

Threads

NEWS. TRENDS. TECHNOLOGY. BUSINESS.

SPAM

Stop Phishing

Phish has left its home in the consumer pool and is heading for the waters of corporate America.

PHISH, SADLY, is not the jam-band quartet of the same name that sent legions of 20- and now 30-somethings into nomadic raptures; it's a new, particularly virulent form of spam that goes "fishing" for personal data by masquerading as legitimate e-mail asking for personal identification numbers, credit card numbers, Social Security digits, and so on.

Phish takes spam to the next level by sending out legitimate-sounding e-mails that direct users to fake Web sites that

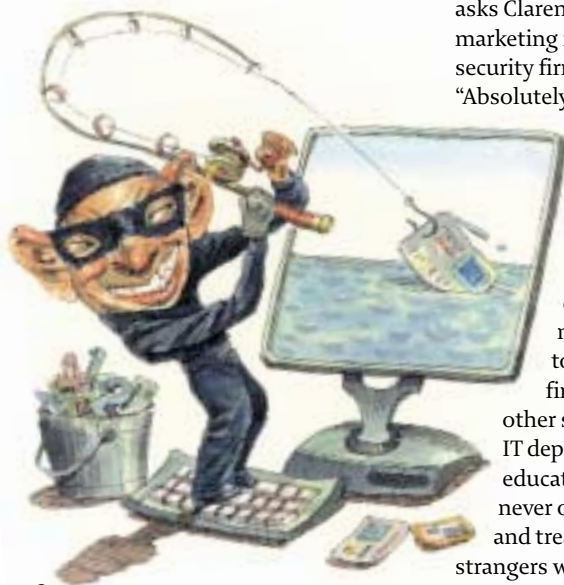
appear to be those of banks, insurers, retailers, and credit card companies. To date, phish's greatest hits include well-publicized scams involving Citibank and PayPal.

The newest one is an e-mail purportedly from no less an authority than Microsoft Corp. itself. The e-mail tells recipients they've been hit by a virus and need to update their systems. Unwary users are directed to a Web site, which opens a nice back door into corporate data.

"Is this something corporate IT should be worried about?" asks Clarence Morey, product marketing manager at Internet security firm NetIQ in Houston. "Absolutely." Thankfully, Morey

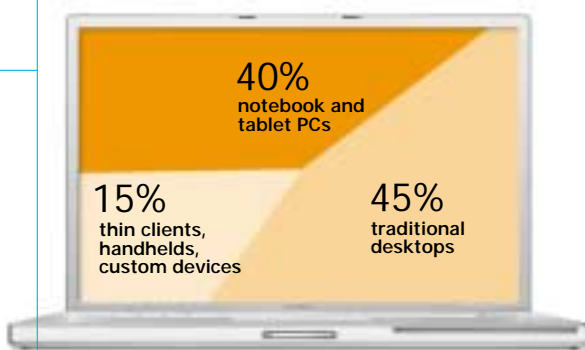
says, the double-barreled approach of vigilance and education should help squash phish outbreaks inside companies. That means that in addition to the standard firewall, anti-spam, and other security apparatus, IT departments need to educate employees about never opening attachments and treating e-mails from strangers with kid gloves.

For the latest news on phish, check out the Web site www.antiphishing.org.



JOHN CUNEO

DESKTOP DECLINE? By 2006, notebooks, tablets, and other portables will edge out the desktop's dominance. SOURCE: Meta Group



PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Putting the People Back in Projects

Project off schedule and over budget? You're not alone. Only 16 percent of IT projects are completed successfully, according to Mark Gould, director of management development programs at Boston University's Corporate Education Center.

To help bring those numbers up a bit, Gould and his colleagues have developed a new competency model that urges managers to tackle projects with a combination of traditional technical skills and general business skills such as accounting and finance.

Gould suggests project managers pay attention to things such as observable skills and 360° feedback assessments, to get an accurate picture of the talent pool before building a project team.

For more information, visit <http://butrain.bu.edu>.

Store it up Think of it as California Closets for corporations.

IT managers now have something else to oversee—a storage management infrastructure. Data storage is becoming an even more distinct operational discipline, argue analysts from Meta Group, a Stamford, CT, market-research firm, and a storage infrastructure can give corporations agility they might otherwise lack.

To get a handle on all that data, Meta Group says IT should:

- Define human roles and responsibilities (get ready to manage a “storage policy director,” “storage architect,” and “storage administrator”);
- Identify and evaluate storage-management tools (namely, a central repository and applications that identify, allocate, configure, and deploy storage assets); and
- Understand the storage taxonomy (that’s knowing the difference between “adaptive storage resources,” and, say “storage tier optimization”).

