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LookSmart Ltd., NetNanny 5.1

NetNanny provides web filtering for web surfing and instant messaging. Furthermore, chat and email can be blocked.

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	●●○○	2,5	2,3	2,8
Tailoring and monitoring the filtering	●●○○	2,3	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	●●○○	2,0	2,6	4,0
Effectiveness for kids	●●●○	2,5	2,0	4,0
Effectiveness for adolescents	●●○○	2,0	1,8	2,5
Effectiveness for kids (porn only)	●●●○	2,5	2,6	4,0
Effectiveness for adolescents (porn only)	●●●○	2,5	2,5	4,0
Speed of filtering	●●○○	2,0	3,2	4,0
Security Integrity	●●●○	3,0	2,7	4,0
Legal Compliance	●●●○	3,0	2,4	3,5

1. Configurability

NetNanny contains a useful default policy that can be fine-tuned to the user's specific wishes. Child carers can also choose to use the ICRA or SafeSurf ratings to filter content.

The child carer can create new user profiles. Group profiles have not been foreseen, so the settings have to be maintained for each user.

The tool can be updated both manually and automatically.

2. Usability

The user interface is quite easy to understand and provides mostly clear options for the users. We did experience that some options require several adjustments in several different settings to achieve a certain desired functionality. For example, to block websites with harmful content, it is not sufficient to set the level of blocking on "block all but family-friendly websites", but we also needed to go to the "activity consequences" settings, choose "websites" from the list of blockable applications and check the "block access" button.

The user interface is available in English and Spanish. It is possible but rather difficult to control the application with only a keyboard.

Help information is easily accessible.

3. Filtering Algorithm & Effectiveness

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

Content Type	Score
Web ICRA filtering	4
Instant Messaging	2
Chat	1
Email	Disable
Newsgroup	* (cfr. below)
File Transfer Protocol	N/A
Voice over IP	N/A
Streaming media	N/A
Peer-to-peer	N/A

Web filtering: URL based filtering

NetNanny provides a permitted and a restricted list of websites that can or can not be accessed. The child carer can also make up his/her own lists.

Based on the tests performed, we noted significant underblocking. On the other hand, there is almost no overblocking.

Web filtering: Content filtering

NetNanny provides a list of words that can be filtered out of websites. The child carer can add or remove words from this list. The Child carer can choose between blocking websites and allowing them but with objectionable words being masked.

Based on the tests performed, there is significant underblocking. On the other hand, there is almost no overblocking. NetNanny does support filtering based on ICRA.

Instant messaging MSN

NetNanny provides the option of filtering harmful content. Words defined by NetNanny as objectionable are replaced by hash (“#”) signs. However, in the tests we performed, the filtering did not appear very accurate, as e.g. one of the objectionable words tested was filtered only 3 out of the 19 times it appeared.

Chat IRC filtering

NetNanny provides the option to block all chat rooms or permit only a selected list of chat rooms. When activated, connection with the IRC server is denied.

NetNanny also provides the ability to filter the content of IRC chat messages. In the tests we performed, the filtering did work. However, we noted that significant underblocking.

Email filtering

When trying to download email messages with objectionable content, NetNanny blocked the request and disconnected from the POP3 server when the first objectionable email was detected. During the next connection to receive emails, all emails (harmful and non harmful) were transmitted without filtering.

Newsgroup filtering

NetNanny provides the option to permit only news groups that have been enlisted in the NetNanny list. NetNanny should also filter objectionable words and sentences in news groups.

When trying to enter a restricted news group, both Thunderbird and Outlook Express crash. The same happens when trying to download all the messages: both applications crash.

File Transfer (FTP) filtering

NetNanny filters FTP text file transfers. When downloading with Internet Explorer, we noted that some words are replaced by hash (“#”) signs. Other files have been transferred as empty files. When using FTP.exe, the files were not filtered. Based on our tests performed, this filtering is ineffective.

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

NetNanny does not provide any option to block VoIP and streaming media traffic.

It provides the option to block file trading applications that have been enlisted in the NetNanny List. Although this option was active, we were able to install eMule+, connect to adult servers and look for files containing nudity. The search results were not filtered and we could download several files.

4. Performance

Based on the values observed during our tests, we determined that the memory consumption for the tool NetNanny is above the average of the other filtering tools tested. However, the results of

the tests on CPU usage were very close to those of the base system, thus demonstrating a low consumption of CPU resources.

Based on the HTTP loading tests for this tool, it scored a 2, meaning that there was a relevant delay that could be noticed by the user.

5. Transparency

When logging in, the user is not informed that Internet filtering, blocking or monitoring software is running.

When a website is blocked, the user gets a Looksmart NetNanny webpage with the message that the website is blocked. NetNanny does not mention the reason (content category) of the blocking. There is also no possibility to override the blocking by entering the child carer's password.

The tool logs violations (e.g. trying to access blocked websites) per user. The log contains the date, time, user, the reason for the violation and the website URL. There is also a table available with the totals per violation category (website, IM, IRC ...) per user. NetNanny also logs the date and time of an IRC chat session per user, mentioning the chat room, but not the whole content of the chat session.

Summarised and more detailed reports are available and easy to understand. The reports can be accessed remotely and users can be categorised in different groups based on these reports.

6. Security Integrity

Network tests

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

Local tests

It is possible to create several users (children) without a password. This reduces the safety of the filtering if several children with different settings use the same computer.

By using WGET instead of Internet Explorer or Firefox, we were able to download pages that should have been blocked.

7. Legal Compliance

Contrary to lawful contractual practices, the vendor's legal notice declines any representations or warranties of any kind whatsoever with respect to the service and/or the performance of products.

However, the privacy statement provides some good accurate and detailed legal information. The types of data retained through the use of the application are specified in a limited way. It is expressly stated that data are only retained on an aggregate basis. And users may "opt-out" from the collection and processing of certain information. Yet, certain improvements may be suggested, for instance regarding the users' protection when their data are disclosed by the vendor to third parties. Currently, the vendor denies any liability with respect to the collection and uses of such data by its business partners.