False Positives Limit Spam-Filter Use

`http://EmailUniverse.com/list-news/?id=931`

PALO ALTO, Calif. -- The prospect of missing important email is the main reason organizations do not use commercial filters to reduce junk email, according to a new survey by the Radicati Group, a technology research and consulting firm.

The survey found 48 percent of users had up to five instances of "false positives," or email messages that had been wrongly blocked as junk email in a month. Although 22 percent of respondents had never had email blocked, the average was 4 false positives a month, and 30 percent had five or more.

The global survey also found 55 percent of companies did not use junk-mail filters on their email systems because they feared they would miss important information, and 75 percent said a filter system's false-positive rate more important than price or total junk-email reduction.

Most respondents -- 65 percent -- said they spent up to five minutes a day looking for false positives, while 12 percent spent 10 minutes or more daily. Also, 66 percent said they "regularly" checked their junk-email folders for false positives, but 34 percent did not.

In its report, "False Positives -- The Achilles Heel of Anti-Spam Products," the Radicati Group said vendors need to develop more advanced anti-spam filters that better distinguish between wanted and unwanted email and must help their users adjust or customize their products in order to reduce the number of false positives.

The report also recommended that companies use several methods to combat unwanted email, train users to search for false positives and consider using email systems that use confirmation to make sure messages get delivered.

For more on the Radicati Group's survey, visit the company Web site.