EXCERPT FROM VIRUS BULLETIN ANTI-SPAM COMPARATIVE REVIEW, SEPTEMBER 2012

Mailshell Anti-Spam SDK

SC rate: 99.84%

FP rate: 0.02%

Final score: 99.74

Project Honey Pot SC rate: 99.80%

Abusix SC rate: 99.96%

Newsletters FP rate: 8.6%

It was nice to see *Mailshell*'s *Anti-Spam SDK* return to the test bench and even better to see the product – which is used by other anti-spam solutions – do so with a decent spam catch rate. This was combined with just two false positives, resulting in the third highest final score in this test. The performance wins *Mailshell* its third VBSpam award in as many tests.

THE TEST SET-UP

The VBSpam test methodology can be found at http://www.virusbtn.com/vbspam/methodology/. Email was sent to the products in parallel and in real time, and products were given the option to block email pre-DATA. Five products chose to make use of this option.

As in previous tests, the products that needed to be installed on a server were installed on a *Dell PowerEdge R200*, with a 3.0GHz dual core processor and 4GB of RAM. The *Linux* products ran on *SuSE Linux Enterprise Server 11* (*Bitdefender*) or *Ubuntu 11* (*Kaspersky*); the *Windows Server* products ran on either the 2003 or the 2008 version, depending on which was recommended by the vendor.
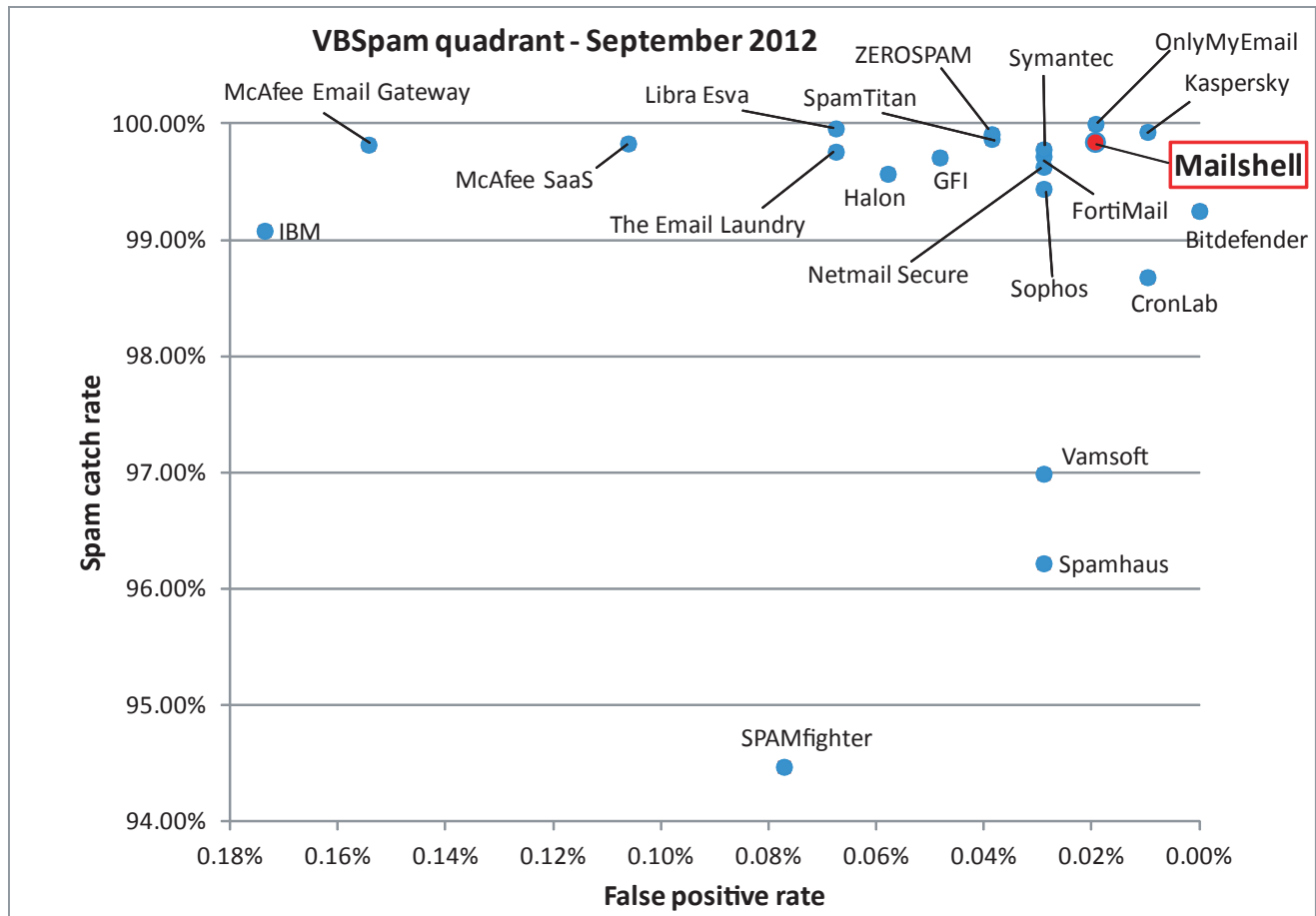
To compare the products, we calculate a 'final score', which is defined as the spam catch (SC) rate minus five times the false positive (FP) rate. Products earn VBSpam certification if this value is at least 97:

$$SC - (5 \times FP) \geq 97$$

Complete solutions sorted by final score	
OnlyMyEmail	99.90
Kaspersky LMS	99.88
Mailshell	99.74
ZEROSPAM	99.72
SpamTitan	99.68
Symantec	99.64
Libra Esva	99.62
FortiMail	99.57
Netmail Secure	99.48
GFI	99.47
The Email Laundry	99.42
McAfee SaaS	99.30
Halon Security	99.29
Sophos	99.29
Bitdefender	99.25
McAfee Email Gateway	99.05
CronLab	98.64
IBM	98.21
Vamsoft ORF	96.85
SPAMfighter	94.09

VBSpam quadrant - September 2012

The test ran for 16 consecutive days, from 12am GMT on Saturday 18 August 2012 until 12am GMT on Monday 3 September 2012. On 24 August, the test stopped running for a few hours due to a hardware failure. Although technically not affecting the test set-up, we chose to suspend the test for a few hours while fixing the issue.

The corpus contained 144,971 emails, 134,418 of which were spam. Of these, 101,621 were provided by *Project Honey Pot*, and 32,797 were provided by *Spamfeed.me* from *Abusix*. They were all relayed in real time, as were the 10,366 legitimate emails ('ham') and the remaining 187 emails, which were all legitimate newsletters.

In recent reports, we have noticed a drop in the products' spam catch rates and we were thus keen to see if this trend had continued. While the average complete solution had a 0.16% lower catch rate this time than in the July test, this was skewed by some products having significant difficulty with the *Abusix* feed. Comparing the performance solely on the *Project Honey Pot* feed (which was all that was used in July) we noticed that, on average, the products' catch rates increased by 0.19%.

Of course, in the cat-and-mouse game between spam filters and spammers it may be that spam filters have worked hard to catch up with the spammers, but it may also be the case that the latter are taking it easy for the moment.

This test also saw an increase in non-English-language ham and newsletters. Several products had difficulties in both these categories. False-positive rates in double digits were not an exception this time, and only one full solution managed to avoid false positives altogether.