Internet Safety Technical Task Force
Technology Submission
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Accountability Software (Unfiltered Version)
http://www.covenanteyes.com

ABSTRACT

Covenant Eyes Accountability software provides complete accountability, including an easy-to-use record of all Internet activity in a Windows or Mac environment. Accountability Partners (including parents) are provided a report which uses age-based scoring to highlight those sites which are inappropriate. Age-based scoring is used to determine level of appropriateness. Emphasis is placed by developers on making the program as difficult as possible to circumvent.

Keywords

monitoring, accountability, reporting, parental controls

Functional Goals

Please indicate the functional goals of the submitted technology by checking the relevant box(es):

X☐X Limit harmful contact between adults and minors

X☐X Limit harmful contact between minors

X☐X Limit/prevent minors from accessing inappropriate content on the Internet

X☐X Limit/prevent minors from creating inappropriate content on the Internet

X☐X Limit the availability of illegal content on the Internet

☐ Prevent minors from accessing particular sites without parental consent

☐ Prevent harassment, unwanted solicitation, and bullying of minors on the Internet

X☐X Train minors in proper use of the Internet

PROBLEM INTRODUCTION

Our surveys and feedback suggest that the two main concerns of parents for their children's use of the Internet are 1.) access to pornography and 2.) unsupervised time on the Internet. Because most existing information on these problems is anecdotal, Covenant Eyes, since March of 2000, has collected its own data and feedback on these issues. All age and gender groups surveyed consider pornography to be a problem of major significance "in society" (rated 10 out of 10) and all groups also consider accountability to be highly important for protecting integrity on the Internet. The age group 27 to 35 years (which largely represents parents with young children) expresses the greatest concern about pornography, and the need for accountability. Filters alone do not provide accountability, because they are easily circumvented.

PROPOSED SOLUTION

Before the advent of Covenant Eyes' software, the ultimate solution to these problems was to place the children's computer in a public place, and only allow them access when a parent is present.

Covenant Eyes becomes, in essence, the public place. Through accountability, children are trained in disciplined use of the Internet.

Covenant Eyes Accountability software developers strive for 1.) ease of use/transparency; 2.) a complete record of times and sites visited; 3.) ease of interpreting that record by parents; and 4.) blocking any means of circumvention. The Accountability software is downloaded from the C.E. website, and installed after download. The program cannot be uninstalled without a password obtained by the Account Controller from C.E., and all Accountability Partners are notified. All reinstalls and any disruption in service are noted on the reports. There is no limit on the number of Partners assigned to a user. The user must log in to Covenant Eyes in order to access the Internet, and a user can log in on any computer which has Covenant Eyes; the same user can thus use multiple computers with all of the usage shown on one report. IP addresses are also captured so that location of usage can be tracked. No Internet access is available without proper logins.

Covenant Eyes inserts itself into the LSP stack (or, in the case of Mac computers, implements a network kernel extension in order to monitor network traffic), and is independent of the browser or ISP.

The report is generated periodically by email to all Accountability Partners, and is also available online at any time. Each site is "scored" for its likelihood of containing mature content. Scoring is age-based, and any sites judged to be inappropriate for an 8-year old are highlighted on the report. The report also includes a "Quick Look" analysis of the entire report, which immediately tells the parent if no further analysis is needed.
For more information see
http://www.covenanteyes.com/help_and_support/article/agebased_sensitivity_levels   (regards age-based scoring)
http://www.covenanteyes.com/help_and_support/article/take_a_quicklook_at_reports_newest_feature (Quick Look)
http://www.covenanteyes.com/files/documents/report.htm (Sample Report)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Features/Functionality
Covenant Eyes ("CE") Accountability software by itself does not block access, so there is no disruption caused by false positives, as there is with all filters. CE provides complete accountability of website tracking, as well as tracking alternate protocols. Monitoring/reporting of all applications using the Internet is currently being beta tested and scheduled for release. CE is browser-independent, and ISP-independent; for instance, on a laptop, the laptop can be taken from a dial-up at home to a wireless hotspot, then to a work environment with a proxied T1 connection, and work seamlessly and transparently through all connections. Patent-pending uninstall notification notifies Accountability Partners when the Uninstall Code is requested, and also notifies of any re-installs. IP tracking of log-in location not only provides location accountability, but also provides theft protection through tracking. Because Internet access is blocked until a valid CE login is made, CE also enables parents to lock down computers from unauthorized Internet access while they are gone. All usage data for reports is stored on CE servers, so cannot be erased or tampered with. A timestamp is recorded for each URL accessed. The software runs in the background, with unnoticeable impact to speed or usability of other software.

