

GOT A STORY YOU WANT TO SEE?

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TECH TIDBITS

NEW PRODUCTS, REVIEWS AND OTHER HIGH-TECH NEWS

ONLINE SAFETY

Phishing becomes personal

BY KIM KOMANDO
Gannett News Service

You know to watch for phishing attacks, which use e-mail messages purporting to be from legitimate businesses to trick you into divulging private information. You're cautious and use a good spam filter, but phishing messages still get through. And these messages are more dangerous than ever.

According to Cisco, almost 200 billion spam messages are sent daily. They have one thing in common: They want your money.

Most computer users can spot phishing messages. Unfortunately, cybercriminals have become more sophisticated, too. Targeted phishing attacks account for 0.4 percent of spam. That may seem minor, but it's 800 million messages a day.

For example, you receive a message purportedly from your Internet service provider. It greets you by name and says your billing information is outdated. It says you must click a link to update your information. If you comply, your information will be stolen. This is the type of targeted attack you will see more of in 2009.

Criminals can pull information about you from public sources, or someone may be tricked into disclosing it. Either way, it is used to tailor the messages.

You won't see a long list of recipients in targeted attacks. You may also notice a difference in the sender's address. Criminals used to spoof e-mail addresses. Spoofing is a quick, easy way to cover tracks. But spam filters can spot questionable e-mail addresses. Criminals now create new accounts with reputable providers. Or, they hack users' e-mail accounts. This helps criminals get past spam filters.

Phishing messages generally request your personal information. They may also instruct you to install a fake security update or a malicious browser plug-in. Do that, and kiss your personal information goodbye.

Criminals reverse engineer updates to understand the flaws they fix. Then they start probing computers over the Internet for vulnerabilities. If you're accessing the Internet without using a firewall to keep out intruders, keylogging software could be installed on your machine. Or, your computer could be added to a botnet, a group of compromised computers doing the scammers' bidding.

Your best defense is vigilance. Only a company run by dummies would request personal information via e-mail. It's possible, but it's unlikely.

Standard security measures are still important. Keep your antivirus and anti-spyware software updated and running. Install Windows updates when they're released. Use a spam filter.

But remember, you're never 100 percent safe.

MEDICAL TECH



AMANDA STRATFORD/GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

TAKE TWO MOUSE CLICKS AND CALL ME IN THE MORNING: Dr. Jeffrey Greenspoon, a Melbourne, Fla., orthopedic surgeon, demonstrates how he uses voice recognition software to respond to patients by e-mail. Many doctors fail to use technology such as this to enhance their practices.

THE DOCTOR WILL 'E' YOU NOW

Medical personnel behind times in working with technology

BY SUSAN JENKS
Gannett News Service

In the Internet age, surveys show fewer than one in three doctors nationwide engage in "e-visits" with their patients.

And in Brevard County, Fla., the number of physicians communicating electronically may be even lower, according to several tech-savvy doctors.

"I do believe this is the wave of the future, but we aren't there yet," says Dr. Samuel Del Rio, an obstetrician/gynecologist with Partners in Women's Health, owned by Wuesthoff Health System.

Privacy and access problems, liability issues and a lack of reimbursement for dispensing free medical advice lie behind an apparent resistance within the health care industry to move more rapidly online with these doctor/patient e-relationships. Cost also can play a role, especially in a small practice.

"Physicians are slow to embrace new technology," says Dr. Jeffrey Greenspoon, orthopedic surgeon in Melbourne, who has been communicating with his patients by e-mail for almost a decade. "They are very resistant to change their way of doing things."

Also, Greenspoon says, "economics is a big hurdle," as insurers provide no reimbursement to doctors for their e-mail transactions, even though these communications often substitute for regular office visits.

Dr. Tim Laird, Health First family practice physician in Port St. John, says e-mail consultations with patients, which he has done for several years, are "well suited to simple questions" that may not justify an office visit, but still are of concern to a patient.

"There are a lot of times where

you don't need to see the patient in front of you," he says, citing blood pressure readings as "a perfect use for e-mail."

Because patients can take these readings at home, he says, they are able to send the results online so he can determine whether to adjust their blood pressure medications. Laird says e-mail also is good for sharing routine test results with patients.

Virtual house calls

Earlier this year, two major insurers, Cigna Corp. and Aetna Inc., expanded pilot programs that compensate physicians who use a secure Internet site to make virtual house calls with patients - a step, doctors say, is in the right direction.

The American Medical Association also recently issued guidelines for physician-patient electronic communications. The guidelines emphasize the need to draw patients into the process at the outset to avoid confusion, and stress that "new communication technologies must never replace" face-to-face time with patients.

Dr. David Hurwitz, clinical director of informatics at Health First, who also works part-time as an internist at Omni Healthcare, says there is "huge potential" for doctors to improve communication with patients through e-mail.

"I think conceptually, it is a great idea," he says. But, like his colleagues, he cautions "it's got to be easy and seamless," or it will be a tough sell for many physicians, "especially if they are technophobic."

He says physicians should begin with baby steps for basic things, such as helping patients make appointments electronically or going online for medication refills — tasks that might not necessarily

be billable — before progressing to communications about non-urgent medical care.

Where doctors should be reimbursed for their time, Hurwitz suggested, is when patients ask for an interpretation of test results or for an assessment of bothersome — not dangerous — symptoms.

