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Kyberpass targets small audience for big market share

By Albert Leonardo



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While Ottawa-based Kyberpass has become the latest outfit to plunge into an already crowded market, but it seems it won't have any difficulty finding users.

As a completely new offering, the company's Secure E-mail TrustPlatform it acts as a plug-in for Microsoft's Outlook 2002, 2000 and 98 versions. Notable features include: real-time validation of digital IDs for authenticity, automatic mapping of digital ID, multiple directory support, standard S/MIME messaging for interoperability between enterprises regardless of PKI type, and a password-change utility for updating digital ID passwords.

Only various IP addresses would initially have to be configured from the client side, and depending on what they are using, it would require the user to map the certificates to the keys, said George Gilka, senior product manager at Kyberpass. From the outset, organizations could implement security policies such as always digitally signing a document and encrypting messages.

"When the user generates an e-mail and they want to make it secure, you need to have the public key in the local store (and) with our product as it's deployed, the administrator would populate the settings with the various directories that are out there. It essentially automates the entire process along the way," he said.

On the administrative side, he added that the company has lessened the security burden by giving the user the optional feature of password change for their credentials, or the system can retain the password so it's not repeatedly entered. And, it ensures that any e-mail sent and received is secure. When the user signs the e-mail, a hash is generated and signs it with a private key, which then verifies the digital signature; if the signatures don't match, it will alert the recipient immediately, he explained.

The platform was created specifically for Identrus, a group that represents 50 financial institutions across the world. Born out of Project Eleanor, which was essentially a way to streamline payment-to-payment information in inter-bank transfers, the Kyberpass product, said one industry expert, was tailor made to extend those capabilities.

"They've (Identrus) gone out to a number of technology vendors, including Kyberpass and said here's the way this all works, (and) if you are interested in being able to sell into this community you'll probably want to make sure that you are compatible with what we are doing," said Eric Hemmendinger, senior analyst of information security at the Aberdeen Group in Boston.

He said the move on a strategic level was quite significant to Kyberpass, since Identrus represents some of the largest financial institutions in the world — companies that vendors strive to obtain as clients. And since Identrus operates as a limited liability company, it is independent of other financial service institutions, he said. On top of that, there are apparently other fringe benefits to this type of vendor-client relationship.

"If you sell to us, you don't need to worry about compatibility or interoperability issues. It alleviates the technology supplier from having to have really in dept knowledge about a particular business. Kyberpass is providing capabilities for financial institutions and others to ensure that people can connect to the business application in a safe and secure manner. And the transactions will have what we call integrity. They need to be attached into the business applications to protect the institutions and the applications," Hemmendinger said.

The Secure E-mail TrustPlatform is available now. Pricing begins at US\$30 per client for deployments of 1,000 or greater.



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