

Beware the Wolf in Sheepskin (Alexander Hartner - workshops@j2anywhere.com)

As great as emails are, allowing messages to be delivered to the other side of the planet in only a few seconds, they also bring spam, which is ever so annoying. Sometimes I wonder why people resort to guerilla advertising methods such as spam and the never welcome sales calls. Spam, using e-mail, is a very cheap medium to bring ones message across, but hardly anyone pays much attention to it any more. However, it seems that even such a minute percentage of recipients responding makes enough profit for those senders. In recent news, for example, it was reported that spam has even affected the price of shares traded on the stock exchange. Certain dubious individuals sent out "investment advise" ad- vocation the purchase of shares with usually very small values. The result was a tiny increase in the share prices of those companies, caused by a few individuals making purchases. With penny stocks ,even a small increase, can make some nice profits.

Besides spam there is a more sinister danger lurking amongst your emails, and that is viruses. Most viruses these days are distributed via emails. Usually with a message luring the recipient into opening and thus executing the virus.

Similarly, there is another kind of email which attempts to fool you into submitting your account details to an anonymous third party. These kind usually alert you of the freezing of your bank account. I have even received messages advising me that I am being sued unless I take some action. Usually, the aim is to get you to enter your access details to a site which mimics the real one. The crooks are basically pretending to be your bank and have constructed a site which looks just like it.

Unless you are careful and verify the address, be careful and ensure the correct spelling there, and the certificate, you can get yourself into serious trouble. As a rule of thumb, don't open attachments from people you don't know. Don't click on any links in messages from anybody you don't know. If you are not sure, it's always better to phone your bank or whatever institution the email pretends to be from.

The cause of this problem is a flaw with the implementation in the email specification. As it stands at the moment, email, unless signed, but that's another story, is not secure. Even your email address can be falsified or duplicated without much effort, so take care what you believe. Often one has to consider the context and the purported sender of the mes- sage. A message claiming to be from your long lost uncle asking for help to transfer vast fortunes from a third world country should most likely be discarded without much ado. Similarly, if there was a investment banker with some hot stock tips, do you really think he would send an email out. A message from your spouse requesting a loaf of bread and milk on your way home should most likely receive more attention. Better get some flowers as well just to be safe.

Video Recorders, Microwave oven and the PC

What do video recorders, a microwave oven and a computers have in common ? The answer ... most of have got one but are not quite sure how to get the most out of it. In recent years the computer has joined the list of must have devices.

Today's technology makes it so easy to publish and distribute information, but instead of creating a rich resource of in- formation, the results seem to be more a confusing mess, full of contradictions and misdirection. Of course, not the whole internet suffers this, but it has become more difficult to find the right information. Very often the best help can be gotten from ones teenagers, but even that can have its challenges which are outside the scope of this article. Some of us are lucky to be able to ask their local computer whiz to show the way.

Having been around the block once or twice myself, even this presents challenges. Most problems encountered can be resolved relatively easily. They do require some basic understanding. This is where local computer workshops come in. The aim of holding local workshops is to increase the ability and understanding within the community. The workshops will be run weekly on Wednesday starting at 19:00. Each workshop session includes a presentation on one selected topic followed by a Q & A session open to everyone. So, if there is anything you always wanted to asked someone, but felt too shy or afraid, this is your opportunity to do so.