

Online spies target firms

BUSINESSES which fail to implement strategies and policies to protect themselves from internet spying are risking their financial futures, an IT security expert warns.

Phil Kernick, a director at business and information security firm COR Consulting, said there had been an increase in internet spying cases.

"Internet spying is someone coming on to your network and trying to stay there to collect information," he said. "They will quietly search around and try to find interesting information that might be politically valuable or financially valuable."

"The idea of this level of spying is not to be caught and some businesses would never know they had been attacked."

He said there had been cases of businesses spying on their rivals to glean confidential information, such as tender and contract details.

"The obtaining and exploiting of private business information undermines a company's entire competitive trading future," he said.

Victims could be a manufacturer, an agricultural trader, a financial services firm or any other trading company.

"It's not the disgruntled individual who has got a grudge who is doing this," he said. "It is focused, targeted and professionally done."

Mr Kernick said there were three key steps a business needed to take to protect itself from internet spies.

The first was to delete old computer accounts.



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"Many penetrations are facilitated by using dormant computer accounts within a company's network," he said.

"Businesses are not diligent about cleaning old accounts. This is especially true with bigger businesses."

Second, firms should check all outgoing data.

"Many businesses just don't know what's leaving the door," Mr Kernick said.

"Internet spying is only useful if information can be removed from the company."

"Check all outgoing data and ensure it is being used by a properly authorised staff member who has permission to remove the data from the company's system."

"There's no way a bad guy can pretend to be a valid user. Look out for information being sent to private email accounts or saved as web files."

Finally, businesses should conduct regular security reviews.

"This will pick up things such as access that shouldn't exist," he said.

"We are so focused on guarding the wall. We are not seeing people who are squirrelling information through the side gates."

"Know where your critical information is kept and watch out for it leaving."



HANDS FULL: People Pilot owner Roland Peddie says mobiles are here for the long term.

Picture: CALUM ROBERTSON

Keeping mobile a good fit

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ADELAIDE game development studio People Pilot is managing its projects in the same way a film might be produced, says managing director Roland Peddie.

Mr Peddie said the firm outsourced work to contractors when developing games to ensure the best artistic and technical talent was used.

Having spent several years in Scotland working in video-game development, Mr Peddie last year returned to Adelaide to establish People Pilot.

"There are two sides to the business," he said.

"The first is original (game) product development and self-publishing, and the second is software development, with a focus on entertainment software such as games and mobile entertainment applications."

The company will work across a wide range of platforms, such as mobile phones, tablet computers and gaming consoles.

"The biggest challenge so far ... has been testing the different smartphone markets and learning about what it takes to release a product on (Google's) Android, (Apple's) iPhone and Nokia's mobile platform," he said.

"Mobile is definitely huge right now and is growing at an extremely large rate."

"It's going to remain a very important part of the entertainment software industry for a long time to come."

"There is so much more that you can use on mobiles."

He said the interactive nature of mobile applications would lead to more companies using them to advertise their products and services.

Families skip talking business

FEWER than one third of Australian family businesses regularly hold meetings to share information, build trust and achieve consensus, a survey shows.

The MGI Australian Family and Private Business Survey also found just 27 per cent of family firms had planned for ongoing growth, transitions and foreseeable contingencies.

The survey, undertaken by RMIT

University and supported by MGI, revealed 18 per cent of respondents had formal processes in place to deal with issues such as succession planning.

"Families should get together in a structured forum to anticipate issues that can arise and identify potential negative and positive impacts," said

MGI Adelaide director Des Caulfield.

On a more positive note, the survey found 51 per cent of respondents spent time together to enjoy activities outside of work. It also found 14 per cent of family businesses had a set of rules to strengthen interpersonal relationships and manage the expectations of family members.



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