

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.

W32/Bofra-B - YET ANOTHER WORM WARNING!

We apologise for reporting yet another instance of a WORM or virus "in the wild" (as some anti-virus companies describe it).

This new WORM is different from other WORM infections, in that it is not propagated by the unsuspecting user opening an attachment to an e-mail. In this case, the e-mail contains a hyperlink to a web site and encourages the user to visit that site. When he/she does so, it downloads computer code that silently infects that user's system. It then does the usual of "harvesting" any e-mail addresses that are on the computer and sends the bogus e-mail to them all.

The name given to this new breed is **W32/Bofra-B**. Some anti-virus companies have stated that it is a variant of the famous "MyDoom" WORM, but others dispute that it is. The semantics of the matter are unimportant. To ensure that it does not infect your system, make sure of one or more of the following:

- If you are running Windows XP, make sure that Service Pack 2 (SP2) has been installed, as this makes your system immune to this kind of infection (providing the firewall has been left activated and configured correctly).
- You have a hardware or software firewall of another flavour installed and configured correctly.
- Your anti-virus software is installed and the virus "signature" database within it is up to date.
- You watch for e-mail that purports to be from PayPal (this is an Internet credit card purchase agent). The e-mail states that it is confirmation of a US\$ credit card purchase. Unsuspecting users will obviously wish to investigate any mysterious credit card purchases and click on the link, which is what the perpetrators want).

This infection will not damage your computer as a conventional virus tends to do, it is a "mass-mailing" WORM that causes mayhem in the mail systems that it infects.

The following two links from anti-virus company Sophos, are particularly useful in explaining this latest threat:

<http://www.sophos.com/virusinfo/articles/howbofrawork.html>

<http://www.sophos.com/virusinfo/articles/bofrab.html>

INTERNET "PHISING" SCAMS GET MORE SOPHISTICATED

In a similar, but more sinister vein, there have been a number of reports recently of more "phising" scams.

"Phising" is when fraudsters send spam e-mail that contains a link to a web address that directs you to their own web-site. This web-site has been set up to masquerade as a bona fide web-site, usually of a major bank or other financial institution. It uses the same graphics and looks, to all intents and purposes, like the real thing.

The e-mail usually states that the receiver's bank account access information is about to expire and that the relevant details have to be provided again to ensure that access can continue. The unsuspecting user then fills in an innocuous looking on-line form, providing account number, account name, logon ID and password etc. This information is then used by the fraudsters to empty that account!

Most internationally recognised banks have been targeted in this way in the past couple of years and most now have ample warnings on their bona fide web-sites, warning customers of these practices.

However, in this new twist, the unsuspecting user does not have to open any attachment or even click on a link within the mail message to direct them to the fake web-site. Simply opening the e-mail causes a very small computer program called a "script" to run in the background and sabotage the web browser such that when you click on a saved link (favourite), it will direct you to the fake banking site and harvest your bank account details.

To date, three major South American banks have been targeted in this way, and it is anticipated that this will spread to larger international banks very soon. Beware!

HOW FAST IS YOUR INTERNET CONNECTION?

The speed at which you are able to connect to the Internet is usually indicated as the maximum speed at which your:

- dial-up modem, ADSL modem or other transmission device
- connection to some telecommunications infrastructure i.e. public switched telephone network, broadband link, wireless service or leased circuit

can send information to, or receive information from the Internet.

The theoretically possible connection speed is usually expressed in terms of kilobytes per second (kbps) – thousands of bytes per second. For example, a typical dial-up modem will be rated at 56kbps, whereas a broadband connection will be rated at 256 or maybe 512kbps (sometimes even faster).

However, the rate at which you can send or more usually, receive information from the Internet is governed by many more factors.

For example, the speed at which your computer can receive, process and display information on your display can have a significant bearing on the **perceived** connection speed. This is usually governed by the cycle speed of your processor, amount of memory, type of graphics card installed etc.

Another element in this complex calculation of speed is the transmission capability of your telecommunications – whether it is a dial-up telephone line, broadband, fibre optic, wireless etc.

Next, there is the Internet itself. Since the Internet is a global network, crossing every time-zone, there are periods when sections of the Internet are busiest and periods when those sections are quiet. The time of day that you are accessing the Internet and the location of the web-site that you are trying to reach are important factors in the time taken to respond to your request to display a particular web page.

Finally, the web site you are accessing has a part to play in this complex scenario. If it is a very busy and popular site (like Microsoft for example), then the number of users it can simultaneously serve is based on the power of the computer(s) that the organisation uses to host its web site.

You will probably be interested to know how well your own link to the Internet is performing. We have recently discovered an interesting web site (there are a number available in many different countries), that enables you to measure the actual connection speed of your link. Visit the following site:

<http://www.numion.com/YourSpeed/Checkup.php?L=uk>

Initially this site will measure how long it takes to display web site graphics from a number of UK based web sites. It will then calculate the average speed across them all and produce an effective transmission rate expressed in kbps (and also in bits per second – bps, where one byte is equal to 8 bits).

You can then change the location of the web sites across which these calculations are made and see the difference in effective connection speeds.

Give it a try – it can be very interesting!

MOZILLA FIREFOX

It sounds a little like the title of a Sci-Fi B movie! However, many of you may be familiar with Mozilla, which has produced an “open source” Internet web-site browser that is beginning to seriously compete head-to-head with Microsoft’s Internet Explorer (IE). The Mozilla Foundation is an organisation that is co-ordinating the efforts of hundreds, if not thousands of software developers to produce software that is truly open i.e. non-proprietary. Their software includes web browsers and e-mail applications. For more about the organisation, go to:

<http://www.mozilla.org>

Firefox is the name of this increasingly popular browser software, and the full production version (1.0) has just been released, and is receiving some very good press reviews.

It maybe worth your taking a look at it, particularly if you, like many others, are becoming tired of the constant flow of security alerts affecting Microsoft’s IE.

It has been reported that since the beta version of Firefox was released 8 months ago, Microsoft’s share of the browser market has fallen from 96% to 92%. Part of this 4% drop is due to the popularity of Firefox.

The browser software is free, and can be downloaded from:

<http://www.mozilla.org/products/firefox>

The reported advantages of the new-comer include:

- Automatic blocking of pop-up advertisements
- Security and Privacy features, including the blocking of potentially dangerous Active-X controls
- Tabbed browsing – this allows the display of multiple web-pages, each in a separate window, but with visible tabs for each window, allowing easy switching between windows
- Google search bar integrated into the main toolbar
- Efficient “caching” of information, which results in faster downloading and display time for web pages

Favourite web-sites stored within your existing copy of IE can be imported into Firefox easily as part of the installation process, so you need not re-create them.

Our own brief trials of the new browser have proved very positive and believe it is well-worth the time spent downloading (it is 4.7Mb in size).

We wish to acknowledge with thanks that some of the material contained within this publication has been sourced from Computer Weekly.

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.

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