

UnderstandIT

From **MAY DAY CONSULTING LIMITED** in association with **FACILITATORS UK**

A publication designed to inform and enable businesses to understand the implications, costs and advantages of using Information and Communications Technology. Distributed through Chambers of Commerce.

COMPUTER CRIME (E-CRIME) – TIME FOR LEGISLATION UPDATE

A recent article in *Computer Weekly*, contributed by Detective Inspector Chris Simpson of the Metropolitan Police Computer Crime Unit, makes quite chilling reading and should give us all food for thought.

The article points out that much of the current computer crime can be dealt with either under existing conventional legislation, or the Computer Misuse Act of 1990. However, the latter legislation was enacted well before the current wave of e-crime was conceived.

The article cites the increasing catalogue of e-crime, which includes such activities as phishing, hacking, extortion, denial of service attacks, advanced fee fraud, money laundering, virus writing, distribution of malicious code, bot-herding, grooming, distributing paedophile material, Internet abuse in the workplace, intellectual property theft, online piracy of copyright material and spamming.

The nature of the Internet and peripheral technology that pervades not only the work-place, but most homes, has changed out of all recognition since 1990.

The available legislation has failed to keep up with the huge leaps in technology, and ingenuity of the perpetrators of such crime. This is true, not only in the UK, but also many other countries. Perhaps this is why there have been only a few high-profile prosecutions for e-crime almost anywhere in the world.

A leading industry monitor of e-criminal activity recently reported that the UK frequently has the largest percentage of compromised computers connected to the Internet. In all, it is estimated that there are countless millions of computers throughout the world that are compromised in one or more ways.

The UK Home Office is in the process of formulating proposals, with the help of public consultation, to update the UK legislation and it is hoped that this will help to tighten our grip on these threats to the successful exploitation of the Internet.

It is important that all of us – business managers and private individuals alike are fully aware of the threats and potential for e-crime. Awareness of the best practice is still very low, both in the UK and internationally. We all need to be on guard and ensure that not only is our own information secure and intact, but also that computer systems for which we are responsible are secure and their integrity not breached.

Every business should have good IT Security policies and procedures and ensure that they are updated and implemented fully, not just written and placed on a shelf to collect dust!

All computer users, whether in business or residential use, must have professional and robust anti-virus and spyware software installed and updated on a regular basis. Firewalls should also be employed – these can be hardware or software components.

It is not until every one of us recognises the potential threats and deals with them (without being intimidated by them), that we can assist the law enforcement agencies to identify and prosecute e-crime perpetrators using accurate and irrefutable evidence, provided by such systems.

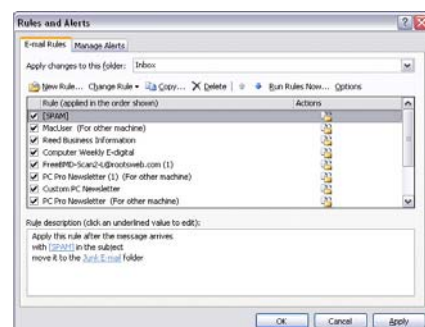
If you need assistance in reviewing and/or implementing best practice IT security policies and procedures in your organisation, please call Alan Finch on 01224 697457.

MS OUTLOOK – RULES

Last month we briefly touched on the feature within MS Outlook that enables the user to set up quite comprehensive rules on how incoming mail items are to be treated. Some of our clients have requested that we cover the subject in more depth, so the following notes are in response to this positive feedback.

The E-mail Rules feature is comprehensive, and useful if you send or receive large amounts of mail and would like your mail organised into folders for later reading, or perhaps to send copies to others. It also helps to identify mail for immediate deletion, for example if it is spam mail.

The feature is accessed via the TOOLS menu. Select RULES AND ALERTS from the drop-down menu. You will then see the list of any previously created rules:

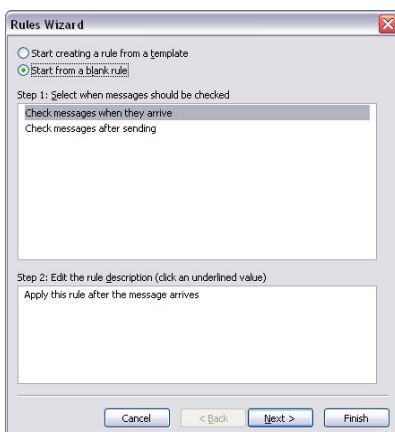


Those with a check mark against are those that are currently active, allowing you to create rules but only activate them when required.

The creation of new rules uses the familiar “wizard” approach. Select NEW RULE from the tool bar in the above dialogue box to activate the wizard. There are two options – the first is to use a pre-set template rule where you just need to change the variable parameters.



The second allows you to produce a customised rule from a much wider set of options – this is a much more comprehensive approach.



Simply select the options that you want and hit the NEXT button to take you to the next stage in the creation process.

The combination of options available is extensive and should meet all of your needs in terms of dealing with your mail, whether it be incoming or outgoing mail.

For example, you can delete known spam messages by specifying a sender’s email address, or specific words that appear in the subject or body of a message and deleting that message or placing it in a specific folder. However, this is very similar to the Junk Mail Filter facility that we will cover in next month’s edition.

When you have completed the wizard, you will have the option to run the rule (or rules) immediately on the items in your inbox. As mentioned earlier, you can switch off any rule at any time, simply by de-selecting it in the list of rules displayed at the beginning of the process.

THE SCOURGE OF “MALWARE”

The term “malware” is really a contraction of “malicious software” which includes “spyware”.

Spyware is a term used to describe software and tracking cookies that track your computer usage and reports it to a third party, often without your consent. Spyware often comes attached to Utilities such as a time and date manager, music download software, or “toolbar buddies”. Toolbar buddies are add-on features for your web browser that provide additional facilities (many of which just produce unwanted advertisements – “adware”). Our apologies for so many, perhaps confusing terms, but it is important that you are aware of them.

You need also to be aware that there are a number of anti-spyware programs now available for free download, that are actually bogus, and introduce spyware to your computer rather than infect it against attack!

Now it is possible for those suffering from these unwanted intrusions to join a growing number of organisations trying to combat the problem by campaigning for government action to stop these activities and to exchange information on guilty websites and how to avoid being caught by them.

Two sites that you might want to visit are:

<http://www.spywarewarrior.com/>

and

<http://www.getsafeonline.org/>

The latter of these two sites is a government sponsored site (in conjunction with others in the industry), and provides useful, professional advice on protecting your computer systems from contamination..

GOOGLE DESKTOP SEARCH – PRIVACY CONCERNS

The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) recently reported a potential privacy threat to those using Google’s Desktop Search software facility. For more information, read the following article:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/4700002.stm>

We wish to acknowledge with thanks that some of the material contained within this publication has been sourced from Computer Weekly, PC Pro, BBC and other reputable sources..

May Day Consulting Limited and your Chamber of Commerce have endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this publication, but do not accept liability for any inaccuracy or omission contained within it.

Information on other Business and IT services can be found on our web site at: <http://www.maydayconsulting.co.uk> or by calling Alan Finch on 07968 262079.

May Day Consulting Ltd

....stress free IT

9 Benbecula Road
ABERDEEN AB16 1FT
Tel: (01224) 697457

E-mail: info@maydayconsulting.co.uk
Internet: <http://www.maydayconsulting.co.uk>