

Report Shows Third-Party Apps Are Security Weak Point

Vulnerabilities are the proverbial Achilles' heel of modern IT systems, and in the "Secunia Yearly Report 2010," the security experts found that vulnerabilities in third-party applications are on the rise. Secunia found that last year, only 13% of vulnerabilities were in the OS, while 18% were in programs from Microsoft. The rest of the vulnerabilities were caused by third-party programs.

"The important message here is that cyber-criminals don't need Microsoft vulnerabilities to compromise your infrastructure, because they have more than enough opportunities in third-party programs," says Stefan Frei, research analyst director at Secunia.

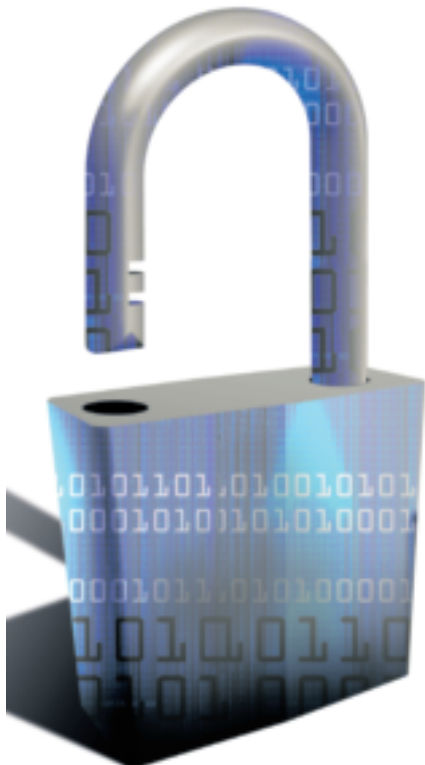
One of the key differences between Microsoft and third-party programs is Windows' built-in Automatic Update, which provides an easy way for people to patch problems. Overall, there were about four times more vulnerabilities in third-party programs than in Microsoft programs. Because most vulnerabilities can be remotely exploited, the threat is relevant for all types of organizations. "We examined the top 50 vulnerability endpoints and found that there were 26 programs from Microsoft and 24 from third-party vendors. The number of vulnerabilities in the top 50 portfolio increased almost fourfold in the last three years, which was an increase of 71% from 2009 to 2010," Frei says.

Bypass Security

The Secunia report also found that cyber-criminals don't necessarily need zero-day exploits to bypass security. "On a typical PC in the last two years, 66% of the vulnerabilities had a patch available on the day of disclosure, so there's a lot that patching your PC can do to block cybercriminals," Frei says. In terms of threats from third-party applications, Secunia found that the top 50 portfolio contained only 14 third-party vendors, and the report indicates that many programs do not provide update options that are easy to use or automatic. Even with applications that do provide such update options, users may not accept the update because they are either unaware of or overwhelmed by the complexity and frequency of what's needed to keep third-party apps secure.

"One of the keys is that your organization needs to know what is really installed on the infrastructure," Frei says.

by Nathan Lake



Easing Email Management

Exchange 2010 May Aid Management Woes

by Jean Thilmany

EMAIL MANAGEMENT REMAINS a complex undertaking for IT managers, with spam and email security among the biggest problems, according to Mimecast's recent Microsoft Exchange 2010 Infrastructure Survey. The survey indicates that IT managers want to be able to harness

Key Points

- Managing enterprise email use and needs remains a complex business.
- Email archiving is becoming a larger part of management concern.
- Many enterprises plan to upgrade to Microsoft Exchange 2010 within the next two years, but they must also look at upgraded management tools to see if they are compatible and meet needs.

the new features of Microsoft Exchange 2010 without introducing additional risk, cost, and complexity during the migration process.

To deal with spam and email security issues, 50% of respondents reported they had at least two solutions for email and

Microsoft Exchange address archiving, but not adequately.

