

TECHNOLOGY TIMES

“Insider Tips To Make Your Business Run Faster, Easier And More Profitably”

What's New

Cleanup Week in Fargo is May 1st—5th, 2017.

The annual event cleans up our cities by giving residents an opportunity to dispose of tires, appliances and other large items at no charge on their garbage collection day.

More information on page 2.

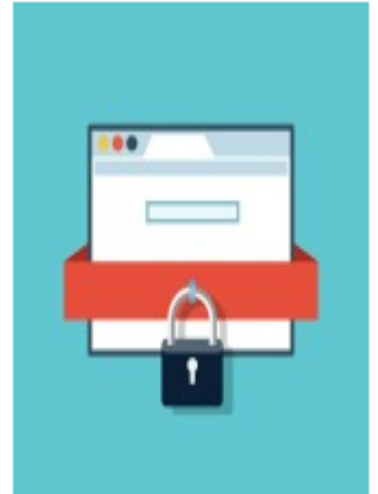
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This monthly publication provided courtesy of Rick Johnston, President of Information Management Systems

“Enabling People to Provide Great Products and Services - Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere”

The Phishing Craze That's Blindsiding Users



Most phishing attacks involve hiding malicious hyperlinks hidden behind enticing ad images or false-front URLs. Whatever the strategy is, phishing almost always relies on users clicking a link before checking where it really leads. But even the most cautious users may get caught up in the most recent scam. Take a look at our advice for how to avoid the newest trend in phishing.

What are homographs?

There are a lot of ways to disguise a hyperlink, but one strategy has survived for decades — and it's enjoying a spike in popularity. Referred to as “homographs” by cybersecurity professionals, this phishing strategy revolves around how browsers interpret URLs

written in other languages.

Take Russian for example, even though several Cyrillic letters look identical to English characters, computers see them as totally different. Browsers use basic translation tools to account for this so users can type in non-English URLs and arrive at legitimate websites. In practice, that means anyone can enter a 10-letter Cyrillic web address into their browser and the translation tools will convert that address into a series of English letters and numbers.

How does this lead to phishing attacks?

Malicious homographs utilize letters that look identical to their English counterparts to trick users into clicking on them. It's an old trick, and most browsers have

built-in fail-safes to prevent the issue. However, a security professional recently proved that the fail-safes in Chrome, Firefox, Opera and a few other less popular browsers can be easily tricked.

Without protection from your browser, there's basically no way to know that you're clicking on a Cyrillic URL. It looks like English, and no matter how skeptical you are, there's no way to "ask" your browser what language it is. So you may think you're clicking on apple.com, but you're actually clicking on the Russian spelling of apple.com — which gets redirected to xn—8oak6aa92e.com. If that translated URL contains malware,

you're in trouble the second you click the link.

The solution

Avoiding any kind of cybersecurity attack begins with awareness, and when it comes to phishing, that means treating every link you want to click with skepticism. If you receive an email from someone you don't know, or a suspicious message from someone you do, always check where it leads. Sometimes that's as simple as hovering your mouse over hyperlink text to see what the address is, but when it comes to homographs that's not enough.

In the case of homographs, the solution is unbelievably simple: Manually type in the web address.

If you get an email from someone you haven't heard from in 20 years that says "Have you checked out youtube.com??", until your browser announces a fix, typing that URL into your browser's address bar is the only way to be totally sure you're safe.

For most, this trend feels like yet another development that justifies giving up on cybersecurity altogether. But for small- and medium-sized businesses that have outsourced their technology support and management to a competent and trustworthy IT provider, it's just another reason to be thankful they decided against going it alone. If you're ready to make the same decision, call us today at 701-364-2718 or email info@imsnetworking.com.

Fargo Cleanup Week Rules

- ◆ Set out garbage before 7:00 a.m. on your pickup day on boulevard only.
 - ◆ Limit two appliances per household.
 - ◆ No wood, building material, or concrete will be accepted.
 - ◆ Fees may apply for excessive amounts of items placed on the boulevard; please call the Solid Waste Department with questions at 701-241-1449.
 - ◆ **Electronics** such as televisions and computers should not be set out for pickup. Instead, please recycle them during our Electronics Recycling Event on Saturday, April 29th from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Fargo Solid Waste, 2301 8th Ave. North.
- For more information please go to <http://cleanupweek.com>.



Shiny New Gadget Of The Month:



Surface Studio: All Beauty, A Little Brains

"We want to move from people needing Windows...to loving Windows."

So said CEO Satya Nadella after taking over Microsoft. And their new Surface Studio takes a bold step in that direction.

In a bid to win over creative types, they designed the Studio with a gorgeous desktop screen that easily glides from vertical to almost horizontal, like an artist's sketchpad. With its Apple Computer-like brushed aluminum finish and ultra-thin screen, it's feels right at home in an open-plan office with microbrews on tap.