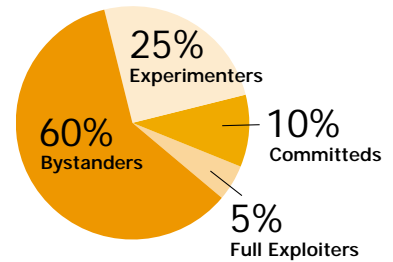
There now, don’t you feel organized already?

MOVING OFFSHORE

Despite the hype, most Fortune 1,000 firms have not jumped on the offshore outsourcing bandwagon—yet.

BYSTANDERS, who are doing nothing or are just starting to investigate the potential of going offshore.
EXPERIMENTERS, who have relationships with offshore vendors for small projects, but haven’t made it a key element of their IT strategy.
COMMITTEDS: Using offshore outsourcers for mission-critical development services.
FULL EXPLOITERS: Developed global outsourcing as a core skill.

SOURCE: Forrester Research, Inc.



SERVER MANAGEMENT

Fighting Downtime

Follow these guidelines to prevent lost productivity due to server outages.

WHEN A SERVER fails and there’s a hiccup in service, it’s more than just an annoyance. Server downtime is one of the most visible culprits of lost worker productivity, thus responsible for thousands of dollars of waste.

That’s why it’s become even more critical that small and midsize companies invest in some form of a high-availability solution to keep downtime to a minimum. According to one calculation by Ferris Research, Inc., a market-research firm in San Francisco, a year’s worth of outages that reduces staff productivity by 50 percent will cost \$95 per mailbox, or \$47,500 for a server with 500 users (that’s assuming a labor cost of \$39 an hour). Outages that occur during off-hours may reduce that impact by half. In either case, though, we’re not talking chump change.

Ferris outlines a few common approaches to dealing with server outages:

- **Spare servers.** Ferris recommends keeping spare hardware on the ready to function as a backup server in the event of a hardware failure. Administrators will have to perform a restore of the system from a tape or other media. The upside is this approach prevents outages while waiting on a repair.



The downside: There’s a delay in restoring the image from the backup media.

- **Traditional server clusters.** A spare “failover” server is linked up to one or more active servers so if one fails, the “failover” is automatically brought into play. This approach is quicker than one that requires restoring from backup, but it is more expensive and requires a higher level of server management skills.
- **Multiple boundary relays.** Failure on servers that act as Internet gateways have the greatest impact because they route messages for an entire organization. Ferris analysts say larger companies should consider having multiple SMTP or relay servers to provide redundancy and load balancing.



LADIES OF FORTUNE 53% of all online gamblers in the United States are women. Why? They prefer having the gambling experience without having to travel, dress up, and deal with social interactions.

Long and light

What are road warriors seeking in a laptop? Something that's painless to lug around and something that stays powered long enough so they can work effectively on the road.

IBM is betting its new ThinkPad X40 notebook line fits just that bill. The redesigned X40, which weighs in at 2.7 lbs. (almost a full pound lighter than its predecessor, the X31 ThinkPad), raises the bar in terms of portability, while adding a spate of new functions. The X40's smaller footprint doesn't skimp on keyboard and screen size. The keyboard has the same dimensions as the X31, and the screen remains unchanged at 12 inches. Pricing starts at \$1,499.



Extras include an 8-cell battery that allows for 7.5 hours of use, and when combined with a battery loaded in the docking station, the X40 can stay powered up for a full day. If you're willing to forgo the movies, think about how much you could get done on an overseas flight!

MUSIC

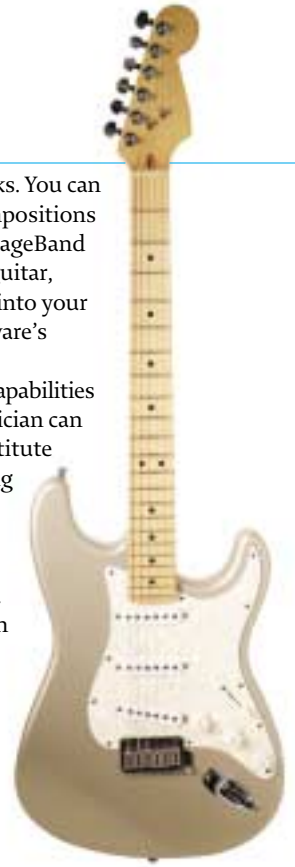
Music Maker

FORGET daydreaming about cutting your own music CD. Why not give it a whirl with GarageBand, the latest in Apple Computer, Inc.'s easy-to-use series of iLife applications that leverage technology to make hobbies such as photography (iPhoto) and music (iPod and iTunes) accessible—and an addiction—to anyone semi-proficient with a Mac.