"There have to be ground rules," requiring either a discussion or a typewritten agreement between physician and patient, before they begin an e-mail exchange, he stressed.

E-mail faster than phone calls

Most studies show patients don't abuse the privilege of having a direct electronic pipeline to their doctor, if it's available.

In 2007, for example, a University of Pittsburgh study, published in the journal Pediatrics, found after following 121 families who e-mailed their doctors, 6 percent of e-mails were urgent, with the rest geared to more routine matters. And doctors in the study received most of the e-mails after business hours — about one a day — responding 57 percent faster than by telephone.

Another study by Kaiser Permanente last year found patients who used the health care provider's secure Web site were almost 10 percent less likely to schedule an office visit. Results of the study, published in the American Journal of Managed Care, also found patients made 14 percent fewer phone calls than those who did not use the online services.

Greenspoon's experience bears out such findings.

He said most of his patients e-mail him about something they forgot to ask during an office visit or pose questions about an upcoming surgery.

They also e-mail his staff for prescription refills and lab results, with staff handling about 10 e-mails daily, compared with the three to four patient e-mails per day he handles, he says.

NEW PRODUCT

Keep track of earphones

A new device on the market allows headphone users to never lose track of their earbuds.



The Cableoyo Pop sticks to the back of an mp3 player, cell phone or laptop, acting as an easy-to-use storage unit. Once affixed to an electronic device, the user can wrap his earphone cord around the suction cup to allow for easy storage. The Cableoyo also comes with a clip to secure the earbuds, as well as 10 decals to allow for customization; the units come in black or white.

Also included is a belt clip that can attach to the user's belt, armband or shirt pocket. The item retails for \$9.95.

■ cableorganizer.com

— Paul Lane

Get free pic program

QUESTION: I recently bought a digital camera. I don't have the money for photo-editing software, but I'd still like to edit my photos. Can I get a good program for free?

ANSWER: There are plenty of free photo-editing programs. Not all will be suitable for you.

If you're new to this, try a simple program like Photo-Plus. IrfanView is also easy. You can crop, add captions and convert photos to different formats, but editing is limited.

For more advanced features, try Paint.NET. You can work with layers and add special effects. The professionals use Photoshop. For something comparable, try GIMP. You'll find links to all these programs at komando.com/news.

E-mail questions to gstech@gns.gannett.com.

GAMING CORNER

Classics games find life on iPhone

Old games never die — they're simply reborn on the iPhone.

Maxis' award-winning city-building simulation, "SimCity," and Namco's quirky "I Love Katamari" game are both available in pocket-sized form on the iPhone or iPod Touch.

■ "SimCity" lets you become the mayor of a thriving metropolis, tasked with building and maintaining three separate but mutually dependent sectors: residential, industrial and commercial.

The goal? To make money while keeping citizens happy.

This version lets you manage using your fingertip. Touch, drag, tap, flick and pinch to build roads and streets, zoom in or out, and handle issues including traffic, recycling, power grids and natural disasters.

■ If you haven't yet played any of the "Katamari" games, these cult favorites star an inch-high alien who is sent to Earth to collect stuff for his dad, the King of All Cosmos, by rolling items into a sticky clump, or katamari.

Your goal is to snowball objects into a growing snowball-like katamari by first rolling over small items, such as thumbtacks, playing cards and erasers, and then larger ones, including pets, people and cars.

— Gannett News Service

INTERNET

Facebook nudity policy draws nursing moms' ire

ONLINE: Breast-feeding moms disagree that photographs of the act are obscene.

BY JESSICA MINTZ
The Associated Press

Web-savvy moms who breast-feed are irate that social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace restrict photos of nursing babies. The disputes reveal how the sites' community policing techniques sometimes struggle to keep up

with the booming number and diversity of their members.

Facebook began as a site just for college kids, but now it is an online home for 140 million people from all over the world. Among the new faces of Facebook are women like Kelli Roman, 23, who last year posted a photo of herself nursing one of her two children.

One day, she logged on to find the photo missing. When she pressed Facebook for an explanation, she got form e-mails in return.

Facebook bars people from

uploading anything "obscene, pornographic or sexually explicit" — a policy that translates into a ban on pictures depicting certain amounts of exposed flesh.

Roman responded by starting a Facebook group called "Hey, Facebook, breastfeeding is not obscene!"

"There is nothing about bottle-feeding a child that has to be discreet," said Roman, who lives in Fallbrook, Calif. "With breast-feeding, it should be the exact same way."

Today the group — part petition, part message board,

part photo-sharing hub — has more than 97,600 members.

One of them, Stephanie Muir of Ottawa, was new to Facebook when she stumbled across the group last year. Muir, a mother of five, does volunteer work related to public health and breastfeeding and said the issue is important to her.

"I think it's time we all get over this notion that women's breasts are dangerous and harmful for children to see," she said.

Facebook spokesman Barry Schnitt said the company's

guidelines regarding exposed flesh allow most breast-feeding photos. However, Facebook draws the line at a visible nipple or areola, he said. Facebook also nixes pictures showing the gluteal cleft.

"We decided nudity was something we didn't want on the site. It doesn't matter the context. We would agree that there are absolutely many contexts for nudity where it is not obscene," Schnitt said, but emphasized that Facebook can't practically convene a panel to decide on a case-by-case basis.