The guts of the machine are stuffed into a nine-inch-long base that's joined to the screen with an überslick hinge design, allowing it to fold nearly flat for stylus- or touch-driven design work.

Downsides? Well, you'll pay at least \$3,000. And it's a bit underpowered to be in that price range. But all in all, even the graphically challenged will find this machine tantalizing.

Reasons To Back Up Your Mobile Devices

It makes a lot of sense for electronics firms to pack a variety of functions into mobile devices and expand their usefulness. Instead of confining their use to communications, companies such as Apple, Samsung, and others have turned mobile phones into mini-computers that can serve as a substitute for your laptop, or as a storage device. If you're using mobile phones as a communications and storage device, backing up now would be a wise move.

Malware on mobile

More than 50% of the world's adult population use a mobile phone with internet connection, so dangers in these handy devices are to be expected. Scarier than the thought of being offline is being online and exposed to malware.

If you use your mobile devices as an extension of your work computers, backing up is a must. Mobile phones have become as vulnerable to malware as laptops and desktops have, especially if you consider the fact that many professionals and business owners use them for emailing confidential documents and storing business-critical files.

Device disasters

Other than malware, other types of disasters can happen on your device. Because you carry it wherever you go, your device can easily be stolen, misplaced, or damaged. They may be easily replaceable, but the data contained in them may not. Having completely backed up data on your devices helps prevent a minor inconvenience from turning into a disastrous situation.

Backup options

Performing backups in iPhone and Android devices is a seamless process. Their operating systems require only minimal effort from users, and backing up entails nothing more than logging into their Apple or Google account. However, other users have different devices with different operating systems, slightly complicating the process.

Mobile devices' safety is essential to business continuity plans. So whether your office users are tied to a single operating system or prefer different devices, there are options to back up all your organization's mobile devices. There are cloud backup services that enable syncing of all devices and that back up files, contacts, photos, videos, and other critical files in one neat backup system. These mobile backup tools are offered on monthly or lifetime subscription schemes, which provides small businesses with enough flexibility to ensure protection.

Mobile phones have become so ubiquitous to how people function that many feel the need to have two or more phones, mostly to have one for personal use and another for business. With all these options on hand, there's no excuse for not backing up data on your mobile devices.

Our experts can provide practical advice on security for your business's computers and mobile devices. Call us at 701-364-2718 or mobile backup and other security solutions today.

Bits & Bytes

The Cloudflare Screw-up: Have your passwords been compromised?

Little bugs can cause huge problems. Like when web performance and security company Cloudflare's code upgrade leaked sensitive data to 3,438 unique domains this past February. Everything from API keys to personal data was exposed. And scariest of all is that any bot could have accessed every bit of it. The good news is that Cloudflare was alerted to the tiny leak before hackers discovered it. The bad news is, a more moderate-sized leak could bring down the web. It just brings home the point that you need to be more vigilant than ever. Change passwords routinely. Use strong passwords that hackers can't easily break. Upgrade to two-factor authentication. *Gizmodo*, 02.17.17

Big Red is still the big dog... but T-Mobile is nipping at its heels.

In the battle to claim best mobile network, the winner is arguable.

RootMetrics says it's Verizon. OpenSignal says T-Mobile. Digging into their reports, you'll find that geographical factors determine the winner. OpenSignal's crowd-sourced data comes mostly from city dwellers. So their finding that T-Mobile wins most likely applies to urban areas. But that data doesn't apply if you're out in the sticks. RootMetrics reports more on overall coverage, and they find Verizon at the top. So who's got the best network for you? At this point, it boils down to where you live and work. But stay tuned...this race is getting close. *AndroidCentral*, 02.24.17

Is your in-car GPS necessary anymore?

Smartphones offer turn-by-turn navigation, satellite-tracked speed readings, voice guidance and real-time, crowdsourced traffic alerts. So why dish out another 300 bucks for your own on-dash, in-car system? Well, those in-car systems have come a long way too... Having voice-command capability, Bluetooth connectivity, geo-based recommendations and a large fixed screen might be reason enough. But if your phone's monthly data

allotment and battery life concern you at all, that in-car GPS, with its own data and power sources, starts looking pretty good. And with features like a streaming dash cam and sensor that warns you if you're following a car too closely, in-car GPS is definitely worth a second look. *DigitalTrends*, 02.24.17

Get totally weird with new Virtual Reality (VR) tools.

You may not have a clue about how to draw at all, much less in 3-D. Doesn't matter... Whereas VR used to be a tool for techies, now amateurs can get in on the act.

A-Frame by Mozilla, for instance, lets you easily type in commands that place 3-D objects like blocks, balls and more into a VR scene you create. Tilt Brush lets you paint in the air wearing a Google Vive headset. And Second Life inventor Philip Rosedale is building software that lets you invite friends into a VR world you design. Most of what any amateur creates will likely be grotesque, ugly or flat-out lame, but somewhere in all that mess, amazing new products will be born. *Wired*, 02.24.17