

Full Control of Webmail and Instant Messaging (IM)

Webmail & IM: An Open Backdoor

In the past few years, webmail applications such as Gmail and Yahoo! Mail have become nearly universal. In addition, instant messaging (IM) products such as Yahoo! Messenger, AIM (AOL), Google Talk, and ICQ have gained tremendous popularity. Most of these tools are easily accessible as long as a browser is available and are widely used by small and large organizations. In most cases, there is no security, there is no control, and there is no policy about the use of these tools. They amount to an open backdoor to a corporate network, creating a liability and security risk.

Most organizations have standardized on corporate emails—Microsoft Exchange Server/Outlook or Lotus Domino Server/Notes—and have already deployed email gateways that inspect inbound and outbound email against security threats, spam, or data leaks. These email gateways monitor SMTP protocols. Since web mail uses the HTTP protocol, it goes unmonitored, creating a backdoor. Unlike SMTP email, web mail requires fast response time. Products designed to inspect SMTP emails introduce unacceptable latency with web mail.

Instant messaging applications are also an effective tool for real-time, quick communication. They have evolved from requiring an external client (AOL Instant Messenger, MSN Messenger), to simply needing a browser (AIM Express). Recently IM has become embedded in Webmail (Google Talk) and social networks (Facebook).

Webmail and IM are attractive and easy targets for viruses and malware, can create data leakage through file transfers, and can be a corporate liability.



Employees report benefiting from faster decisions, higher productivity and lower telecommunications costs when they use IM. However, organizations must plan for and build a strategy for IM management and security



- Peter Firstbrook, Gartner

Solutions

Current Solutions Traditional URL filtering vendors advocate blocking the URLs required to access Webmail or IM applications. This is not popular with end-users and is often counter productive. Many times, there are business reasons to access Webmail; many road warriors cannot connect to mail servers but they can easily communicate via Webmail. Peter Firstbrook, a Gartner analyst and authority on web communication, notes, “Employees report benefiting from faster decisions, higher productivity, and lower telecommunications costs when they use IM.” Thus progressive organizations do not aim to block Webmail and IM access altogether, nor do they provide unrestricted access.

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Zscaler: Provide the Right Access to the Right Person

The solution is the right level of access to the right person.

Zscaler offers a policy - based solution whereby organizations can manage all aspects of Webmail and IM use.

- **Who:** Apply unique, customized policies to groups or to individual users.
- **What Webmail or IM applications:** Tailor policies based on application; an organization may choose to allow Gmail, but prohibit Yahoo! Mail.
- **What actions:** Policies that allow users to read and compose emails, but block file attachments, which can lead to data leakage. Similarly, since there is little business use for IM file transfers, allow chat but prevent file transfers.
- **When:** Allow access based on time; for example, Webmail/IM may be prohibited except during lunch hours.
- **Where:** Customize policies by location or internet gateway; what applies to an organization's San Francisco office may not be appropriate for its Singapore office.
- **How Much:** Finally, Webmail and IM can be managed based on volume or time quota. Policies can limit Webmail or IM by a time quota; for example, limit Webmail or IM use to 1 hour or 50Mbs of traffic per day.

Real-time Reporting

Zscaler provides both broad summaries and detailed reports of Webmail and IM use to provide businesses a full understanding of Web-based communication. Information provided includes:

- Top Webmail or IM applications in use in your organization
- A comparative trend of the use of top Webmail or IM applications
- Webmail or IM use by your organization compared to that of your Industry Peers
- Analysis of the top Webmail or IM Activities (Views, File Attachments, Requests Denied)
- Location-based or Department-based Analysis
- Extensive drill-down capabilities

Top Webmails: Comparative Trend

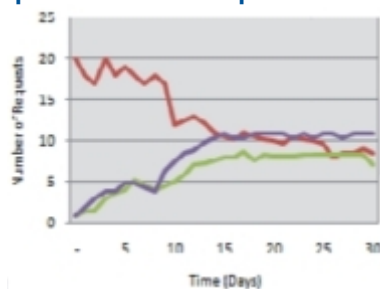


Figure 1: How has the use of Webmail and IM changed over time?

Top Activities : All Social Sites

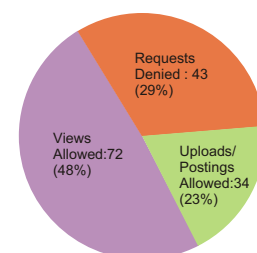


Figure 2: How many Webmail are used to send file attachments? How many IM are used for file transfer?

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