

Surveillance, Censorship or Common Sense

Limitation of Access to the Internet may seem like censorship and surveillance of the employee. But for the management it's primarily about increased productivity and cost reduction.

In Denmark, there is no tradition of censoring access to information but with the Internet, this picture may change in the years to come. For companies it's a big decision whether to start filtering what the employee has access to and it's seldom the technical part of the project, which gives them a headache.

The problem of filtering often raises questions about security, for both the management and employee. For the employee it may seem that the management does not trust the staff, and thoughts of George Orwell's Big Brother society are never far away. In schools it is probably different. Most parents probably would not object to their children not having access to all information available on the Internet.

For the management, it's all about securing the highest possible productivity, and by restricting access to some parts of the Internet; they can prevent loss of productivity due to "too much web surfing." Filtering may also help to decrease the traffic load on the Internet connection, which will also reduce the cost.

What to filter.

The Danish TV show Big Brother forced many companies to shut down access to TV-Denmark's website. From this site one could follow the residents of the Big Brother house 24 hours a day, and with a

high quality video stream the data transferred could be as much as 0.5 mbit/s. So even companies with large Internet bandwidths didn't need many curious employees, before having to close down access to TV-Denmark's site or otherwise they would have found their Internet access very slow or stopping altogether.

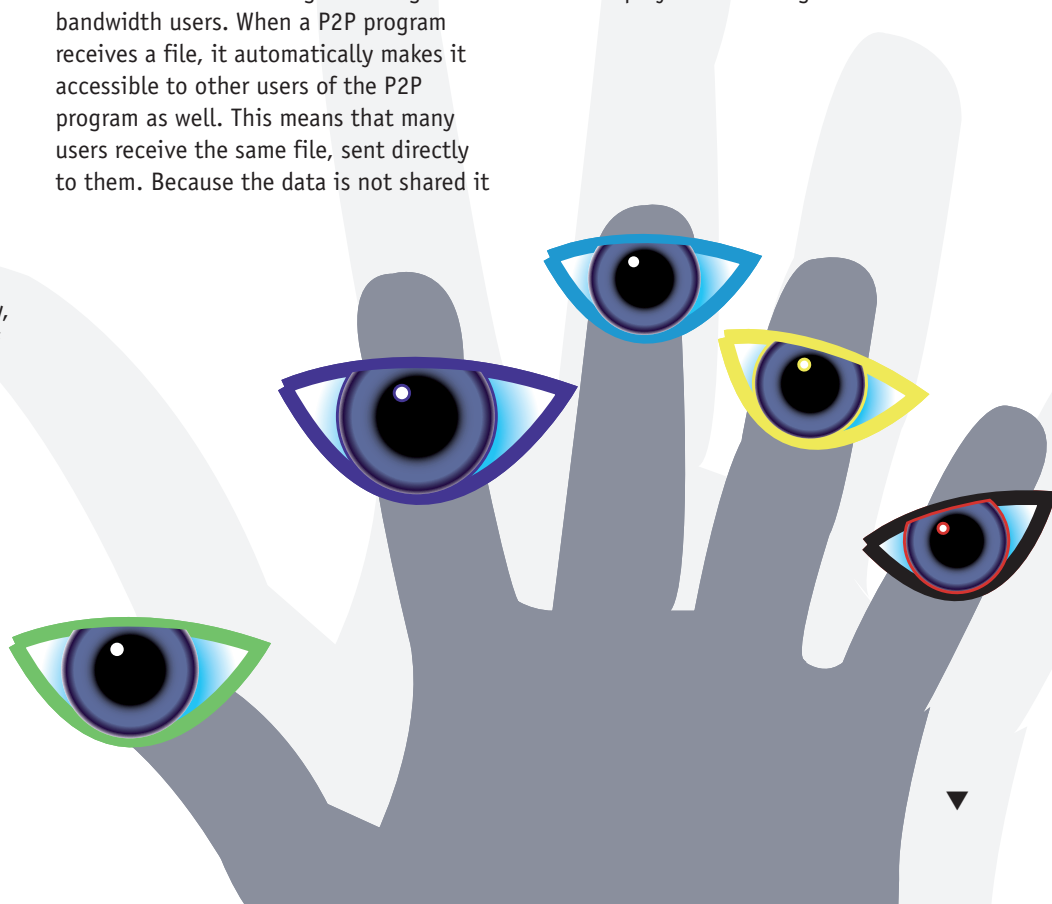
Another problem is file-sharing programs. Peer2Peer or P2P programs as they are also called are amongst the largest bandwidth users. When a P2P program receives a file, it automatically makes it accessible to other users of the P2P program as well. This means that many users receive the same file, sent directly to them. Because the data is not shared it

means that a huge amount of bandwidth is consumed.

