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INTERNET MONITORING SOFTWARE

Internet provision continues to spread and monitoring what staff are using it for is becoming a major concern for many companies. To keep an eye on how employees use the internet, bosses are introducing web monitoring software to ensure it isn't being used improperly.

The creepily named WebSpy Analyzer is marketed as a product that will 'safeguard staff from legal action'. Leaving aside the issue of selling such software as a 'benefit' to employees, it provides a fairly intuitive approach to internet monitoring, producing reports based on various staff profiles.

Once you have installed WebSpy (it does not need to be on the server itself), it has to be configured to import logs generated by proxy servers operating between the LAN and the internet. Data imported from these logs provides information on how long users browse the internet, the sites they visit and how much data they download. You can visit listed sites to check content yourself, while running WebSpy's Sentinel in the background means all web and email content will be scanned, only alerting an administrator if a present violation occurs.

Reports from the program can be exported into Word, Excel or HTML format using a variety of templates and employing charts for quick visual information. We only used it on a small test network, but its main use will be in larger organisations where employees may more easily abuse internet access.

Verdict

WebSpy will not provide legal safeguards for a company against misuse of facilities by staff (as its makers point out). But as a convenient means of collecting information, WebSpy is a useful, if fairly expensive tool.

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