

# Executive Stress

OFFICE SUPPORT

"Professional Assistance for the 21st Century Professional!"

June 2004

Volume 4, Issue 2

Welcome!

WE'VE SURVIVED the over-indulgence of chocolate that was Easter, and now the financial year end looms. It's time to get together all that info for the tax man. If you find yourself in the same position each year-end facing a mountain of "shoe box receipts" then set yourself a "New Financial Year Resolution" to get organised for next year. You could try getting yourself a lever arch folder, some dividers and plastic pockets. Group your receipts into their various expense categories and put these into the folder in their relevant section.

Or have your VA enter the receipts for you (preferably as you get them or perhaps once a month) into a spreadsheet, and give this to your accountant or tax agent, instead of present-

There's no such thing as bad weather - only the wrong clothes. Get yourself a sexy rain-coat and live a little!

- Billy Connolly

ing them with boxes of loose receipts.

Come end of financial year 2005 you'll know exactly where everything is and your accountant will thank you for it!

The bad news this last three months was the passing of our oldest pet ... 16½ year old Pasha, our cat. She's been with us through everything and has left a real hole in the family. We miss her very much.

The good news is I completed a course in Adobe In-Design (notice a difference in the newsletter?) so I'm even better equipped to handle client requests for desk top publishing!

Mother's Day was in May so I hope you remembered the most important person in your life! I've included

an ode to mothers in recognition of the day in this newsletter! Call your mum! ☺

Till next quarter!

Lyn P.B

**SPAM ...** We all get it ... We all hate it! So we go out and buy spam blocking software in the hope we can protect ourselves from it. Our recent Special Edition newsletter explained the new anti-spam legislation in Australia. Here we'll begin a series on spam blocking software: what it is and how it works.

(Reprinted from Woody's Email Essentials)

## The False Positive

The success of spam blocking software lies not merely in the percentage of spam it traps, but in its ability to limit false positives. A false positive occurs when spam blocking software incorrectly identifies genuine email as spam. This is the killer error, because not only may it cause you to miss out on receiving legitimate email, it also forces you to devote time to double-checking the activities of your spam blocker.

The false positive is the Achilles heel of all the current crop of spam blockers. It's a brave person who trusts their spam blocker implicitly and

has it delete suspected spam automatically.

Instead, most of us funnel suspect spam into a quarantine folder where we can run at least a cursory glance over it before deleting it permanently. This is certainly less work than checking each piece of email as it arrives, but it's far from a satisfactory solution, especially as merely reading the subject lines of porn spam can be so offensive.

Each of the current spam-fighting technologies falls prey either to the curse of the false positive or the lesser crime of the false negative (that is, spam mis-categorised as 'good email'). In addition, there are other problems with some spam blocking techniques.

## Blacklists

Blacklists work by identifying the source of spam and placing those who send spam on a blocked list. As a large proportion of spam comes from a limited number of Internet domains, many blacklists block those domains in their entirety, as well as

## Spam Filters

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Newsletter



blocking other known spammers.

**Blacklist drawbacks:** If a blacklist blocks a domain as a whole it may effectively stop a lot of spam; in so doing, though, it will also block all legitimate email from accounts in that domain. Conversely, if a blacklist focuses on blocking individual email addresses, spammers have little trouble avoiding this targeting. To do so, they use a program which generates random account names, often on the same domain. So, for instance, if a blacklist blocks mail from ratbag@spam-r-us.com, the spammer can automatically start transmitting from ratbagette@spam-r-us.com.

In fact, simple blacklists are these days largely regarded as counter-productive, because they achieve a very low success rate in blocking spam while at the same time blocking an inordinately large number of legitimate emails.

### Collective Blacklists

Collective blacklists borrow an idea from file-swapping software such as Kazaa. Instead of sharing files, users pool their experience of spammers. If most users flag an item as being spam, the sender is added to the collective blacklist. To avoid the problem of someone blacklisting a sender maliciously or accidentally, the collective blacklist also lets users identify email as

not being spam. If a sender's positive votes outweigh the negative, they won't be blacklisted.

**Collective blacklist drawbacks:** Collective blacklists rely on the active, conscientious participation of the members of the network. Over time, though, many users become lackadaisical about using the software and opt for the easy way out in dealing with email. A user may, for example, get tired of receiving a newsletter to which they subscribed. Instead of opting out of the newsletter's mailing list, they hit the "Is spam" button the next time the newsletter shows up in their inbox. Get enough people doing that and legitimate correspondence suddenly becomes email non grata.

