

Keeping Identity Thieves at Bay

New service restricts online account access based on IP address

Identity theft and fraud are among the most common complaints registered with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Today's hackers are highly organized, professional criminals intent on gaining access to financial systems. They steal and sell credit card numbers, passwords to financial sites, and other personal data. Other professional criminals purchase that information to use in various illegal schemes.

Given these threats, it's no surprise that the financial services sector has been hit hard with new regulations concerning security and privacy of customer information. And while user IDs and passwords are a good starting point, they are not sufficient to keep sophisticated criminals away. A further challenge is that while it's important to keep the bad guys out, it's critical to let the good guys—advisors like yourself—in to do the important work you have to do on behalf of your clients.

IP Address Restriction distinguishes between advisors and thieves

To help combat threats to your clients' account information, Fidelity Institutional Wealth Services (IWS) now offers advisors the ability to restrict users' access to the Fidelity AdvisorCHANNEL[®] website and Fidelity WealthCentral[®] according to their IP Address. This can be an effective way to help block fraudulent access by someone who has stolen logon credentials.

With this technology in place, advisors can only access IWS' websites from the IP address or addresses he or she has registered with Fidelity Investments (Fidelity). These addresses must be static, meaning that they must be exactly the same each time the advisor tries to log on. Otherwise, the advisor will get an error message. The IP Address Restriction is set up at the firm level, so it affects all users for a particular firm. However, exceptions can be granted for individual users.

When this protection is used, even if a criminal steals an advisor's online credentials, access will be denied because the IP address will not match the address registered with Fidelity. With no way to access Fidelity's systems, criminals can't access customer information and assets.

IP address restriction means that the user can only access our systems from the designated IP addresses. If the advisor is at home or on the road, they are not likely to be able to control those IP addresses, so they will not be able to access AdvisorChannel.com or WealthCentral[®] from those locations. The system also requires that the advisor have a "static" IP address. This is determined by the Internet Service Provider (ISP). Most ISPs do not offer static IP addresses for home connections. For business users, there may be an additional charge, or the advisor may need to upgrade their service to a more comprehensive package.

This doesn't mean that an advisor can't log on while in a different location. The system requires a static IP address at the office, so you can connect to the office via a Virtual Private Network (VPN), and then access Fidelity's websites using the office's IP address.

As an advisor, you already have your clients' best interests in mind. Many clients worry about someone stealing their identity and using it to access their accounts. To protect their interests, you also must take steps to prevent criminals from stealing your identity and using it to infiltrate your clients' accounts.

The IP Address Restriction is just one way that Fidelity is working to help ensure your clients' information, accounts, and assets are safe. It's an ongoing effort, as identity theft strategies and tactics are continually evolving.

To determine if an IP Address Restriction is right for your firm, please contact your Fidelity Relationship Manager.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What are the features of an IP Address Restriction?

The financial industry is seeing an increasing amount of fraudulent activity, and Fidelity is dedicated to protecting our client's accounts. IP address restriction is one tool that can help mitigate this risk.

What happens if a user tries to log in from an IP address that isn't allowed?

They get an error message instructing them to contact their local system administrator. The ID is not blocked from future attempts to log in; the session just doesn't allow them to log in from that location.

What if a client needs to change their IP address?

They can do this by submitting a new request form. The best way to change from one IP address to a new one is by submitting two separate changes. First, submit a request form listing both the new and old IP addresses, so that both addresses are allowed during a transition period. Once the changes are finalized on the Advisors' network, they should submit a second request form, listing only the new IP address.

What are the limitations of the IP Address Restriction?

The IP Address Restriction only affects the ability to log in to Fidelity's websites. It does not affect use of the desktop software. It is applied globally at the firm level, and it prevents users from logging in. It cannot be used to block individual functions within the website, such as trading.

What are the potential drawbacks?

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How can advisors use the product when traveling?

It is possible to use an IP Address Restriction even if you are on the road or at home. The system always requires a static IP address at the office. Once that is established, the advisor can use a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to connect to the office, and then access our web sites using the office's IP address. The advisor should consult a networking professional for assistance with this setup.

How can exceptions be granted?

The IP address restriction is applied globally at the Firm Level, so by default, it applies to all IDs associated with the firm. It is possible to make exceptions for individual user IDs. These IDs are specified on the request form when the restriction is requested or changed.

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