● MESSAGE-SECURITY APPLIANCE

Clearswift MIMEsweeper SMTP Appliance CS500

PC PRO A LIST

EXCLUSIVE

PC PRO RECOMMENDED

Clearswift ensures a solid hardware basis for its appliances by using Dell PowerEdge rack servers.

PRICE £5,498 exc VAT

WARRANTY 1yr on-site NBD 4hr response

SUPPLIER Clearswift 0118 903 8700

INTERNET www.clearswift.com

VERDICT Clearswift's message-security appliances offer a comprehensive range of features and good management tools, with the CS500 ideally suited to smaller businesses.

When we last looked at Clearswift's message-security software, we felt that although MIMEsweeper for SMTP 5 (*see issue 124, p198*) was a powerful piece of software, it wasn't the easiest to use. Appliances are proving to be simpler to install and, seeing as most of its competitors are moving into this market, it would make sense for Clearswift to follow suit. And it does so with a complete family comprising four models. The entry-level CS500 on review is aimed at SMBs of up to 500 employees.

Clearswift scores highly with its choice of hardware – it's chosen Dell's rack servers as a foundation. The CS500 is based on a PowerEdge 750 1U rack model (*see issue 118, p166*). The appliance delivers Clearswift's own content filtering and SpamLogic anti-spam solution, and tops it off with Kaspersky's anti-virus scanner. A fundamental difference between Clearswift's MIMEsweeper for SMTP software and its appliances is that the former requires a Windows platform, whereas the latter uses a heavily customised Linux kernel, which also provides stateful packet inspection firewall protection.

Installation is indeed a lot easier than the software alternative. You can connect a PC directly to the appliance to access the browser-based Setup Wizard. As it functions as a proxy server, you can then slot it directly into the network. All you need to do next is point your internal mail server at the appliance to allow inbound and outbound mail to pass through it. For web browser management, Clearswift has worked hard on the interface, which is split up into different Centers for each function, making it very accessible. The appliance can start filtering straight away. A predefined active policy is created during the quick-start phase, but the Policy Center makes light work of creating new policies.

Filtering policies use a three-phase concept, employing combinations of content rules and routes. These tell the system what to look for, how the suspect message should be handled and who should be notified. Plenty of predefined content rules are provided, making it easy to create new policies. Rules must be associated with routes and these can be anything from all outbound or inbound messages right down to an individual user. Configuration is streamlined by the inclusion of predefined references for use in rules. These can include multiple quarantine areas defined for different rules and routes, lexical expressions, message annotations such as company disclaimers and lists of filenames to be detected. Unlike many other message-security products, Clearswift can scan inside message attachments such as Office documents and PDFs.

SpamLogic incorporates a barrage of tests, including Bayesian analysis with auto-learning, textual analysis, auto-white listing and reverse DNS lookups. Kaspersky gets tough with viruses, and the scanner also protects against spyware and phishing.

All suspect messages and attachments are placed in quarantine areas, accessed from the Message Center. Reporting is another impressive feature, as a raft of predefined reports is provided, which can be scheduled to run at regular intervals with output emailed to selected users.

With the CS500, Clearswift has delivered a complete message security solution that's easy to deploy, offers strong features and is all tied neatly together with a slick management interface.

DAVE MITCHELL

PC PRO RATINGS

PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
FEATURES & DESIGN	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★☆
OVERALL	★★★★☆

SPECIFICATIONS Dell PowerEdge 750 rack server; 2.8GHz Pentium 4; 2GB PC2100 SDRAM; Adaptec 39160 dual-channel Ultra160 SCSI PCUI card; 73.4GB Seagate Cheetah 10K Ultra320 hard disk; 2 x Intel Gigabit Ethernet; Linux kernel; SPI firewall; Clearswift MIMEsweeper content filtering and SpamLogic, Kaspersky anti-virus engine; web browser management.