One partial solution to this problem is to have a suitable software policy. Most employees understand that they should not install just any old software on their corporate workstation. But this should be clearly stipulated in a paragraph of the Corporate Software Policy. However, even that may not be enough. For example, are you allowed to download non-work related software in working hours (and burn them on a CD to take back home)?

It is sensible to make general rules, e.g. regarding the watching of streaming video. Is streaming video allowed or not? Perhaps only in the lunch hour, or at some other time.

Whether filtering or not, companies should have a clear Internet and Software Policy. It should be as specific as possible, to prevent confusion about the rules, for both employee and management.



Keep an eye on everything

ContentKeeper

Manufacturer: ContentKeeper Technologies
www.contentkeeper.com
Borrowed from: ISDS, www.isds.dk

With ContentKeeper the network administrator can monitor and control which places on the internet the users can visit, or to be specific which they are not allowed to visit. The "illegal" traffic will be filtered out before it reaches the PC's.

The filtering is carried out by a Linux-PC on which ContentKeeper is installed. The PC needs to be connected to the network and located between the PC's to be filtered and the Internet itself. It is independent of the operating system installed in the PCs that you wish to filter.

The PC hardware requirements are quite modest, and ContentKeeper can run without difficulty on a 700 MHz Pentium III with 256 Mb RAM and 3 network cards. Linux is included with the program, and the entire installation process can be accomplished within 15 minutes.

The filtering is carried out by ContentKeeper, which stays in contact with its datacentre, from where it collects the addresses of the newly discovered illegal websites. It is the same principal used by antivirus programs when getting new definitions files. Of course, you are not restricted to the set of rules and database of websites that ContentKeeper is supplied with.

You have the option to totally ignore these and build your own, or use a combination of the two.

As well as completely blocking websites, ContentKeeper can also be configured to issue a warning when you try to access to an "illegal" page. In this way you can tell the user: "You are allowed to access this website, but we will monitor you".

It is not only web addresses that can be filtered, but http-traffic in general. In this way you can filter traffic regardless of the type of web page, for example a chat channel, where certain key words or phrases will occur.

Files can also be filtered out. ContentKeeper looks at file extensions, before they reach the requesting PC and stops those that are not allowed. In this way you can for example allow a user to download zip files, but not mp3-music.

Policies can be created on both user- and group level, and you can filter on IP addresses, as well as for example giving some machines free access to surf anywhere on the Internet.

The configuration is controlled from an ordinary Web browser, by logging on to the ContentKeeper machine. From there you can control everything and even stop ContentKeeper or reboot the PC. The main menu is a bit crowded and it would be beneficial to move some of the lesser used items to a separate page. Having too many options only leads to confusion. Other than that it really works well, and you will soon become familiar with the many options available in the program.

When you purchase the program, you automatically get one year of software maintenance included (as well as the new

URL files) and it can turn out to be a really good investment. The manufacturer is very proactive at adding in new functionality and frequently releases new versions with additional features.

The log files, together with the graphical reporting tools give the administrator a complete and very straightforward view of what is happening on the network. ContentKeeper is an incredibly powerful tool, and its scored based on its functionality is four Globes out of five.

Is it too much "Big Brother"? That's up to the individual to decide – taking in consideration how ContentKeeper will be used. But the program does not provide any more information about a persons surfing habits than can be compiled from the firewalls log files. It just presents the data in a much less complicated way.

When boxes are ticked sites, and when boxes are not ticked sites in this category.

Remember to click on **Save and Redisplay** after making changes.

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Remember to click on **Save and Redisplay** after making changes.

Select **Day/Hour** to tick/untick all hours and days for each week.
 Select **01,02,03...(etc)** to tick/untick the same hour each day.
 Select **Monday,Tuesday...(etc)** to tick/untick the same day each week.
 The **Blue Tick Box** represents the current Day and Hour.
 Select **Save and Redisplay** to keep your settings.

ContentKeeper gives the option to allow access to some websites at certain times of day, e.g. during lunch break.

Vendor:



www.contentkeeper.com



PC WORLD | consider

ContentKeeper
 Filtering and supervising in a class by itself. Will undoubtedly be a very good idea in schools for protection of the children.

