Websense Seeks to Bolster Smart-Phone Security with URL Filter

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The company's URL filtering and classification software offers compliance and mobile security protection tools for wireless operators and service providers.

Websense is taking on mobile device security with new URL classification and filtering software designed to prevent users from accessing malicious or inappropriate Web content.

The Websense Wireless URL Categorization Engine collects URLs from Internet sites and classifies them. Depending on the content filters installed with the individual wireless service provider, access to certain Web sites can be allowed, blocked or permitted only after a "continue" option is presented to the subscriber. Wireless operators, or their subscribers, can set filtering policies for more than 90 categories of Web sites, ranging from adult content to spyware, Websense officials said.

"Web-enabled mobile devices are more powerful than ever before in terms of computing power and access to broadband connectivity, making them an easy target for security threats such as spyware and keyloggers," said Kian Saneii, Websense Wireless general manager, in an interview with eWEEK. "The security threats to enterprise networks are real - more than half of smart-phone users keep confidential business data on their devices."

Using Websense's ThreatSeeker technology, Web sites are scored and classified based on reputation and characteristics. These high-risk sites

are added to a threat "watch list," so operators can block access to those sites, helping to improve security coverage against external Web-based threats.

"The database of scanned Web sites is updated daily, often in real time, to mitigate security threats as they emerge," Saneii said.

Though the Websense Wireless URL Categorization Engine establishes the categories that determine whether a site will be blocked or allowed, the actual blocking policies are determined by individual network operators based on their own policies and government regulations, Saneii added.

"Websense Wireless has created very specific definitions for how Web sites are categorized. However, there are ways to change those categorization parameters, which will in turn affect whether a site is blocked or not," he said. "The actual process of changing those categories can be done automatically without requiring an IT - worker - ."

Wireless infrastructure providers and IP-based service providers can leverage the Websense Wireless URL Categorization Engine within their own technology offerings. This helps reduce management and deployment costs as compared to handset-based security offerings, Websense officials said.

The Websense Wireless URL Categorization Engine allows operators to deploy value-added services such as customized parental controls, premium content offerings for subscribers, enhanced wireless security identification offerings, and mobile advertising and marketing.

Protecting smart phones and other mobile devices from malware is going to become increasingly important to corporations as the number of

mobile devices used for business continues to grow, Saneii said.

"More than 80 percent of mobile devices lack security capabilities on par with typical enterprise security protection, according to Gartner," he said. "The business market is poised to play an increasingly important role in the U.S. wireless industry as total subscriber growth slows. With the consumer wireless market approaching saturation, service providers are turning to the business market and its attractively high voice average revenue per user and still early-stage adoption of data as primary growth drivers."