



A Suitable Corporate Policy for Net Access

Managing Internet use in a corporate set-up is like tightrope walking. You must balance between restricting Net access and choosing suitable speeds.

In earlier issues of LINUX For You, we have covered mailing and intranets, and their relevance to the corporate world. In this article we learn about managing Internet access in the corporate world, which has become essential for various purposes, such as getting information on products, purchasing them online, and comparing different products.

But there is a lot of unwanted or superfluous information on the Net. So we get cornered into a Catch-22 situation, where if Internet access is not provided to employees, work slows down; and if it is provided, it consumes a lot of valuable time and energy.

One approach to this problem would be to provide restricted Internet access to people in the organisation—restricted in terms of time, type of data you can allow access to and permissible websites.

Another issue relevant to corporates is the speed of access. For this, there are two options. One is increasing bandwidth, which may be prohibitively expensive. Besides, some employees

BI Group...

"We are a publishing house with branches all over the country. Linux has played a critical role in integrating our business processes that include the corporate e-mail system, critical file transfers, and Web content management. In the long run, we have seen the operational costs go down and productivity increase. If we compare the scenario three years ago when we were using Novell NetWare to today's Linux environment in our organisation, we cannot think of without it."



Mohammad Aslam
manager finance
BI Group, New Delhi

could misuse it. The second option is managing the bandwidth at the server end, so that the bandwidth is available to users according to their needs and type of usage.

Some commercial Web proxy servers are Ezproxy, Microsoft Proxy Server 2.0, Netscape Proxy Server, Obvia Remote Patron Authentication, Web Access Management, and WebManager. Among open source proxy servers, Apache, Delegate and Squid are the most popular ones. After scrutinising all these commercial and open source products for Internet access for corporate needs, the Squid proxy server appears to be the best choice.

In brief, Squid provides for caching and/or forwarding requests for Internet objects such as the data available via HTTP, FTP and gopher protocols. Web browsers can then use the local Squid cache

KATHA...

"Open source Linux has played an important role in our organisation, an NGO. Our corporate e-mail, Internet access, security of servers and much more has been well-placed since its deployment way back in 1999. It has let us achieve a reduction in the total cost of operations without compromising on IT implementations."

Geeta Dharamarajan, executive director, KATHA



Bharti Teletch Limited...

" Linux has tremendously successful in our corporate. We have not only deployed conventional services like Corporate Messaging, Web proxy, Firewall , Email , VOIP environments but also have our major and critical applications. Squid proxy with content management has been there to define our corporate Internet access policies even for the remote locations and VPN."



Neeraj Arora
network administrator
Bharti Teletch Limited, Gurgaon

server as a proxy HTTP server, reducing access time as well as bandwidth consumption. Squid keeps these objects in RAM or on local disk. These servers can be installed in hierarchies to allow central servers build large caches of data available for servers lower in the hierarchy. With Squid, you can perform tasks such as bandwidth conservation, statistics (more than you could ever imagine), filtering (very flexible), remote resource access and a lot more. But you have to be careful, as it is a very powerful and complex software. It may be an over-kill for most situations and requires extensive knowledge of Unix and the process of compiling and installing programs under Unix.

The Squid Internet Object Cache is more than a mere proxy; it is one of the most popular proxy servers on the Internet for a simple reason—it's a free and easy-to-configure tool that cuts down on Web traffic for large Internet sites.

Experts have shown that a well-designed cache can save enterprise networks at least 35 per cent in terms of network bandwidth, and even a small cache of a few gigabytes can save as much as 25 per cent. Also, using Squid's configuration files, you can specify exactly what you want to cache and the length of time for which it is to be cached.

Ever since it was introduced, the Squid Internet Object Cache has been one of the leaders when it comes to caching Web documents. And while a new breed of commercial caching software and devices offer better performance and/or richer feature-sets, Squid remains a solid choice for Unix site designers who want to add caching functionality to their intranet or Internet site.

We have covered the implementation of a Squid proxy server since it is easy to implement and can be tuned to corporate policies. It's probably the best bet among proxy servers available today. **LFY**

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