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THE EXPERT-MESSENGER

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NEW THREAT OF “MEGA-SPAM”

Just when you thought it couldn't get any worse, the threat of mega-spam looms on the horizon.

At the moment email users in the UK are receiving 20 billion items of spam every day—one sixth of the world's total. In fact 49 out of every 50 email messages is considered junk.

New threat

And it's going to get worse. “Just when malware seemed to have reached a plateau, new attack techniques have emerged,” says Jason Steer of Ironport Systems, an email security provider.

This new wave of malware not only borrows tech-

niques from social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace—it also hunts for useful personal data on them.

The new threats “are collaborative, adaptive and are intelligent,” says Steer.

They can also attack people who get too curious. “If you're a researcher and you hit the pages hosting the malware too much... there is an automated process that launches a denial of service [attack] against you,” says Brandon Enright, a network security analyst at UC San Diego.

So how to stay safe?

Firstly, keep your anti-virus software up to date.



Secondly, beware attachments or links in emails from unexpected sources.

Thirdly, be wary of links in blogs. They too can take you to a malware site.

Fourthly, disable your preview pane. Some viruses can infect your computer without being opened!

It's a dangerous world on the web. As they used to say on Hill Street Blues, “And hey... let's be careful out there.”

DID YOU KNOW?

- A survey showed that 43% of workers spend longer chatting to co-workers by email than doing actual work
- 900 spam emails are sent every second
- The average worker sends 4,580 replies and CCs every year
- Europeans are now spending more time online than they do reading print media
- A third of children wrote to Father Christmas by email
- 86% of people admit opening an attachment without being sure it's safe.

HANDWRITING R.I.P.

A delegate to one of our email culture-change sessions told how his son was given special physical exercises by his school.

Otherwise healthy, the boy did not have enough strength in his upper arm to write for more than 5 minutes. His strength was in his digits. He could text for hours — but not write.

No surprises, given a survey by the BBC showing:

- 50% of written communication is by email
- 29% is by text message
- 13% is pen and paper
- For 15 to 24 year-olds, only 5% of their writing is on paper.

Of course there's nothing wrong (and a lot right!) with using a keyboard—but let's keep our options open—just in case there's a power cut.

ONE STEP TO EMAIL HEAVEN

Imagine all your emails were useful...that you could tell what they were about just from reading the subject line...and when you opened them they were easy to read—and it was obvious what needed to be done.

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The “Becoming an email exemplar” e-learning programme takes just 60 minutes and will save most people at least 30 minutes a day.

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www.happylearning.co.uk/freestuff/email exemplar_trial_module/

WHAT ARE WE DOING TO OURSELVES?

Here's a great question to make people wriggle. When you discover someone uses a blackberry, ask them if they take it on holiday.

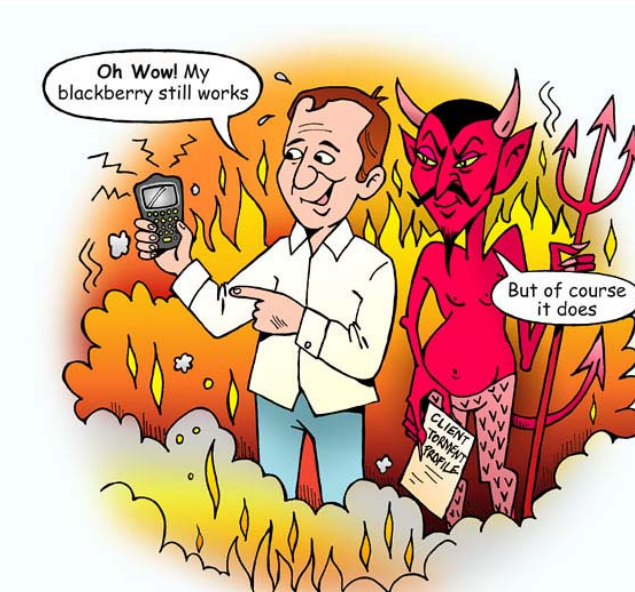
What you'll then often see is as fine a display of wriggling as you could hope to come across this side of a belly-dancing class.

This wriggle is the embodiment of people knowing on the one hand (wriggle to the left) they shouldn't take it on holiday, but on the other (wriggle to the right) they hate to feel out of touch.

This is the essential dilemma of blackberries: they are great and they are awful.

They are great because they help us stay in touch, catch up with email on the train, between meetings, whenever there's "slack" time.

They are awful because



there is no longer any "slack" time and people cannot easily let go.

The working day has lengthened to include the trips to and from the office, that little gap while the kettle is boiling, while you are waiting for your partner to

come out of the bathroom, ooh I'll just check it before I put the light out....

What are we doing to ourselves? And what are we doing to other people?

How do you feel while speaking at a meeting if you

see a colleague checking their email?

If you receive an email from your boss, timed at 10.00 p.m. on a Sunday, how does that make you feel?

And if it's *your* partner checking the blackberry while on holiday, does that make you feel valued?

It's time to face up to the addictive nature of a lot of modern technology.

While we don't want to reject it all—and find ourselves looking for a working public call-box, we do need to start to value ourselves and those around us more highly.

Let's by all means *use* technology to stay in touch — but remember friends are flesh and blood—not bits of plastic.

TOP TIP

People often ask, "What is the one thing I can do to make the biggest difference in the time I spend on email?"

This is what we say:

Turn off all your "new message" alerts.

Yes, all of them: the "ping" noise, the pop-up message, the envelope on the task bar.

You know they are impossible to ignore: what is it like to hear the "ping" - then not look at the email?

Moreover, each interruption will take about another five minutes before you

regain your concentration.

So turn them all off and decide to look at email at specific times of the day.

If you check your email, say, twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon, that will batch all the interruptions into those four time-slots.

Admittedly, some people do need to be alerted by email so they can respond instantly, but put your hand on your heart and honestly decide if that's you.

You'll be surprised how much time this can save.

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change communication culture

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