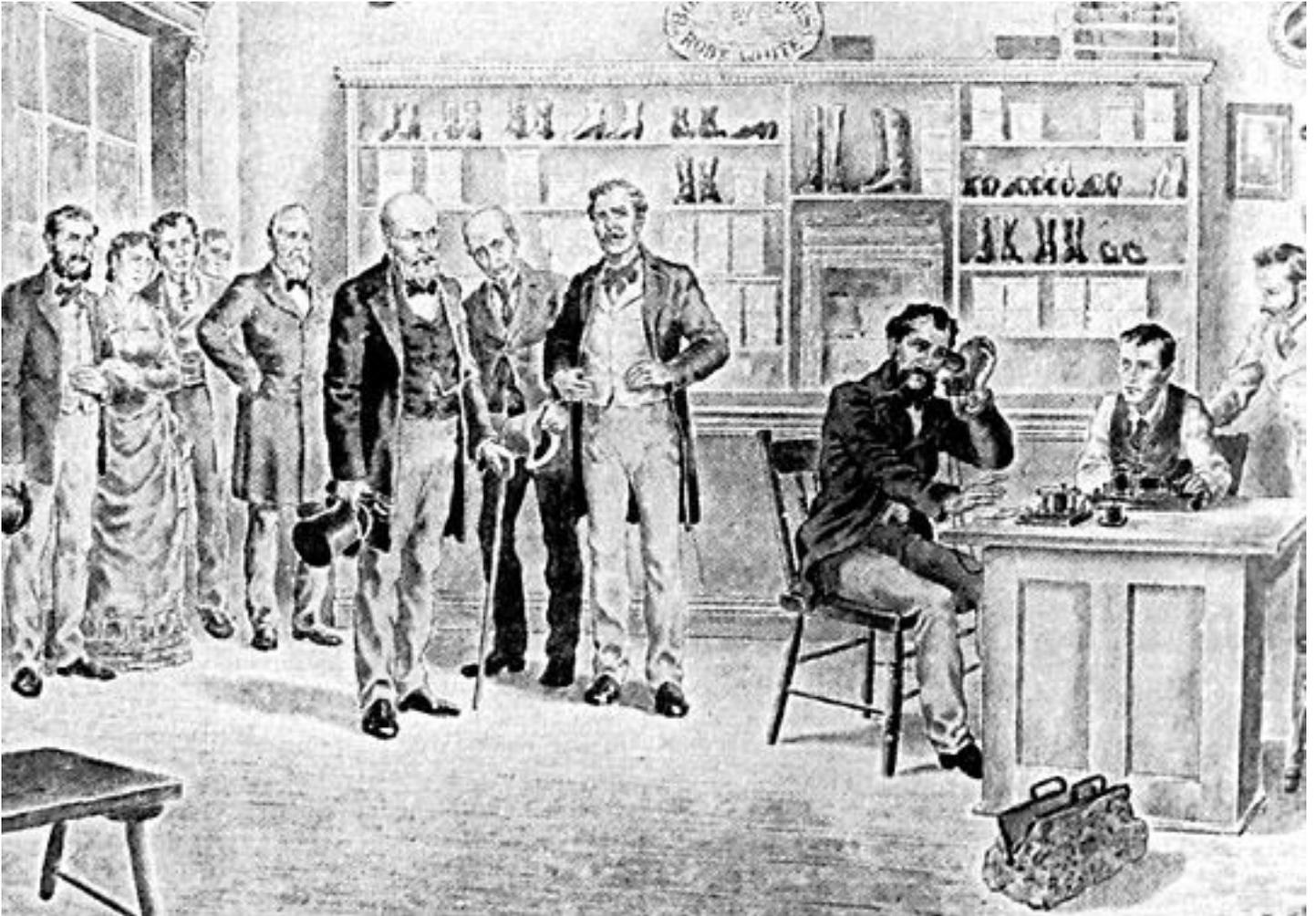


Change is good... why the old business doesn't get it...



PLUS

- Telephone Co's scared of new Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) upstarts...
- Why do I have to “activate” software when its already “registered”?
- GNUCash... the FREE bookkeeping package for Linux.

Some telephone companies try to squash VOIP...

I remember working for large companies who would reorganize every three to four years, and each time they did this the management of the day would gush on about how "change was good" and how we employees should be "embracing change". Managers would arrange staff meetings to explain what a "paradigm shift" really was, and how being able to adapt meant that the company would be around for a long time to come. This they said would benefit both customers and shareholders, making everyone better off.

That loud POP you just heard was a paradigm shifting.

Last month we published an article in the Smart Sheet about VOIP and how it was going to save you or your company money by using the Internet to provide inexpensive telephone services. Well shortly after I wrote that article I stumbled across a short news item that exposed the inability of established telephone companies to deal with the coming change. You could practically hear the gears crashing together as the world did what everyone has been telling us we must do in order to survive, "embrace change". The paradigm shift began years ago but the established stake-holders, seemingly oblivious, kept to the status-quo, thinking they were the ones who brought about change. Too late it seems, they realize that this is not the case. The gravy-train is pulling away from the station and they have not got a ticket. What to do? Well their brilliant plan, it seems is to try to derail the locomotive.

The light at the end of the tunnel can NOT be turned off..

Michael Powell, chairman of the FCC, according to the Advanced IP Pipeline which broke the story, told the newswire that he believed the blocking was coming from rural Local Exchange Carriers rather than big providers.

It is not clear whether the blocking of VoIP calls would breach FCC regulations but it might be considered anti-competitive behaviour. Telephone companies are considered "common carriers", like the postal service, and have responsibilities to carry all traffic regardless of type.

