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Instant Messaging

Instant messaging is one of the fastest growing communications media. Therefore malware for IM will become an increasingly important issue. Antivirus companies are already creating protection for IM and desktop antivirus packages can detect malware aimed at IM.

What Is Instant Messaging?

Instant Messaging allows two internet users to 'chat' directly to one another in real time. As you type your message in a text box on your screen, the words appear almost immediately on the screen of the other person. Unlike email where the sender and receiver don't have to be online at the same time, with IM both users must be online at the same time.



Problems With Instant Messaging

The Threat From Malware On IM

IM is regularly attacked by ‘spim’ which stands for ‘spam on Instant Messaging’ and is similar to spam. However, the messages pop up automatically when a user is logged on to their IM program which makes the messages hard to ignore.

Also, some spim messages contain code that can access a person’s contact list. It then spims other addresses by stealing the identity of the infected IM program. The recipients of the spim accept the incoming message because they believe it comes from one of their friends.

Spim is a serious problem because sometimes it carries viruses. As users communicate with each other, the virus can spread very quickly. It therefore doesn’t take long for thousands of users to get infected by an IM malicious code.

Give out **WORKSHEET 12**. When the group have had time to think about ways of protecting themselves from IM malware, go through the list below and see if anyone comes up with the same suggestions. Did anyone suggest something that is not on this list?

How Can You Protect Yourself From IM Malware?

- Keep your antivirus protection up to date.
- Check whether your Internet Service Provider (ISP) offers a spam-blocking service.
- If your email program has a ‘junk mail’ filtering facility, activate it.
- Never click on an ‘unsubscribe’ link in a spam message.
- If you have doubts about an email message, do not open it.
- Switch off the ‘Display HTML email’ in your email program and stick to reading messages in plain text.
- Never forward a message about computer viruses without checking further — most are hoaxes.
- Delete chain email messages.
- Do not reply to an email which says it comes from your bank.
- If you use instant messaging, make sure that your client program is set to accept invitations only from people on your buddy list.
- Be sensible and don’t take risks.

Chat Rooms And Social Networking

Chat rooms and online social networking are now key parts of millions of young people's lives. Young people use social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+ and Ning every day to keep in touch with their family, friends and peers.

Give out **WORKSHEET 13** and ask the group to fill in the first table and write what they know about each site. Which one do they use/prefer?

Now ask them to fill in the second table giving their reasons for using networking sites. Tell them to explain their reasons in the column below. Does anyone feel pressured by their peers to participate?

Does anyone in the group not use a social networking site? Ask for a show of hands. Ask if they would like to tell the class why they do not use such sites.

Networking sites allow users to write their own personal profiles and blogs, join groups and upload photos, music and videos. Friends can communicate in various ways. The networks grow as more people join and start to form groups which share interests and activities.

