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Easybits Software AS, Magic Desktop 2.0

Magic Desktop from EasyBits Software AS provides a special protected environment for young children. The environment provides "light" applications, custom-built specifically for children, for web surfing and email, but also e.g. Easy Write, Easy Paint and games.

Its support of platforms and languages is summarised in the table below:

Type	Client	Server	Service						
Platforms	Win95	Win98	WinME	Win2k	Win03	WinNT	WinXP	Linux	MacOS
Protocols / Applications	browser	instant msg	chat	e-mail	news	file transfer	peer2peer	VoIP	Stream
Languages User Interface	Czech	Danish	Dutch	English	Estonian	Finnish	French		
	German	Greek	Hungarian	Italian	Latvian	Lithuanian	Maltese		
	Polish	Portuguese	Slovak	Slovenian	Spanish	Swedish			
Languages Filtering Criteria	Czech	Danish	Dutch	English	Estonian	Finnish	French		
	German	Greek	Hungarian	Italian	Latvian	Lithuanian	Maltese		
	Polish	Portuguese	Slovak	Slovenian	Spanish	Swedish			

The feedback given by the User Reference Group is summarised as follows:

Test domain	Score	Actual score	Average all tools	Best tool
(Un)installing and updating the tool	●●○○	1,7	2,3	2,8
Tailoring and monitoring the filtering	●●○○	1,8	2,5	3,2

The scores of the Lab tests are summarised as follows:

Test domain	Score	Actual score	Average all tools	Best tool
Local language support	●●●●	4,0	2,6	4,0
Effectiveness for kids	●●●●	4,0	2,0	4,0
Effectiveness for adolescents	●○○○	1,0	1,8	2,5
Effectiveness for kids (porn only)	●●●●	4,0	2,6	4,0
Effectiveness for adolescents (porn only)	●○○○	1,0	2,5	4,0
Speed of filtering	●●●●	4,0	3,2	4,0
Security Integrity	●●●●	4,0	2,7	4,0
Legal Compliance	●●●○	3,0	2,4	3,5

1. Configurability

The installation worked well, and it is possible to define several users, each with their own profile. The configuration menus are clear. The application provides functionality to keep children in the protected environment, and web filtering uses white lists, that need to be configured by the parents. The tool is mostly appropriate for very young children, as sites need to be white-listed before they can be accessed.

2. Usability

The user interface is easy and colourful. Options are well explained in the menus, so there should not be a need to use the online help, which provides a guided tour and additional explanations.

It is easy to change the administration user interface between languages. Even though this may not be required in many households, it is a nice option for multi-lingual families. However, the change in language does not change the names of the programs. So also e.g. Danish and French kids have an application called "Easy Write", i.e. in English, not translated to the local language. The Magic Desktop is designed to be used with a mouse. The admin menus can also be used without the mouse.

3. Filtering Algorithm & Effectiveness

The scores of the Lab tests for the individual effectiveness tests are:

Content Type	Score
Web ICRA filtering	N/A
Instant Messaging	N/A
Chat	N/A
Email	N/A
Newsgroup	N/A
File Transfer Protocol	N/A
Voice over IP	N/A
Streaming media	N/A
Peer-to-peer	N/A

Web URL Filtering has been scored 3 because it is only using a white list mechanism, which is different as all other tools.

Web filtering: URL based filtering

The websites that are available in Magic Desktop are predefined. New websites can be imported by child carers, but imported websites are not filtered or blocked when containing objectionable content. Child carers can also maintain a list of blocked and denied websites.

Web filtering: Content filtering

The websites that are available in Magic Desktop are predefined. New websites can be imported by child carers, but imported websites are not filtered or blocked when containing objectionable content. However, if the important site contains a link to a new page, this page is not accessible until the child carer has approved access.

Instant messaging MSN

The Magic Desktop does not provide an instant messaging application. Therefore, it is not possible to use instant messaging from within the Magic Desktop.

Chat IRC filtering

The Magic Desktop does not provide a chat application. Therefore, it is not possible to chat from within the Magic Desktop.

Email filtering

The Magic Desktop provides its own email application. Children can only receive emails from senders who have been added to the child's address book. Other emails are put in quarantine, and are only available after entering the child carer's password. This way, child carers can block emails from unknown senders. On the other hand, if those white-listed senders send harmful content, this content is not filtered or blocked.

Newsgroup filtering

The Magic Desktop does not provide a newsgroup application. Therefore, it is not possible to read newsgroup messages within the Magic Desktop.

File Transfer (FTP) filtering

The Magic Desktop does not provide a File Transfer application. Therefore, it is not possible to transfer files via FTP over the internet within the Magic Desktop.

File transfer via Internet Explorer is only possible if the file server is added to the white-list of safe sites.

Voice over IP, streaming media, peer-to-peer blocking

The Magic Desktop does not provide a Voice over IP application. Therefore, it is not possible to use VoIP from within the Magic Desktop.

The Magic Desktop does not specifically filter or block streaming media.

The Magic Desktop does not provide a peer-to-peer application. Therefore, it is not possible to use peer-to-peer from within the Magic Desktop.

4. Performance

The CPU and memory consumption tests were not performed on this system, since its filtering mechanism was causing technical issues to our testing method.

Based on the HTTP loading tests for this tool, it scored a 4, meaning that there was a very low impact in terms of delays and therefore was almost not noticeable.

5. Transparency

As the Magic Desktop uses a special interface, the kids are quite aware that they are in a different environment. As the Magic Desktop only allows surfing to the "white list" shown in the Magic Desktop bookmarks, there is no need for blocking or logging other sites.

6. Security Integrity

Network tests

The network security tests performed did not identify security issues caused by the tool.

Local tests

The local security tests performed did not identify significant security issues.

7. Legal Compliance

The website communicates in clear-cut and simple language information about the vendor, the product's functionalities and its generic IP (Intellectual Property) policy. Terms and conditions are drafted in a legally acceptable language. The privacy statement is very brief due to the fact that the vendor denies collecting or processing any personally identifiable information.