So what does this mean to you?

Well, not too much really because the saboteurs have been caught trying to gum up the works. You can still get a VOIP telephone, you can still connect it to your high speed Internet and perhaps you will save money on your phone bill. Remember to crunch the numbers to see if VOIP is good for you.

MSN Messenger SPAM Zombie danger

By Stephen Bungay

MSN Messenger is the latest delivery vehicle for a worm called "Bropia-F" which is turning infected Windows PCs into zombie drones ready to spew unwanted emails (commonly called SPAM) into the inboxes of everyone on the infected PC's address book. The worm offers "sexy image files" to the Messenger contacts of infected users and if they take the bait they get a photo of a roasted chicken with a bikini tan line on it. Meanwhile, in the background, the Bropia-F worm is busy installing a variant of another worm called "Agobot", which then opens a back door on the infected system. The bot (slang for robot) can then be used to collect system information, log keystrokes and relay SPAM, and you know how much you look forward to getting SPAM emails.

"Many corporations have been blocking the use of instant messenger programs for employee productivity reasons, and now may have good cause to do so for security reasons as well," said Joe Hartmann, senior virus researcher at anti-virus firm Trend Micro. "With the popularity of instant messenger, it may be the home users who are most at risk - this kind of worm uses humor to make people forget that they are being infected and back doors are being opened into their systems."

The Bropia-F worm comes in a file thats 184 KB in size, and it attempts to propagate to MSN Messenger users by sending a copy of itself under one of the file names in List-1;

bedroom-thongs.pif
hot.pif
lmao.pif
lol.scr
naked_drunk.pif
new_webcam.pif
rofl.pif
underware.pif
webcam.pif.

List-1

The worm is rated as a medium risk.

Practice safe computing and exercise caution in the programs that are allowed to self-install on your PC. Windows users should ensure their antivirus signature files are up to date to detect the worm.

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If you must use Internet Explorer do this first

By Stephen Bungay

I have in the past advised many people that they move away from Internet Explorer (IE) and use a web browser that is safer, but if you just HAVE to use IE what can you do to protect your PC from being exploited by all the nifty "features" that are built into it?

First you have to turn off some of those features, at least as far as the Internet "zone" is concerned anyway. To do this;

1. Select the tools menu at the top of the Internet Explorer window and its "Internet options" sub-menu.
2. Select the tab labeled "security" on the resulting window.
3. Click on the icon labeled "Internet"
 - 3.1 Click on the button labeled "Custom Level".

A window will appear listing all of the features that are enabled and disabled for the Internet zone. Scroll down through this list looking for an item labeled "Active X controls and Plugins". For ultimate security set all of these to "disabled", but if you think you might want a web site to download programs and have them run inside your IE browser then set them to "prompt", this way IE will prompt you before it runs an Active X program from a web-site, if you think the program shouldn't run then you can deny it access.

Backing up your computer's hard disc...

Windows XP Home and Professional editions both have backup utilities built into them, as does Linux and Macintosh OS/X. Taking the time to back up your files can save you loads of stress later on when (not if) you get nailed by a virus, somebody drops your laptop, or your hard drive decides it's time is up and so is the data you have stored on it. In this article we are going to touch on the built in services of Linux and Windows XP, sorry, but the Mac users will have to consult their documentation, but the Mac is based on FreeBSD (a variation of Unix) and it most likely comes with it's own backup utility. OK, onward with the details...

Windows XP Home

By default Win XP Home doesn't have the backup utility installed on a new PC (thoughtful of them huh?) , so you'll have to do it yourself. Here's how...

1. Insert your Windows XP CD into the drive. If it doesn't auto-start then
 - 1a - Open "My Computer"
 - 1b Right click on the CD ICON to bring up the context menu.
 - 1c. Select the "Explore" item in the context menu. This will bring up Windows Explorer so you can view the contents of the CD.
4. In Windows Explorer, double-click the ValueAdd folder to open it. This will show you more folders.
 - 4a Find and double click on the Msft folder, then
 - 4b Find and double click on the Ntbackup folder
5. (Almost done) Locate and double-click on the file called "Ntbackup.msi" to begin the installation of the Backup utility.
6. You now have the backup utility installed. It's real name is ntbackup.exe. Proceed to the Windows XP Pro section to find out how to start it up.

If you get stuck, or if you just want to know more detail, Microsoft has a web-page on this subject at;
<http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;en-us;q302894>

Windows XP Pro

Windows XP Pro users have life a little easier because the backup utility should have been installed at the same time that XP Pro was put on the machine.

1. Click the Start button on the menu bar
2. Select "All Programs"
3. Select "Accessories"
4. Select "System Tools"
5. Click "Backup" to start the wizard.

Linux (almost every flavour)

Linux users can select from a wide range of backup options. My personal favourite is "PartImage", which is short for "Partition Image" and it allows the user to create a snapshot of their computer's hard disc(s). These "images" can be broken up into smaller files to allow for easy storage on CD ROMs or DVDs. Partition Image can also be used to backup Windows computers. See your Distributions documentation or installation packages for all of the options available to you. Here are just a few third party backup utilities along with their Internet home pages. Out of all of these only Storix is a commercial product, the others are free

Kdar: <http://kdar.sourceforge.net>

dar: <http://dar.linux.free.fr/>

Storix: <http://www.storix.com>

Bacula: <http://www.bacula.org>

rdiff-backup: <http://www.nongnu.org/rdiff-backup>

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