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Survey: Small Businesses Fail to Take IT Security Seriously

By Nathan Denny on Dec 6, 2011

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Despite a glut of reports on the security risks in our modern age of online hyper-activity, a shocking number of small and medium-sized businesses simply don't feel they're at risk, according to a recent survey by Applied Research and Symantec, the world's largest computer security provider.

"While most SMB managers exhibited knowledge of threats such as keystroke logging, distributed denial of service attacks, website vulnerabilities and targeted attacks, **exactly half indicated they need not have concern** about any of it," writes Ellen Messmer at *Network World*. (Empasis ours.)

"We are a small business and are not targets for these types of attacks," was the typical response.

Even Symantec officials expressed surprise at the level in which small businesses seemed to dismiss security threats.

"They're saying these things happen to other people, not them," said Kevin Haley, director of Symantec security response. Instead, small businesses felt that it was big corporations who were at risk.

"Only **39 percent** [of small and medium-sized businesses] use **antivirus** on every desktop," Haley noted. "That's striking right there."

Also striking: Only **67 percent** of small businesses create login and password restrictions for online banking purposes. What's more, a whopping **63 percent** don't bother to "lock down" computers used for banking.

Haley goes on to note that this lack of caution can be dangerous, given that some malware (like "Trojan" viruses) are specifically targeting smaller businesses.

True, it's in Symantec's interests to encourage businesses to buy security software. But even taking that possible bias into consideration, the report does illustrate a surprising lack of security awareness on the part of small businesses.

If you're one of those businesses that isn't taking safety seriously, you may want to consider this your wake-up call to secure your online systems -- before it's too late.

Does your company take IT security seriously, or is it under the rader? Sound off in the comments and let us know your thoughts.

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