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ePrivacy Group Releases Open Standard for Sorting Spam from Legitimate Email

WASHINGTON, DC —April 30, 2003— /Xpress Press/ ePrivacy Group, a provider of trust technology and services, today unveils a new open standard for email, a comprehensive set of technology tools and policies that add verifiable sender identification and content assertions to email. A whitepaper describing this new standard, called the Trusted Email Open Standard (TEOS), will be made available today at the Federal Trade Commission's Spam Forum in Washington, D.C., where ePrivacy Group's CEO, Vincent Schiavone, is presenting.

ePrivacy Group's release of TEOS comes on the heels of recent calls from marketers, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), enterprises and consumer advocates, for a technology-based identity and content assertion framework to reduce the amount of spam received by consumers and businesses, and improve the reliability of legitimate email delivery. The culmination of years of research and negotiations with industry executives, privacy advocates, legislators, and government regulators, TEOS (pronounced tee-oss) is now available in the form of a white paper at <http://www.eprivacygroup.com/teos>.

"Marketers, ISPs and consumers all agree that we need to add trust and accountability to email communications," said Schiavone. "What we are offering is our tested, proven technology to serve as the backbone of a widely-embraced open standard that will meet the needs and concerns of all stakeholders, as well our services as a neutral party between the interests of the emailers and those of the recipients."

Based on ePrivacy Group's experience as an international privacy and trust technology consultant to marketers, ISPs, major corporations, and the Federal Trade Commission, TEOS differs from other recent proposals for less-robust systems. TEOS is based on working email identity and content assertion technology already used by marketers and ISPs as the backbone of the Trusted Sender program, which ePrivacy Group operates in conjunction with TRUSTe.

At its most basic level, TEOS creates a framework of trusted identity for email senders based on secure, fast, lightweight signatures in email headers, optimized with DNS-based systems for flexibility and ease of implementation. TEOS also provides a common-language framework for making trusted assertions about the content of each individual message. ISPs and email recipients can rely on these assertions to manage their email.

"TEOS creates an environment in which emailers can make whatever level of trusted assertions they want. They can simply say 'This is who I am,' but they can also state what the message is about or indicate which organization's guidelines they have chosen for their email activities," explained Schiavone.

"ISPs, companies and individual recipients can then decide how they want to use those assertions. For example, trusted senders could be given priority delivery. Certain types of content—like billing statements or shipping notices—could be automatically exempted from spam filters," said Schiavone. "Newsletters that the customers of an ISP have requested can be reliably and automatically exempted from the ISP's normal set of blacklists and filters. With TEOS, they can actually have faith that messages are what they say they are."

According to ePrivacy Group's CTO, David Brussin, TEOS will also end the spoofing that plagues email today. "Yesterday the FTC reported that 66 percent of spam contained false 'From' lines, 'Subject' lines, or

message text. The technology standards we are proposing can put a stop to that, and they can do so without interfering with anonymous individual email.”

At its highest level, TEOS enables senders to place a visible seal in messages, certifying to consumers that the sender meets specified criteria. Programs to certify messages would be managed by independent authorities, each setting its own criteria.

Just as independent organizations certify everything from the safety of household appliances to the overall trustworthiness of businesses, independent email authorities will offer programs that certify emailers meet specific criteria. For instance, an industry association could offer members a program that certifies they meet that organization’s guidelines for email marketing. A consumer advocacy organization may offer a different program with different guidelines. A private company may self-certify that it meets the requirements of privacy and anti-spam laws at the state, federal or international level.

Senders will have total control over which programs, if any, they use. Recipients can decide whether or not to accept email from specific programs. The independent email authorities that offer programs will be overseen by a Trusted Email Oversight Board containing representatives of the sender, recipient, technology and nonprofit communities.

“The structure we have devised is scalable to permit rapid deployment of these new email standards,” said Schiavone. “It is also designed, like the technology standard itself, to be fully international.”

“Trustworthy email is good for everyone involved,” said Schiavone. “It increases the amount of legitimate email that gets delivered, read and acted upon, while allowing ISPs and recipients to more efficiently block and filter out spam. The technology is proven to work, the demand is there, and the time is right for emailers, ISPs and consumer advocates to work together—rather than in their own vacuums—to create an email environment that works to everyone’s advantage.”

About ePrivacy Group (<http://www.eprivacygroup.com>)

ePrivacy Group is working to end spam by adding trust, privacy, and intelligence to electronic messaging through industry initiatives like the Trusted Email Open Standard and products like Postiva(TM) and SpamSquelcher(TM).

Postiva enables email senders to improve message open and click-through rates by creating email trust stamps that provide real-time verification of compliance with standards for responsible email, as in the Trusted Sender program overseen by TRUSTe.

SpamSquelcher reduces spam’s impact on ISP and enterprise bandwidth, server capacity, and support costs by shaping email traffic to prioritize legitimate email and dramatically slow the flow of spam.

Founded by leading experts in privacy and security who provide education and consulting services to Global 1000 enterprises, ePrivacy Group is a privately held company based in Philadelphia, with offices in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C.

Trusted Email Open Standard: <http://www.eprivacygroup.com/teos>

Federal Trade Commission Spam Forum: <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/workshops/spam>

Source: ePrivacy Group