

MICROSOFT

Certified Professional Magazine

EDITORS' CHOICE PRODUCTS WE LOVE

WE ASKED A GOODLY NUMBER OF OUR CONTRIBUTING editors and expert reviewers to name the products they can't live without, the products they dream about at night, the ones that cause a Pavlovian drool reflex when they think about them awake. Remember, it's not "Products We Like," or "Products That Get the Job Done Acceptably." Besides being a boring headline, those products simply don't cut the mustard. "Good enough" products just aren't good enough for this compendium.

Of course, as in all matters of love, you don't always get what you want. Sometimes, you get what you need. Therefore, in the interest of playing the field, we also offer alternatives that we'd be perfectly happy to work with. They too deserve your admiration, respect and consideration.

Try any of these 22 products on your Windows network, and you just might fall in love, too.

BY DAVID W. TSCHANZ

When I first opened the package with GFI MailEssentials for Exchange/SMTP 7, I wasn't sure what to expect. Based on evaluation of a predecessor, I knew GFI had crafted an excellent product. Sometimes, though, the newer version isn't as elegant as the previous and makes you long for the good-old days. Hence it was with a considerable sense of trepidation that I slid the CD from GFI into the tray and let the product unfold.

MailEssentials acts like an e-mail firewall. Key features include anti-spam, e-mail archiving, disclaimers, personalized auto-responders and POP3 downloading. All of this is transparent to the user, requires no training for users and little, if any, additional administration beyond initial set-up. MailEssentials, when packaged with GFI MailSecurity, scans all inbound and outbound mail. Attachments with a high likelihood of carrying a virus, worm or other nasty tidbit (.exe, .vbs) can be quarantined and assessed.

When it comes to defeating spam, GFI MailEssentials takes a server-based, rather than client-based, approach. A server-based anti-spam product installs at the gateway and eliminates the deployment and administration hassle of desktop-based anti-spam products.

Spam is addressed at the server level by intercepting an incorrect "Reply To" address or a message header containing an incorrect domain. There are also the expected options of refusing mails from domains and deleting mails with certain strings in the body.



WINNER

EXCHANGE ANTI-VIRUS
GFI MailEssentials/MailSecurity for Exchange/SMTP 7

GFI MailEssentials:
From \$225 for 10 mailboxes; GFI MailSecurity: From \$295 for 10 mailboxes.
GFI Software USA,
919-388-3373,
www.gfi.com

Content checking and anti-virus features are now found in the separate GFI MailSecurity for Exchange/SMTP tool, an e-mail-content checking, exploit-detection, threats-analysis and anti-virus solution that removes all types of e-mail-borne threats before they can affect your users. MailSecurity is available in a bundle with MailEssentials or as a separate product. I view it as a subset of MailEssentials, which—while not totally correct—is more logical.

GFI MailSecurity is available as an SMTP gateway version and for VS API. The gateway version scans inbound and outbound mail and should be deployed at the perimeter of the network as a mail-relay server. The VS API version integrates seamlessly with Exchange Server 2000 and scans the Exchange 2000 information stores.

I threw all of the test viruses I had on my test network against the product. And then I tossed in a few wild ones lying around in undeleted e-mail from my ISP. GFI MailEssentials/MailSecurity grabbed them, quarantined them and sent messages to the administrator, sender and receiver (which I had configured it to do) that something was amiss.

The messages were straightforward, and I think it ate the viruses as well, as I never figured out what it did with the scripts it banished.

GFI MailEssentials/MailSecurity does what it was designed to do—identify, hunt and kill anything that looks like a threat to e-mail security with the quiet relentlessness and thoroughness of a white blood cell gobbling an intruder in your bloodstream. And that's why, a year later, it's still my favorite.

But one can't really address the area of anti-virus without mentioning McAfee and paying tribute to a product, in fact an entire line of products, that's been providing consistent high quality for years.

McAfee's GroupShield is exactly what you'd expect it to be—a solid, reliable product robust enough to assure that it won't let you down as long as you remember to maintain it. If it's lacking in other bells and whistles such as content-checking, anti-spamming and the like, it's by design. This is an anti-virus defense product and that's all it claims to be.

David W. Tschanz, MCSE, MCP+I, i-Net+, is an American who has lived in Saudi Arabia for 12 years. David can be reached at deser-twriter1121@yahoo.com.