A unique feature of Covenant Eyes is that age-based scoring is done dynamically, so that every individual site is scored, including the variables in a URL (URL data following the question mark). Scoring is text-based, both on the URL and the source code; as such, each individual search result, youtube, myspace, eBay, craigslist, etc. site is scored. New anonymous proxy sites are almost always detected by this method. Secure sites are also monitored.

Use Cases
Covenant Eyes is used in a variety of settings. Parents use CE to monitor children's use of the Internet. Accountability is also provided between spouses. Schools recommend and/or require all students to use CE while on campus. Churches provide a record of integrity by requiring all staff computers to have CE installed. Businesses monitor staff productivity and illegal use with CE installed on company computers. Parole officers require sex offenders to use CE. Counselors require counselees to use CE for accountability. Agencies with agents in the field require corporate laptops to have CE installed.

Technological Effectiveness
Covenant Eyes solves the problem of parents not knowing what their children are doing on the Internet, plus other use cases mentioned above. It is the only program providing complete accountability, including complete URL's, timestamps, and an age-based score of appropriateness of content, and is the only program to provide that accountability for each individual site within a domain.

The Covenant Eyes Accountability software alone does not block access, which is a drawback for young children who need more than accountability; in those cases, the Covenant Eyes Filter is recommended as an add-on. Further, CE's scoring does not distinguish categories (this is under current development), so the age-based score does not tell the Accountability Partner why a site scores high; it may score high for pornographic content, or it may score high because it is a highly mature dating site. While scores are relative, with the more objectionable sites scoring higher, there is no distinction of categories. CE software also does not do image analysis, but is text-based.

Testing of each version is done on all platforms, on a wide variety of computers, with all Windows and Mac versions. Effectiveness is evaluated and measured in a variety of ways, mostly generated through consumer analysis. Google analytics, metrics on reasons for cancellation (provided by our customer support team of 18 people), and compilations of customer feedback, all are analyzed by the marketing team and management.

Strengths/Weaknesses analysis
Covenant Eyes is the only program that provides complete accountability for each URL, with age-based scoring including scoring the variables in a URL, with a detailed record of each complete URL and the time of access. CE is also the most difficult of all programs to circumvent.

Patent-pending uninstall notification provides Accountability Partners notice that the program is uninstalled, and notification is also given of reinstallation. Patent-pending monitoring of filesharing, ftp, cell phone (under development) and other protocols, as well as monitoring of all applications using the Internet (in beta test), provides accountability for all Internet use. Foreign sites are also scored, and are regularly monitored for anomalies by the scoring team at CE.

Because every URL is listed, and because many sites are comprised of multiple URL's, there is sometimes confusion on why multiple hits occur from one page view. Also, the program does not monitor vmware or linux versions, which may provide some measure of circumvention for this or any other program. Some encrypted protocols also cannot be monitored for content. Keystroke entries are also not currently monitored. One disadvantage to parents is that all users of a computer, including the parents, must have a login username and password to access the Internet; in most cases, parents acquire an additional username for themselves. While many foreign words are included, the scoring algorithm does not include non-Roman characters, so some sites receive false negative scores (though the scoring team watches for these, and adjusts them after the fact for future scoring).

Implementation Requirements

Covenant Eyes Accountability software supports all Windows versions and Mac versions 10 and higher (including fast switching). End users should know how to download software and follow instructions for installation. Accountability Partners (who are not necessarily members) typically learn how to read the Covenant Eyes reports within the first one or two cycles of reporting. Children need not have any expertise, as the software runs transparently in the background.

Technical Standards of Implementation

The Covenant Eyes scoring team relies on feedback from end users to evaluate what is appropriate or inappropriate for various ages. Eight years of experience has enabled the scoring team to score the Internet in agreement with the vast majority of CE end users. Hardcore pornography scores as very inappropriate for all ages. Sites dealing with sexual matters, social networking sites, dating sites, lingerie sites, gambling and violence sites, are scored according to their age-appropriateness. A Google search on "standard of internet accountability" reveals that Covenant Eyes is the number one site for that search.

