Email Security Concerns in Enterprise Today

Email is probably considered the most important method for communications both inside and outside the enterprise. It allows employees to share information, companies to work easily with partners across the globe and provides the means for companies and their customers to stay in touch. But the convenience and ubiquity of email as a business communications tool has exposed businesses to a wide variety of new risks associated with outbound email.

Securing and monitoring the information that leaves a corporate communications network has become as important as managing and defending the inbound email stream. Plus the growing popularity of new electronic communication channels (such as webmail, blogs, media sharing sites and instant messaging) pose new sources of risk for IT security professionals and the organizations they serve. Without control over the information entering and leaving corporate email networks, companies risk legal liability, regulatory violations and penalties, competitive threats and possible loss of proprietary information.

Just how concerned today are companies about the content of email leaving their networks and how do they manage the legal and financial risks associated with outbound email?

In its fifth-annual study of outbound email and content security issues, Proofpoint, Inc., a messaging security solutions provider, found that large enterprises continue to incur risk from — and take actions against — information leaks over outbound email as well as newer communications media such as blogs, message boards, media sharing sites and mobile devices. It recently conducted a survey, in conjunction with Forrester Consulting, which includes input from senior IT staff at more than 300 large U.S. corporations with more than 1,000 employees.

According to the study, outbound email remains the greatest source of risk for U.S. enterprises with a record 44% of surveyed companies reporting they investigated an email leak of confidential information in the past 12 months. 41% of the largest companies surveyed (with 20,000 more employees) reported that they employ staff to read or otherwise analyze the content of outbound email. 26% of companies terminated an employee for violating email policies in the past 12 months.

I guess this is just indicative of the times we live in; however, I found most of these statistics very unsettling. The thought that occurred to me as I read these survey results was that in order to compete successfully in today's global market, it requires a great deal of time, innovative thinking, persistence and superior skills. The fact that companies need to allocate dedicated people and time in order to monitor an employee's outgoing email, scan blogs, message boards and media sharing sites, takes away from time that could be much better spent on more worthwhile endeavors.

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