

Small Business Computer Users uninformed & unprotected

Small business computer users are courting disaster in today's online environment. "The very notion that small business computer users, or for that matter home users, can maintain an acceptable level of security when operating a computer online is a myth", according to MSP (managed service provider) TechOnline.

"We have presented to more than 25 groups in the past 3 months, representing over 500 small business users, and their lack of understanding about computer security and the risks they face is staggering", said Peter Philipp, a Director of TechOnline. "Less than 5% have heard of phishing, and in most cases only 5% to 10% knew what spyware was", he said. Yet these two forms of attack have been identified as the biggest threats in 2005.

Today's computer security environment is very different from that of even 12 to 15 months ago, and much more dangerous. It is no longer just the bored geeks seeking notoriety that are causing the problems; organised crime has become a major player in the world of online crime. It is the ideal environment for criminals to flourish, the opportunity to make lots of money, along with the relative anonymity that comes with operating in cyber space. As a result, the face of computer crime today has changed radically.

Whilst the well informed IT specialists and security experts are well aware of this change and what to do to combat it, most people in small business remain oblivious and, as a result, they are easy prey for the many and varied attacks that continue to hit computer users.

Online banking fraud is one of the many consequences from this lack of security awareness. "We knew that online banking fraud was a problem, but we were surprised at how many people volunteered that they had suffered online banking fraud", Mr Philipp commented. "When asked if they had experienced or knew someone who had experienced online banking fraud we typically had a response of over 10%".

All too many small business computer users think it's only a matter of staying away from "unsavoury" web sites. The respected SANS Institute in the US regularly runs a test to see how long it takes for an unprotected computer connected to the Internet to be hacked or scanned. It is currently just 35 minutes! So, just being connected to the Internet means you are exposed. The reality today is that anything short of a complete and comprehensive computer security regime will leave you vulnerable; simply using antivirus software and maybe a hardware firewall is grossly inadequate.

TechOnline's answer to this is a subscription based, managed service tailored for small business and professionals that covers three areas of security, backup and 24 hour help. TechOnline offers small business a fixed price subscription package that provides computer management and support 24 hours a day, just like an IT department in a large corporate. And it is all done remotely, without the need for an on-site technician visit.

TechOnline's customers are impressed: "This new online computer management service is a potential saviour for small business people, it allows me to re-focus on building my business, leaving the computer management and related problems to the experts", says Peter Ernest, MD of business consultancy Values Journey.

Peter Philipp explained that companies with 1 to 4 computers are the target market for TechOnline's services. "This is the largest sector in the marketplace with over 340,000 companies, and includes business consultants, engineers, architects, financial planners, company directors, serviced and virtual office tenants, mobile professionals, and many more", he said. "These are people that cannot afford their own in-house IT resources, and must therefore "wait 'til it breaks" and then rely on assistance from people with limited skills and knowledge, such as friends and relatives, or the local computer retailer".

About TechOnline

TechOnline is a new type of Managed Service Provider (MSP), offering a low cost, subscription based computer management service designed to address the computer risks faced by micro/small businesses. The TechOnline service works remotely, is automatic and delivered each and every day, covering computer security, backup and helpdesk.

TechOnline is the first MSP in Australia focused exclusively on delivering automated remote computer services to small business. Its comprehensive set of services cover computer security including virus, spyware and identity protection, a 24 hour x 7 day helpdesk and the backup of all critical business information.

TechOnline – Your Technology Risk Partner. www.techonline.com.au

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