### Whitelists

Whitelists block all email except from senders or domains you identify as acceptable. This puts control firmly in your hands.

**Whitelist drawbacks:** Whitelists initially require effort on your part to set up a comprehensive list of acceptable senders. Even when a whitelist uses your existing address book to generate a list automatically, you'll need to spend some time ensuring the list is correct and that people from whom you rarely hear are included. The long-lost friend who emails you out of the blue will get stopped by a whitelist, and you may never know they cared.

## Firewalls - Do they really help?

*Reprinted from Woody's Office Watch*

**MICROSOFT AND** others have had much to say about people installing firewalls on their computers and networks – this is good advice but doesn't tell the whole story.

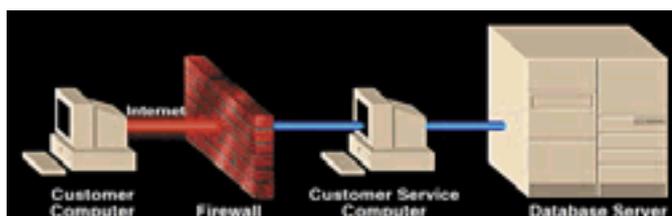
Firewalls block incoming traffic that you haven't authorised. They can be hardware (typically in your broadband router) or software (the Windows XP firewall or third-party software).

Either of these can block worm attacks, like Sasser, reaching your computer but they can also block your Internet use since the port used by Sasser is also one that Microsoft networking uses.

Having a firewall on your router (home or business) is not foolproof. It is quite possible to be infected 'in house' or from a computer set up behind the firewall. For example: a notebook computer (that hasn't been patched and has no software firewall) is connected on the road, at home, on a wireless link or on a hotel internet connection and can get infected using such a link. That infected computer is then brought to the office and when linked to the network it can spread to other

computers.

Even if your networked computers (home or office) are behind a firewall it's worth considering adding a software firewall on each computer, especially any portable machines. While you may have patched against Sasser, the firewall may help against the next worm.



There have been recent suggestions about the vulnerability of broadband connections – it is true that the 'always on' nature of cable and ADSL links increases the possibility of infection but turning your net connection off is going to make your computing much slower and be of little real protection. An unpatched computer can be infected via modem or wireless link just as easily.

## To Patch or Not to Patch...

**WITH THE** problems inherent in Microsoft security patches ("critical updates"), you can start to wonder whether you should patch or not. A recent Woody's Office Watch looked at options for patching and concluded that there's no right answer - you have to

assess the situation for yourself.

The decision is not the simple one that Microsoft says it is.

You can set Windows XP computers to download but not install updates. This saves time but lets you make the final choice about installing the update or not. If nothing else you know exactly when the update is installed and can notice any immediate changes.

However there are times when fully automatic download and install is appropriate. The computers used by occasional users or those not interested in the machinations of their computers are probably best to set up as fully automatic updates. The computers of elderly people and kids are usually best updated in this manner as are the computers of senior executives.

On Windows XP computers you can change the automatic patching options by going to Control Panel | System | Automatic Updates. Make sure the top option 'Keep my computer up to date' is checked.

Then choose the download and install options. You can choose the second option 'Download the updates automatically ...'.

For a hands-off approach choose the third option 'Automatically download the updates and install them ...'

The trick here is that you have to choose a time of day when the computer will be on. The 'download only' option works whenever the computer is on and there is bandwidth available to the Internet, but the fully automatic option only works at a specific time. This is a typically narrow minded set of options from Microsoft that users have to live with.

Absolutely the worst thing you can do is NOT download the updates – yes there's a risk in the updates but that risk is better than being infected by the next nasty and passing it on to others.

## Ode to Mothers

**THIS** is for the mothers who have sat up all night with sick toddlers in their arms, wiping up barf... laced with Oscar Mayer wieners and cherry Kool-Aid saying, "It's okay honey, Mummy's here." Who have sat in rocking chairs for hours on end soothing crying babies who can't be comforted.

For all the mothers who run carpools and make cookies and try to sew Halloween costumes. And all the mothers who DON'T.

