



## Central Management Console from Clearswift

Many businesses implementing appliance based network security take the strength in depth approach, by preferring to have multiple systems, each handling different functions. Web content and email filtering are prime candidates for this type of solution, particularly so where they're handling high volumes of traffic, as separate appliances can deliver superior performance. However, one drawback is a lack of centralisation of security policies, making it difficult to implement clearly defined AUPs (Acceptable Use Policies).

Clearswift has traditionally focused on web content filtering and messaging security, and it takes a novel approach to this problem. With its highly respected MIMESweeper appliances, it has introduced the concept of peer grouping, and this makes light work of deploying configuration changes to multiple appliances.

Peer grouping means that users can now group appliances together, using their IP addresses or host names, and easily replicate security policies across them all. Peer grouping isn't an optional extra as Clearswift has made it a standard feature of the management interfaces in its MIMESweeper appliances. So, all you are left to do from one of the appliances is to designate all those you want in a peer group. Any policy modifications or creations on this system can now be easily deployed to all other MIMESweeper web

content and email appliances.

For testing, we installed MIMESweeper Web and Email appliances in the lab. Initially, there's work to be done on each unit, but this is handled deftly by wizards which guide you through adding licenses, setting the date and time, configuring network parameters and securing administrative access. Now you can move over to the appliance's web management interface, and we've always liked the fact that Clearswift has maintained a consistent look and feel across both products.

Messaging policies employ a simple concept for filtering, as they use a combination of content rules and routes which tell the appliance what to look for, what to do with offending messages and crucially, who to tell. The same applies to content filtering, as you define what you want to look for, how suspect content should be handled and again, who should be notified.

The appliances come with a large selection of predefined messaging and web content rules and this makes it very easy to create policies. Rules need to be associated with a route and these can range anywhere from all outbound or inbound messages for an entire company, right down to an individual staff member. Creating a peer group couldn't be easier as you select this option from the System tab. You then choose from web or email appliances and enter the IP address or hostname of the new member. During this

process, you can also decide whether to deploy a default security policy to the new peer group member, or alternatively, a previously saved custom policy.

We found that once we had created our peer group, the policy management features had changed to reflect this. The content rules, for example, now contain a mixture of options for both web and mail, in the same list. Policy deployment is nicely streamlined and when modifications need to be committed, they are pushed from the appliance they were configured on, across to all peer group members.

Another valuable feature is that Clearswift doesn't require you to nominate one appliance as the master and all others as slaves. Regardless of how many appliances you have deployed, you can go to any one of the peer group members, create or modify a policy, and deploy it to all of the other members.

Clearswift's peer grouping feature adds considerable value to its security appliance portfolio. It really is very easy to use. Importantly, it gives businesses running multiple MIMESweeper appliances, a powerful ability to consolidate their security policies under one roof. **NC**

**Product:** Central Management Console  
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**Price:** Included as standard with all MIMESweeper appliances