Phishing emails breaks 3 billion mark in April

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In light of the news that 12 people were arrested yesterday in London and Kent for allegedly tricking e-mail users into revealing their financial details online, please find below the very latest fraud statistics from Brightmail.

Number of fraudulent emails has grown almost ten-fold in past nine months.

Phishing - an official email that seems to be from an online bank or retailer, but is in fact a scam designed to steal personal financial information - is now a persistent threat, says anti-spam leader Brightmail.

The company saw more than 3.1 billion fraudulent spam emails last month (April 2004). That is 5% of all internet email worldwide. In August 2003, Brightmail recorded 300 million fraudulent spams.

What makes the fraudulent emails so dangerous is that they look completely legitimate at first glance and in some cases look even more professional than the organisations site. Phishers forge legitimate "from" or "received" lines, copy graphics from the legitimate website, or use pop-up windows or URLs that look very similar to the actual ones. In addition, there seems to be a recent trend to include trojans or key logger viruses. Experts assume that organised crime is behind many of the phishing attacks.

According to Mark Bruno, Enterprise Product Manager at Brightmail, any company that does business online is a potential victim - not just banks, but also ISPs and other consumer-focused companies such as retailers, airlines or online bookshops. And as online services become more widely spread, so does the phishing problem.

To minimise damage both to their brand and customers, companies must react as quickly as possible when a phishing attack occurs, e.g. by closing down the bogus website. What they need is an early warning system. Brightmail offers such a service. Brightmail Anti-Fraud works as a three-step process:

1. Fraud Detection: Brightmail's patented Probe Network of over 2 million decoy email accounts sees fraudulent email spam as soon as it hits the Internet.
2. Fraud Alert: Brightmail Anti-Fraud customers are notified immediately of fraudulent email messages posing as messages being sent from their company.
3. Fraud Blocking: Brightmail provides specific rules to block fraudulent messages for the more than 300 million email users within the company's existing customer and partner base.

Of the 96 billion emails that Brightmail filtered in April, 64% of these were spam messages. If you need more information, would like more statistics please contact GBC, Silja Binner/Sophie Heximer at +44 (0)208 322 1922 or siljab@gbc.co.uk/sophieh@gbc.co.uk. Or for product information you can call Brightmail UK Ltd on +44 (0) 1293 76 3028.

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