This is for the mothers who gave birth to babies they'll

never see. And the mothers who took those babies and gave them homes.

This is for the mothers and grandmothers whose priceless art collections are hanging on their refrigerator doors.

And for all the mothers who froze their buns on metal bleachers at football or baseball/softball games on an early Saturday morning drinking hot coffee from a Thermos so that when their kids asked, "Did you see me, Mum?" they could say, "Of course, I wouldn't have missed it for the world," and mean it.

This is for all the mothers who yell at their kids in the grocery store and swat them in despair when they stomp their feet and scream for ice cream before dinner. And for all the mothers who count to ten instead, and can realise how child abuse happens.

This is for all the mothers who sat down with their children and explained all about making babies. And for all the (grand)mothers who wanted to, but just couldn't find the words.

This is for all the mothers who go hungry, so their children can eat.

For all the mothers who read "Goodnight, Moon" twice a night for a year. And then read it again. "Just one more time."

This is for all the mothers who taught their children to tie their shoelaces before they started school. And for all the mothers who opted for Velcro instead.

This is for all the mothers who teach their sons to cook and their daughters to hit a home run.

This is for every mother whose head turns automatically when a little voice calls "Mum?" in a crowd, even though they know their own offspring are at home -- or away at college or are married and on their own.

This is for all the mothers who sent their kids to school with stomach aches, assuring them they'd be just FINE once they got there, only to get calls from the school nurse an hour later asking them to please pick them up. Right away.

This is for mothers whose children have gone astray, who can't find the words to reach them.





For all the mothers who bite their lips until they bleed and count to 1000 when their 14 year olds dye their hair purple.

For all the mothers of the victims of recent school shootings, and the mothers of those who did the shooting.

For the mothers of the survivors, and the mothers who sat in front of their TVs in horror, hugging their child who just came home from school, safely.

This is for all the mothers who taught their children to be peaceful, and now pray they come home safely from a war.

What makes a good Mother anyway? Is it patience? Compassion? Broad hips? The ability to nurse a baby, cook dinner, and sew a button on a shirt, all at the same time?

Or is it in her heart?

Is it the ache you feel when you watch your son or daughter disappear down the street, walking to a friend's home alone for the very first time?

The jolt that takes you from sleep to dread, from bed to cot at 2 A.M. to put your hand on the chest of a sleeping baby?

The panic, years later, that comes again at 2 A.M. when you just want to hear their key in the door and know they are safe again in your home?

Or the need to flee from wherever you are and hug your child when you hear news of a fire, a car accident, a child dying?

The emotions of motherhood are universal and so our thoughts are for young mothers stumbling through nappy changes and sleep deprivation...

And mature mothers learning to let go.

For working mothers and stay-at-home mothers. Single mothers and married mothers. Mothers with money, mothers without.

This is for you all. From all of us.

## 2nd Annual Virtual Trade Show

**THE 2ND ANNUAL** Virtual Trade Show was a smashing success! The month of May was very exciting for Virtual-Professionals.com as the hosts of the 2nd Annual Virtual Trade Show. We had over 65 exhibitors, 21 sponsors, and OVER 30,000 unique visits from around the world! We owe much of the success of the trade show to our exhibitors, who all worked very hard to promote and participate actively in the trade show, not only to help their own business, but also to further the careers of virtual professionals worldwide and aid in spreading awareness of the virtual industries.

The door prize for most active exhibitor for best promotion of the virtual trade show went to Lyn

Prowse-Bishop of Executive Stress Office Support ([www.execstress.com](http://www.execstress.com)). Thanks Lyn!

Sponsors will have extra promotion for three months on [virtual-professionals.com](http://virtual-professionals.com) as our thanks and appreciation for their continued support of our endeavors.

Thanks again to all exhibitors, sponsors and visitors who made the success of another Annual Virtual Trade Show possible. We are already beginning to plan the 3rd Annual Virtual Trade Show, slated for Spring, 2005!



If you're interested in participating in 2005, or for further information on VTS 2005, please contact us (see below)!

Drop us a line to:  
**PO Box 1036**  
**Oxley Qld 4075**

Contact Us!

You can phone or fax anytime on: **+61-7-3375-5613** Or try our mobile: **0417-648-172**

Email: [lyn@execstress.com](mailto:lyn@execstress.com)

Visit our website for more information and a contact form: <http://www.execstress.com>