



# Security firm offers webmail service to block spam

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A new webmail service from Top Security enables personal e-mail users to avail of the same €15 million infrastructure that the security firm has created to service its corporate customers.

Topmail ([www.topmail.ie](http://www.topmail.ie)) provides a free e-mail service which uses the Blockmail-managed e-mail service which TopSec Technology, the company's IT security division, sells to corporate customers. Incoming e-mails to company servers are monitored 24/7 in real time to ensure viruses, spam, malware or any content that may violate corporate policies is not delivered to end users.

Emmet O'Rafferty, founder and group chairman of Top Security, explains that following such a large investment of time and money in Blockmail, the company decided to bring the functionality to home users and small businesses.

"It is marketing for Blockmail and Top Security to get people to more readily identify us as an IT security firm, and not just about physical security," says Mr O'Rafferty.

The group is relatively unusual in the Irish market as it also provides traditional security services such as CCTV monitoring and security guards.

"If you are going to protect the physical, you have to be able to protect the virtual as well," says Mr O'Rafferty. "In the US, the two come under the one portfolio, but in Europe companies are only starting to do that."

To avail of the Topmail service, users have to provide a valid mobile phone number to which a password is sent, as well as a variety of personal details. Top Security says this is "to protect . . . users from malicious or

abusive usage of the system" and to prevent spammers from signing up to the service.

Although e-mail can be accessed through the website, it is also possible to download it to desktop programmes such as Outlook Express, so users can work with their mail offline.

While spam is a growing problem for e-mail users, Topmail is entering a crowded market. Most internet users have an internet e-mail address. Migrating to a new address can potentially interrupt communications, which is an issue in particular for small businesses.

And unlike Google's Gmail service, Topmail does not provide the facility to have e-mails from other accounts automatically forwarded to the webmail account.

Although some users have found Gmail less than perfect for filtering spam and other e-mail-borne threats, earlier this month Google paid \$625 million (€455 million) for Californian e-mail filtering specialist Postini. Google's investment does not worry Mr O'Rafferty. "The Google approach supports our theory that this is what consumers want," he says.