

PRESS RELEASE

Business draws a blank on Web 2.0

Clearswift research highlights patchy understanding of Web 2.0 benefits among businesses as well as potential threats to security

Results highlights:

- More than one third (35.4 per cent) of organisations don't monitor employees' use of the internet
- Almost half (48.3 per cent) of businesses don't know whether they've lost confidential information via social media outlets
- 19.1 per cent of IT and business decision-makers don't have a policy governing appropriate use of the internet, including social media sites
- 41.6 per cent of organisations discourage or forbid blogging while 46.7 per cent don't have a policy on it
- 40.8 per cent of IT and business decision-makers consider social media to be relevant to today's corporate environment, yet only 11.1 per cent are already making use of them from a business perspective
- A significant 14.6 per cent of organisations are not aware of social media and have no policy on it

London, UK – 16 April 2007 – *Despite being aware of the popularity of new Web 2.0 technologies, organisations have a limited understanding of their benefits or accompanying security threats, new research from content security specialists Clearswift has found.*

More than one third (35.4 per cent) of UK & US IT and business decision makers polled said their organisations did not monitor employees' use of the internet, suggesting companies are unaware of the potential threats – such as loss of company data – associated with employee use of social media such as MySpace, YouTube, Twitter and blogs. Almost half (48.3 per cent) of businesses surveyed did not know whether they had lost confidential information via social media outlets.

A significant number of organisations acknowledged the potential business benefits to be realised from Web 2.0 technologies (40.8 per cent consider social media to be relevant to today's corporate environment), however, they are failing to exploit them to gain competitive advantage with only 11.1 per cent currently making use of social media from business perspective. Fifteen per cent of organisations were not aware of social media and had no plans to use them to benefit their operations.

While the majority of IT and business decision-makers were generally aware that their employees were accessing Web 2.0 social media sites from the office (86 per cent) the research found that this

awareness was not always reflected in security precautions with 19.1 per cent of respondents admitting their organisation did not maintain a best practice policy for staff on Internet use.

“Clearswift’s research has highlighted some real gaps in understanding of implications of a Web 2.0 world among businesses,” Jon Lee, CEO, said.

“Given the length of time the internet has been a part of the corporate world, it is staggering that almost a fifth of organisations still do not have a policy in place to guide employees on appropriate and safe use of the web. Businesses must educate their employees and put guidelines in place if they are to avoid exposing themselves to the information risks associated with Web 2.0 technologies,” he said.

When asked to rate the importance of various IT security issues to their organisations, survey respondents said loss of confidential data was the second-most important (behind preventing virus/worm infections) and damage to company reputation was rated third. However, the possible vectors for these threats – security breaches via blogs, security breaches via forums and security breaches via Instant Messenger – were placed 17th (last), 16th and 15th in the survey respectively, in terms of priority.

More than one third (35.4 percent) of organisations did not monitor employees’ Internet use despite 23.3 per cent having the capabilities to do so.

“It’s clear that organisations don’t equate employee use of social media sites with potential security breaches which is a worrying sign. Recognizing the threat is the first and foremost priority, and it is clear that education measures still have some way to go,” Mr. Lee said.

“Earlier research has shown that employees, particularly younger employees, are using these Web 2.0 technologies heavily at work, and the risk for potential loss of confidential information via these sites is very real. Organisations need to reassess their security policies and precautions in light of the growing popularity and business use of Web 2.0 technologies to ensure they are remaining secure while maximizing the corporate benefits of the technology.”

The research, which polled IT and business decision makers in the UK and US, was conducted by Clearswift to further develop research released in March examining employees’ attitudes to social media. The original research examined users’ habits regarding usage of social media at work and the potential security threats associated with this. This second survey was conducted to explore any dichotomy between employees’ behaviour and their perceived behaviour by employers.

The original research found that more than a quarter of young British office workers were spending three or more hours a week when at work on ‘Web 2.0’ social networking sites such as YouTube, MySpace and blogs, with a massive 42 per cent of young office workers discussing work-related issues on those sites. The research illustrated how widely used so-called ‘Web 2.0’ social communication has become for chatting about work among workers aged 18-29, signalling the potential risk for leakage of confidential company or government information.

The survey highlighted the considerable amount of time today’s young office workers spent surfing social media sites from office PCs, with 39 per cent of office workers aged 18-29 admitting to accessing social media sites ‘several times a day’. Younger workers were more likely to take access to these sites for granted, with 59 per cent of office workers aged 18-29 believing that employees should be entitled to access this type of Internet content from their work computer for personal reasons – while 63 per cent of workers aged over 50 believing that there should be no such entitlement.

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