

QUANTIFYING THE VALUE OF ADVANCED EMAIL SECURITY: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Enterprise email is indispensable to your business — and is also the leading delivery mechanism for malware and social engineering. Aberdeen’s analysis estimates that an investment in advanced email security reduces the median risk of phishing attacks by about 85%, for a median annual return on investment of nearly 12 times.

Summary and Key Takeaways

- ▶ In our contemporary world of *posts, tweets, snaps, and grams*, good old-fashioned **enterprise email** continues to be the ubiquitous workhorse of corporate communications.
- ▶ As organizations transition from a traditional, *PC-oriented* endpoint strategy to a *mobile-first approach*, email is the number one category of enterprise software that organizations have mobilized for employee use, and the number one corporate resource to which employees are granted access from employee-owned mobile devices.
- ▶ Because of its ubiquity — as well as its fundamental reliance on the actions of human users — email is also the leading **delivery mechanism for malware** (71%) and **social engineering** (96%).
- ▶ These conditions lead to a growing list of undesirable outcomes from attacks on enterprise email, including infected endpoint systems, lost productivity for users (and responders), data breaches, and ransomware.
- ▶ Based on empirical, publicly available insights about phishing attacks and data breaches — such as those published in the Wombat Security 2016 *State of the Phish* (SOTP) report and the Verizon 2017 *DBIR*, along with analyst estimates based on Aberdeen Group’s ongoing [research](#) — Aberdeen has developed a Monte Carlo model to estimate **the annualized risk of phishing attacks**, and **the value of advanced email security** for reducing that risk.
- ▶ For the *private sector* as a whole, the annualized business impact of phishing attacks — based on the lost productivity of *1K users* and a data breach of *100K to 1M records* — is estimated to be **between \$0 and \$6.5M**, with a **median of about \$220K**.

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- ▶ For the same scenario (private sector, 1K users, 100K to 1M records), an investment in advanced email security reduces the annualized risk of phishing attacks to **between \$15.9K and \$700K**, with a **median of about \$33K** — a median reduction in risk of **about 85%**, for a median annual return on investment of **about 11.7-times**.
- ▶ An investment in advanced email security reduces the potentially catastrophic “long tail” of the annualized risk of phishing attacks in this scenario by **about \$5.8M**, or **approximately 9.3 times**.
- ▶ The likelihood that an investment in advanced email security for all users will “pay off” is **about 85%**.
- ▶ As always, what action the senior business leaders in any given organization will take as a result of this analysis is by no means certain: *accept* the risk, *transfer* the risk to a third party, or take steps to *manage* the risk to an acceptable level. The role of the security professional is to *advise* and *recommend*; it falls to the senior business leaders to *decide*, based on the organization’s appetite for risk.
- ▶ The quantitative risk analysis described in this research report is one of literally hundreds of scenarios that Aberdeen’s Monte Carlo model can accommodate, based on the selection of industry sector, number of users, and number of records. For insights into other scenarios, please contact the author.

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Read the full report:
[*Enterprise Email: Are You Adequately Addressing Your Risks?*](#)

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