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Information Systems Security Solutions

<u>Preventing the New Year's Surprise</u>

PC users opening email or Instant Messages (IM) over the Christmas holidays received an unexpected gift, a web link connecting to a Happy New Year's cartoon. Clicking on the link activated computer malware, which allowed hackers to gain control of their PCs, potentially leading to blocked computer services, reduced ability to deliver organization services, and loss of business value.

Malware is software used for malicious purposes and includes viruses, worms, trojans, spyware, and junk email. Malware attempts to exploit Internet communications, computer hardware and software vulnerabilities.

Solutions such as software patches, hardware upgrades, and Antivirus software can all be used to resolve computer system vulnerabilities and associated malware. However, there is always a time gap between when new malware attacks (such as the New Year's cartoon) are identified and remedies are available. **Therefore, while patches, upgrades, and Antivirus software are required to combat malware, they are insufficient.**

Successfully protecting your organization's computer network from malware threats involves implementing organization wide Information Systems Security Policies for authorized computer system usage.

Thompson Network Consulting recommends that robust security policies include the following:

1. An employee computer usage statement, detailing:
   a. Appropriate email/IM communications
   b. Authorized Web Sites that employees may visit
   c. Procedures for verifying email/IM attachments
2. Antivirus software on all network and desktop computers
3. Firewall protections restricting computer access
4. Regularly updated inventory of computer hardware and software
5. Schedule for installing software and operating system patches
6. Schedule for scanning organizational computers for malware

Thompson Network Consulting offers solutions that protect confidential electronic records, ensure secure communications, and optimize computer network performance. Our solutions enable organizations to meet expected outcomes for quality service delivery.

Thompson Network Consulting services, security presentations, and event information can be found at: www.thompsnet.com