

Comparative Performance of Anti-Spam Gateways

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In Gartner's July, 2013 "Magic Quadrant for Secure Email Gateways," the analysts suggest that the anti-spam market is mature and that working with a strategic vendor is more important than differences in spam-filtering effectiveness. We disagree, because secure email gateways have significant differences in the underlying email filtering engines, and are *not* equal from the point of view of their ability to filter spam.

Opus One has performed monthly efficacy testing on anti-spam products for over eight years. Our unique and industry-leading methodology relies on actual corporate mail streams, manually analyzed for spam (including phish and other security threat messages) and non-spam email, run for approximately one week out of each month. This is a laborious process, but it provides significant real-world results--which differ from results obtained through automated tests based on artificial mail streams.

Trend Micro has asked Opus One to test products from the eight vendors identified by Gartner in 2013 as Challengers or Leaders in the field (Barracuda Networks, Cisco, McAfee, Microsoft Office 365, Proofpoint, Sophos, Symantec, and Trend Micro).

The two graphs below compare the catch rate (sensitivity) and false positive rate (positive predictive value) for each of the tested products in July 2014. The products in the graph are not identified by name, except for Trend Micro, which had the highest catch rate and lowest false positive rate in this scenario. The results shown here are from the most common vendor-recommended configuration options for each product, considering only positively identified spam messages as spam.

