

## GLOBAL NEWSLETTER MARCH 2006



*Here, have my personal details!*

'Cyber safety' is a buzzword that means more than just having an up-to-date virus scanner. As most computer users are now wise to the need for security software tools, hackers are shifting their focus to the weakest link in the chain – the people factor. The most expensive security software will not protect you if you decide to email your credit card details to a gentleman in Nigeria who wants to transfer \$30 million to your account.

In the business world, instant messaging has grown into a fast and effective communication method, especially for remote offices and even customer interaction. But if you haven't purchased a secure corporate instant messaging system and you're relying on free services like MSN Messenger, be warned. Google shows over half a million results for 'hack msn messenger conversations'. Information sent over most free instant messaging programs is not secure and can easily be picked up by anyone with the right software. If you don't want your customers or competitors to know it, don't discuss it via free instant messaging.

Children still tend to be the target audience for cyber safety messages. Their generation has embraced the internet age of online communities, chat rooms and messaging. Parents should teach their children never to give out their personal information over the internet, including real full name, address and phone numbers. Unfortunately, stalkers don't need that amount of detail to still pose a threat. All it takes is a photo, their town and suburb, and details of their after-school schedule (e.g. went to my regular swimming lesson on Monday at ABC Swim School) for your child to be at risk. Sit down with your children at the computer, pretend you are a stranger and see how many clues they are leaving as to their identity and location.

All computer users should be vigilant about reading the privacy policy if a website requests your personal information. It's usually a very long, jargon-filled piece of text, but you may just discover that you're agreeing to let them pass on your details to marketing companies. And we're sure you've heard this a million times before but never open a file or click on a website link unless you're sure it's from a trustworthy source and you are expecting it. With viruses that masquerade to look like they came from your best friend, it pays to check if that person really sent it to you intentionally or not.

The future will see more and more 'too good to be true' offers where you'll hand over power by deciding to give out your personal information. Your local Computer Troubleshooter sees these kinds of scams all the time and can offer you advice on what may turn out to be a common hoax.

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