence specialises in enforcing end-point security, and its latest offering, Online Internet Security (OIS), aims to provide a simple solution for managing and monitoring user activity, no matter where they are.

OIS is offered as a hosted service, and each managed system requires a small client to be installed. This communicates with the online service, allowing security policies to be easily deployed with the minimum of administrative overheads. Policies can contain a wide range of criteria and allow you to implement functions such as web content filtering, IM, newsgroup and P2P blocking, plus, access restrictions to systems during specific time periods. The service also provides full anti-virus and firewall facilities, which are implemented locally on each client system.

OIS couldn't be easier to use, as you access your dedicated area on the Netintelligence website and download a deployment utility. This is installed on a Windows server within your domain, where it runs a quick scan of Active Directory and the network, and builds up a list of users, groups and available systems, along with basic details of the installed OS. You can then place selected systems in a queue to receive the client utility along with anti-virus components if also required. Once the client has been installed, it will keep a watch out for Internet access and as soon as this has been detected, it will contact the online service and download and apply, any new security policies.

The beauty of this system is that users can be managed and monitored regardless of their location, and even when they aren't connected to the LAN or Internet. Achieved through the installed client and running in the background, polices are equally enforced off line, applications monitored and, the activity log updated when re-connection occurs.

The administrative web interface is very easy to use and you can see at a glance which systems have had the client or anti-virus and firewall components deployed, along with those that are still waiting. Users can be placed into groups for easier management and multiple policies can be applied to the same group, allowing administrators to create a security profile tailored to individual business requirements.

For content filtering policies, you can currently pick from around sixteen categories and block, allow or white list them. All client web requests are passed back to a hosted content database for processing, before access to a URL is permitted. The anti-virus and firewall components come courtesy of Kaspersky, with the former also providing protection against spy-ware as well. Once downloaded, it runs a real-time virus scanner and offers a simple interface where users can run 'on-demand' scans on selected drives. Updates are completely automated as the software down loads any new signatures at predefined intervals.

The reporting facilities are the icing on the cake as the client downloads logs of all local web and application related activity to the command centre, which presents it all to administrators from within the web interface. You can view graphs and charts of general activity and application usage, see which websites have been visited and, identify those users attempting to access blocked sites. Detailed user activity reports can be easily created, and these can also include basic information about each system's hardware, plus installed software and detected configuration changes.

Hosted services are becoming a very popular way of providing a range of IT facilities to businesses and it's easy to see why. The Online Internet Security service is a prime example, as it allows security policies to be easily deployed to end users and provides very detailed reporting tools, taking away most of the burden of support and administration. **NC**

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