Reliance and Use of Law and Policy

In all cases, sites which indicate compliance with 18 U.S.C. 2257 Record-Keeping Requirements for ages of porn stars are considered inappropriate for all ages.

Viability for Domestic and International Use

Covenant Eyes Accountability software is in use in 115 countries and all 50 states.

Effectiveness to Date

The effectiveness of the Covenant Eyes Program can be best shown by the words of others. A Google search on the phrase "covenant eyes" (in quotation marks) reveals more than 20,000 hits; reading the content line on that search shows testimonials of a wide variety of other sources (the few sites which claim to "remove Covenant Eyes" are erroneous, as they do not provide a way of circumvention). In addition, a search on "internet accountability" shows Covenant Eyes as the number one hit out of more than 600,0000. Finally, we get testimonials every day; a July 15 email stated: "I want you to know, and please pass this along to whomever you can, that this program is phenomenal. I am so grateful that it was created and more grateful that someone told me about it. It is one of the very best investments I have ever made and has been a blessing to my spiritual walk."

Failures have come in the sense that some people, children included, go on viewing pornography even though they are being watched. Such is the nature of addiction. In those cases we recommend the Covenant Eyes Filter, or that Internet use be discontinued altogether.

EXPERTISE

CE's programming staff includes 4 computer engineers (B.S. engineering), three programming technicians, and a staff of 4 web developers, plus clerical support staff. We are currently advertising for an additional engineer. Our CEO has started more than 20 successful companies. Our CFO is a former bank president. Our COO is a former project developer for EDS. Our CTO is a computer engineer, formerly with IBM. Our V.P. of Marketing has been in marketing for nearly 30 years.

Our clients include many businesses, churches, ministries, and schools. However, 89% of our members are individual families. Covenant Eyes is also co-branded by organizations, the largest of which is the Eye Promise Program of Promise Keepers.

Other products include the Covenant Eyes Filter (a separate template is submitted for the Filter Plus Accountability). Under development are Theft Protection service, warehousing and marketing our 700,000,000+ URL database, and cell phone/PDA monitoring.

COMPANY OVERVIEW

Covenant Eyes pioneered Internet accountability when, in 2000, CEO/President Ronald DeHaas desired a means of providing (theretofore unavailable) accountability for his own sons. He enlisted the help of Windows developers to develop the program, with the specifications that the software would provide complete accountability and be as non-circumventable as possible. Since then, Covenant Eyes has experienced at least 44% growth each year. In 2008 so far, CE has had 56% growth over last year. Other owners of the company are Collin Rose (a tele-communications expert and CEO of a telephone/ISP company), Lynn McClurg (marketing VP with nearly 30 years marketing experience), and Scott Hammersley, VP of technology and holds a B.S. in Computer Engineering from the University of Michigan).

Original capital for the corporation was provided by CEO Ronald DeHaas, whose $700,000+ investment paid expenses of the company until it became independently able to carry expenses in 2002. Current year revenue is anticipated to be approximately four million dollars.

Covenant Eyes is a mature and profitable company with nearly 50,000 users.

BUSINESS MODEL OVERVIEW

The goal of Covenant Eyes is to provide accountability to anyone and everyone. There really is nobody who should not be accountable on the Internet. As such, we do not want cost to be a factor. Of course, we must pay our staff and other expenses. But the minimal cost can be afforded by almost everybody, and for those who cannot afford to

pay anything at all, we have a "Hardship Program" that is available for the asking, with no questions asked. The Hardship Program provides the software free of charge for renewable three-month periods. For those who can afford it, the cost of the Covenant Eyes Accountability software is $7.99 per month or $84.99 per year, with significant reductions for additional users (for example, a family of 6 can have 6 usernames for $15 per month). There is no charge for Accountability Partners who are not members, and there is no charge for upgrades or for adding the software to additional computers used by the member.

MORE INFORMATION
More information is available at our website, www.covenanteyes.com. An extensive Help and Support Center is available on that site. Readers are also encouraged to do a Google search on "covenant eyes" and read testimonials and information available in the search results. See also: http://www.covenanteyes.com/help_and_support/article/covenant_eyes_products/?c=85

CONTACT INFORMATION
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CERTIFICATION
 I certify that I have read and agree to the terms of the Internet Safety Technical Task Force Intellectual Property Policy.