

ASK

THE INVISIBLE
 TECHNICIAN™



Q: What's the best way to contact the Help Desk for timely service?

A: The fastest way to get technical help is to call our Help Desk. We have live answer between 7am and 6pm EST, Monday to Friday, and a guaranteed response time of 15 minutes. After hours a voicemail will generate a page alert to the on-call technician, who can call you back right away. Your second option is to send email to support@itdepartment.com. Email sent after hours does not generate a page alert and will be addressed on the next business day.

Business & Technology Trends

Available Online at:
www.itdepartment.com/news

Technology & Business Article Links:

[Separating the Forest & the Trees](#)

Useful paradigms for IT decision-making.

[Need for Hot-Spots Cooling](#)

Notebooks now incorporating cell technology to increase range of accessibility outside hot-spots.

[Linking IT and Business Priorities](#)

Using technology to drive core competencies.

[Software Piracy: Not Knowing What You Have Can Cost You.](#)

Five Ontario SMB's busted for illegal copies of software in use. Inadequate asset tracking can leave you vulnerable.

Is SPAM getting out of hand?

Over the past few months, many of our clients have experienced a sharp rise in the amount of SPAM getting through to their inboxes, and increasing difficulty effectively white-listing to prevent false-positives. What has been going on? The fact is that SPAM has been a generally worsening problem everyone experiences. Think of it like an arms race: spammers get more sophisticated, anti-SPAM software companies have to keep up or get ahead, and customers experience the gaps. THE IT DEPARTMENT® recent migration of all our customers to a new anti-SPAM solution was the result of an extensive comparative study of SPAM solutions available. See the article on page 2 for more.

News Corner: ITD Supports Centre for Homeless

At THE IT DEPARTMENT®, standing behind organizations making significant contributions to our community is very important to us. This spring, we had the pleasure of accepting a contract to update and stabilize the computer network used to manage a homeless shelter. Critical client data was at risk because so much of the network equipment was unreliable. Our new client, the Ottawa Booth Centre run by the Salvation Army found that engaging our support service available 24/7 would cost much less than maintaining support in-house, and would also help them afford much needed upgrades. At The Salvation Army, improvements in operational efficiency mean that homeless men have better access to needed help and services. We are privileged to work with The Salvation Army, a Christian not-for-profit organization with an incredible history in Canada and in Ottawa, reaching out to those in need. To find out more about them or donate to their work, go to www.salvationarmy.ca

The IT Department® Becomes HP Reseller

THE IT DEPARTMENT® is pleased to announce our recent acceptance as a value-added reseller for HP equipment. The addition of HP to our list of partner suppliers gives us better access to the HP brand, known for quality product and customer service.

Business Partner



Anti-SPAM Solutions Evaluation Summary

SPAM has been increasing recently as techniques used by senders seem to have become much more sophisticated. Unfortunately, there is no magic bullet and this is a hugely frustrating issue for the entire IT industry - in fact for the entire economy. At least 2/3 of all Email on the Internet is SPAM constituting a massive waste of resources.

As part of our pledge that "We make IT work and keep it working."TM, THE IT DEPARTMENT® provides our clients with an anti-SPAM and anti-virus solution that works with their Microsoft Exchange Email server. This is contracted on a subscription basis since such products must receive regular updates. (Desktop McAfee anti-virus is separate, equally important software which is not part of this discussion about Anti-SPAM software.)

We recently re-evaluated the market-leading anti-SPAM software. All vendors evaluated had to integrate into Exchange, and evaluation was based on the following criteria:

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| 1. Vendor reputation | 6. Industry reports, end-user and administrator surveys |
| 2. Number of false-positives over a 2-week period | 7. Number of untagged SPAM messages received |
| 3. Ability of users to whitelist & check what trapped | 8. Level of management required |
| 4. Technology used and strategy to remain effective | 9. Reporting |
| 5. Ease of Use | |

In summary, these criteria described current effectiveness and expectation of ongoing future effectiveness. Using these criteria, a short-list was developed which included Sybari Manager, Sybari Defense, GFI MailEssentials, Symantec and Trend Micro.

Vendors scored 1 point out of a total of 15 for each of the following 15 layers of filtering: real-time blacklists, blacklisting, whitelisting, automatic white listing, keyword filtering, content filtering, header filtering, Phishing detection, Bayesian detection, SPAM URL detection, directory harvesting protection, sender policy framework detection, database message comparison, human monitoring element and proprietary SPAM detection. Resulting scores were: GFI 13, Trend Micro 10, Sybari Manager 5, Symantec 5, Sybari Defense 3.

Ten of these criteria were also designated as key indicators of the 'future-proof' level of each product. Again, 1 point per criterion was awarded to each vendor, for a total of 10 points available. Resulting scores were: GFI 9, Trend Micro 5, Symantec 2, Sybari Defense 2 and Sybari Manager 1.

GFI MailEssentials led in almost every category evaluated, scoring highest overall. A more detailed report is available to our customers on request. The IT Department® is now recommending GFI and has deployed GFI both at our own offices, and at customer sites. Some possible explanations for the rankings could include the relative lack of flexibility of larger organizations for responding quickly enough to new spammer techniques.

Software Licensing and Standardisation: Why fix it if it works?

You don't have money to waste when you're an SMB or a non-profit organization. So, why not make use of what you have available, before spending more money on equipment or software? Equating IT spending directly with expenses like office supplies is a mistake because it leads to decisions which can run counter-productive to your main business objective in the long run. The old adage 'a stitch in time' applies.

One of the most common small business IT mistakes is to try and cut corners on your IT network by putting together a hodge-podge of equipment and software versions, and making maximum use of software purchased. The reasons are understandable. After all, what's wrong with installing software you paid good money for, on computers you use?

Some benefits for SMB's of taking a standardized approach to network architecture include lowered management and maintenance costs which translates into less downtime and significant improvements in productivity. Non-standard environments are simply more prone to hardware crashes, non-optimal backup practices, and infection by malware. Some equipment and software is just not designed for the sheer volume of malware working environments are exposed to daily. Outdated or 'borrowed' software (unsupported) is not only similarly vulnerable, but can also lead to steep fines. Moreover, your service provider cannot support it because they cannot be responsible for issues caused by use of non-legal software, even though they may have been contracted to provide a certain level of service and protection to your network.

Even if the prospect of a fine seems remote, the savings to your workflow efficiency and support costs for keeping a standardized, recently updated and fully legal network are significant.