In a financial services firm—where rules are in place about what kind of information a person can send via email—compliance officers need to be able to search all sent and received emails for terms and for trades. Email is archived according to strict compliance rules, Goerlich says.

Goerlich believes Exchange 2010 does a better job of making searches easier than past versions; however, he says the updated version does require more disk space for archival purses. "You can put archives on less expensive disks, but the way it's archived in 2010 requires more disk [space]," he says. "We're tracking this as we move from Exchange 2007 to 2010, and archiving costs end up being a wash."

Microsoft Exchange 2010 does allow for archiving emails directly from a user's mailbox. Goerlich's firm currently uses a third-party archiving system but is looking at Exchange 2010's archiving feature as the firm continues the move to the new program.

"We're looking at costs," he says. "We're looking at what's in [Microsoft Exchange] 2010 that would allow us to archive, but we're also looking at the cost of managing it and using disk space."

quotas to staff. And that can lead to a compliance catastrophe, says Alec Milton, managing director of product marketing at Oasys Ltd. Milton explains that employees are being assigned email quotas because managers are discovering Inboxes are getting too large. He says employees then delete important emails because someone is putting pressure on them.

For enterprises with compliance issues or that operate in sectors where potential litigation is always a risk, such as engineering, employees need pertinent documentation at their fingertips.

"Nowadays, that's all email rather than letters changing hands, and emails are in Inboxes of individuals that might no longer be with the firm," Milton says.

To reduce email management headaches, Goerlich recommends partnering with a company to perform the day-to-day management of an enterprise email system. The enterprise system remains on the premises, but the partnering company monitors it remotely. Goerlich's enterprise put such a partnership in place two years ago, and it found that the cost was less than hiring IT staff dedicated to email management and allows staff to undertake other responsibilities.

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20% said they had at least three, Orlando Scott-Cowley, Mimecast Internet and messaging security and compliance expert, wrote in a statement.

Nearly 68% of those surveyed plan to upgrade to Microsoft Exchange 2010 within the next two years and 51% plan to within a year, though slightly more than 25% of respondents said they didn't have enough IT resources to tackle the migration, Scott-Cowley says.

In With The Old

J. Wolfgang Goerlich, a network operations and security manager at a Midwest financial services firm, agrees that managing enterprise email needs is a more complex undertaking than ever. He says big issues include uptime and performance, which are more important than ever in an age when most enterprise employees rely on email to perform their jobs. But another management issue has been creeping to the fore of late.

"One thing we have to deliver now that we didn't have to deliver five or 10 years ago is the archiving," says Goerlich. He explains that updated versions of

A third-party archiving system can act as a defense against email downtime at the enterprise level, says Norman Graham, vice president of product development and support at ArcMail (arcmail.com), which develops archiving systems. These systems reduce the load on the email server and allow access to email when the email server is down. They also can be used to restore the server when it's operational again, he says.

It's important to note that business email risk includes more than just the risk of enterprise system downtime. It also includes local risks that affect individual employees, such as the loss of access to emails deleted accidentally or to emails stored at the desktop level when that system crashes.

Easy Archives

Lack of disk space is indeed a problem encountered by email managers at nearly all enterprises. Today's enterprise email users are demanding the unlimited storage space they're used to with their Web-based email accounts, Goerlich adds.

Because enterprise email disk space is finite, many email managers assign storage

like [Microsoft] Exchange, but now it's spent delivering reports to executive management for business intelligence," Goerlich says.

And in this age of email management complexity, anything that simplifies email management is greeted enthusiastically, he adds. ■

Mobile Mail

When considering email management options for your enterprise, Bob Leibholz, senior vice president of sales and business development at Intermedia, says you need to remember to include the mobile devices your employees are using. "People don't work on desktop[s] or laptop[s] anymore," he says.

Leibholz explains that Microsoft Exchange can be implemented to manage the emails for these mobile users. So when users log into their email accounts remotely, Enterprise can manage those emails, as well as email the user accesses using his desktop computer.