

excelan : Blocking out time wasting web sites.

At Excelan, we believe that everyone should maximise their IT investment. That is why we have developed a series of relevant and useful emails to help you achieve this.

How can you stop staff from wasting time on frivolous websites?



How can you keep your children from finding the nasty web sites?

The internet is a great resource of information and business services that benefits almost all businesses. As you probably also have found out, it can also be a big distraction and time waster. There is also much debate at the moment in politics about controlling the internet to protect children from the more un-savoury content available online. Apparently the government believes it should spend lots of tax payers dollars on this. Opponents argue it will just slow down the internet.

You may be interested to know that there is already a low cost facility available that allows you to control the type of internet content that is available through your internet connection for yourself.

OpenDNS is a free service that allows you to choose what types of content will be accessible via your internet connection. This is great if you want to keep your staff focused on the job at hand, stop your children from stumbling into sites they shouldn't be. It can also protect you, your family or your business from identity theft and phishing attacks like fake websites that steal your banking password.

OpenDNS allows you to block up to 54 categories of web sites (see below image from their website). You can also block specific web domains if you wish.

<input type="checkbox"/> Adult Themes 	<input type="checkbox"/> Adware	<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol
<input type="checkbox"/> Auctions	<input type="checkbox"/> Automotive	<input type="checkbox"/> Blogs
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Chat	<input type="checkbox"/> Classifieds
<input type="checkbox"/> Dating	<input type="checkbox"/> Drugs	<input type="checkbox"/> Ecommerce/Shopping
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/> File storage	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial institutions
<input type="checkbox"/> Forums/Message boards	<input type="checkbox"/> Gambling	<input type="checkbox"/> Games
<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Hate/Discrimination	<input type="checkbox"/> Health
<input type="checkbox"/> Humor	<input type="checkbox"/> Instant messaging	<input type="checkbox"/> Jobs/Employment
<input type="checkbox"/> Lingerie/Bikini 	<input type="checkbox"/> Movies	<input type="checkbox"/> Music
<input type="checkbox"/> News/Media	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-profits	<input type="checkbox"/> Nudity 
<input type="checkbox"/> P2P/File sharing	<input type="checkbox"/> Parked Domains	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phishing 
<input type="checkbox"/> Photo sharing	<input type="checkbox"/> Podcasts	<input type="checkbox"/> Politics
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pornography 	<input type="checkbox"/> Portals	<input type="checkbox"/> Proxy/Anonymizer 
<input type="checkbox"/> Radio	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	<input type="checkbox"/> Research/Reference
<input type="checkbox"/> Search engines	<input type="checkbox"/> Sexuality 	<input type="checkbox"/> Social networking
<input type="checkbox"/> Software/Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Sports	<input type="checkbox"/> Tasteless 
<input type="checkbox"/> Television	<input type="checkbox"/> Travel	<input type="checkbox"/> Video sharing
<input type="checkbox"/> Visual search engines	<input type="checkbox"/> Weapons	<input type="checkbox"/> Webmail

OpenDNS is free to use and has no ongoing subscription fees.

Q. What happens when I try to access a blocked web site?

A. OpenDNS will display a message in your browser telling you that the site has been blocked. You can customize this message to reduce any confusion.

Q. Will it slow down my internet access?

A. Actually... No. OpenDNS performs a function known as a DNS lookup. This is a process that is normally done by your ISP. The information from the DNS lookup tells your web browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox etc.) how to make the connection to the web server that you are trying to access. With OpenDNS the DNS lookup is checked against your restriction settings. If it is not a restricted site, then your browser is connected to the web server and it downloads the content at your normal internet connection download speed. If however the site is a blocked site OpenDNS sends your browser to a web server that displays the 'Blocked site' message.

Q. So can it be circumvented by staff?

A. Yes there are ways to bypass the filtering that is done by OpenDNS but when set up correctly it can only be circumvented by someone with administrative access to their workstation. It requires some technical knowledge that is often beyond the average user. Also circumventing it will prevent the workstation from functioning as part of the business network, meaning that it would probably not go un-noticed. Users who take laptops home would be able to use their home internet connection without any filtering as the filtering is applied to the internet connection only.

Q. Can I have a different set of restrictions for different users?

A. Sorry, No. OpenDNS gives you a lot for free but it does not lend itself to that level of manageability. The settings you select apply to all workstations in your home or office. To bypass it you would need to log into the OpenDNS control panel and uncheck the types of sites you wish to access. For a solution that can be managed on a per user basis you will need a more sophisticated solution installed on your server or on the network. Talk to Excelan about this if this is what you need.

Q. Can I have different rules at different times of the day.

A. No not easily. OpenDNS cannot do this on its own however some router manufacturers are starting to make routers that utilise OpenDNS and these can be set to use it in different ways at different times of the day. (See <http://forums.opendns.com/comments.php?DiscussionID=4931>)

Q. Is it hard to set up?

A. Well, that's where Excelan can help. If you set up your home internet connection yourself and were able to configure your router then you will probably be able to do it in your home for yourself. However in a business environment it is best if the settings are incorporated at the server so that it is centrally managed and applied consistently to all workstations on the network.

Q. Where can I read more about OpenDNS

A. You'll find more information on the OpenDNS website here - <https://www.opendns.com>

So if you want to stop wasting time, and take control, ask us. We are here to help. So pick up the phone and lets get started.

This free tip has been provided to you by Excelan. Feel free to pass it on.

If you need help and advice on getting web filtering up and going in your office and getting more from your IT systems then call Excelan on 02 8011 0281 or email us at enquiries@excelan.com.au