Touted as a "studio in a box," GarageBand lets people with no musical training (or even those with a decent background) enter the world of a virtual recording studio. Right at your fingertips are hundreds of musical instruments, prerecorded loops, special audio effects, and features that function as a bona fide sound engineer to help you control everything from volume

level to the mixing of tracks. You can even record your own compositions and jazz them up with GarageBand simply by plugging your guitar, keyboard, or microphone into your Mac and putting the software's features to work.

While GarageBand has capabilities that even a seasoned musician can appreciate, it is not a substitute for a professional recording application. But at a \$49 price (for GarageBand and the rest of the iLife applications), it's almost a no-brainer for anyone with the slightest interest in jamming. With a little practice, who knows, the rest of us wannabes might just discover what it takes to become a superstar.



GADGETS



Better than Dick's?

Gadget geeks the world over think of Dick Tracy as their childhood über-hero, but even Dick's pre-modern, two-way, walkie-talkie wristwatch never pulled news off the Net—mostly because there was no Net.

All that's changed now: Suunto Inc.'s, N3 "wristop" lets wearers get a steady stream of news from Microsoft's MSN Direct subscription service. The 2.2-ounce unit can pull down news headlines, detailed weather reports, and stock prices, and it can receive (but not yet respond to) instant messages sent from MSN Messenger. The Suunto watch costs \$300, and the subscription news service is available for \$9.95 a month in select areas. For details visit www.suunto.com or www.msndirect.com.



CUTTING EDGE George Lucas fans take note: Check out the legendary film maker's feature film debut with *THX 1138: The George Lucas Director's Cut DVD*, to be released September 14. *THX 1138*, which initially came out in 1971, attracted a cult following for its portrayal of a disturbing, futuristic world. Go to www.thx1138movie.com for more info on the upcoming flick.

FUNTHREADS

Online faithful Use the Internet to shop, sure. Surf the Web to find information, definitely. But what about going online for faith-related reasons?

According to a national survey conducted by the Pew Internet & American Life Project (www.pewinternet.org), the practice is more common than you might think. Nearly two-thirds, or 64%, of all Americans going online (nearly 82 million Americans) have, at one time or another, done so for some sort of religious activity, from sending holiday-related greeting cards to making donations to religious groups.

ELECTRONICS

TiVo for the Masses

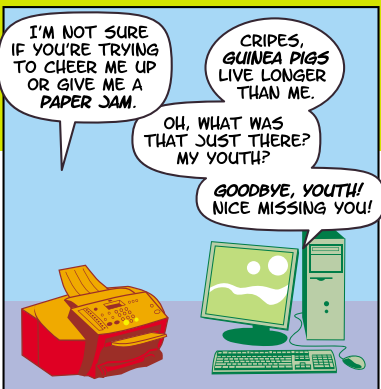
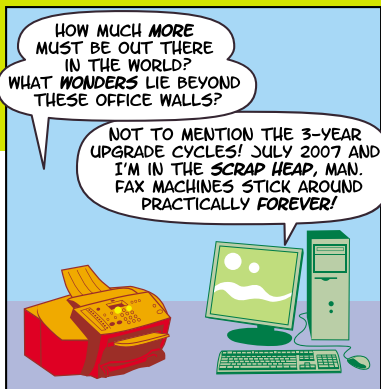
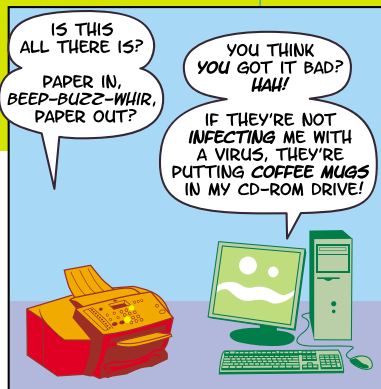
WHO'S MALE, affluent, and nurtures a love of satellite TV? Today, that describes the one in 40 U.S. households (about 7 percent), which own a digital video recorder (DVR). By 2009, however, DVRs, and not just the much loved TiVo system, will land in nearly 44 percent of homes, far beyond those of the early technology adopter elite, according to a new study by Forrester Research Inc., a market-research firm in Cambridge, Mass.

The expected surge in popularity is due to a number of factors. The once pricey and relatively unknown piece of electronics gear is now nearly a household name and can be purchased for under a couple of hundred dollars. DVR wannabes, as Forrester calls them, are hungry for DVR capabilities, including skipping commercials, pausing live TV, and easily recording all episodes of a given show. But perhaps the biggest boost to DVRs is the cable companies' decision to make DVRs a standard part of their cable services over the next few years.

With that kind of roll-out strategy, you can forget about your TiVo-envy.



DISCONNECTED



TOP: WARNER HOME VIDEO; ILLUSTRATION: JOHN CUNEO

By jaQ Andrews and Erik Evensen