



The Weakest Link

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ARE YOU THE WEAKEST LINK?

Computer security begins with you. At work and at school you need a logon to access the network. What do you do with that password? Do you change it monthly and keep it secret...or do you claim a failing memory and keep it on a post-it note under the blotter for easy access?

Do you have your e-mail account set to remember your password? It's easy to check off those "remember my password" boxes so we don't have to track multiple logons, but it's not very secure. Do you leave your car and house unlocked for easy access as well?

Why am I picking on your computing

habits? Having recently been burned by some sloppy computing habits myself (did I have a backup??) and having listened to people complain about some of the security requests the IT department was making, I decided to explore this area in which most of us sin. The next time someone's poor habits cause major server issues, I do not intend to be caught up in the problem. My proactive stand will help you compute smartly as well.

OPERATING SYSTEM UPDATES



Current operating systems assume, quite correctly, that your computer touches the internet. Thus both Mac OS X and Windows XP are set to take advantage of this connection and want you to do regular updates to the operating system. The software update can be set to happen automatically at logon, or once a week, or any schedule that works for you. Just make sure you do the updates.

There are people out there who get their thrills trying to get past locked and secured computer environments, often just for the ego trip of proving to their buddies that they can. Unfortunately, their next thrill is your next security issue or e-mail virus. Both Apple and Microsoft have teams of coders in place who work to stay one step ahead, or at least pull together a quick security patch for the latest hack method. They do a pretty good job of it too. Patches are often out within hours of a potential problem being reported. Unfortunately they can't do anything about the one flaw in the system: you.

Are you guilty of being the weakest link? When you set up your computer preferences did you enable daily checking for system updates? Microsoft took a lot of bad-mouthing recently about some of the security holes in the XP environment, but they did have patches posted within hours of the problem reports. People who experienced hacker problems had not bothered to download and install the recent security patches that would have prevented these attacks.