

GFI Software calls for smart social networking use in 2012

Submitted by: GFI Software

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Safer Internet Day calls for families to work together to keep safe online as GFI research highlights the Internet safety challenges facing teens and young adults

London, UK – February 6th, 2012 – GFI Software today released advice ahead of Safer Internet Day to help parents ensure the Internet is used safely and sensibly by children, teenagers and young adults.

In-keeping with the theme of this year's Safer Internet Day (<http://www.saferinternet.org/web/guest/safer-internet-day>) on February 7th, GFI Software is encouraging families to work together to educate each other in safe online participation and to 'Discover the Digital World Together, Safely!'

Recent research into internet use by teenagers conducted for GFI Software by OpinionMatters revealed that one in three parents do not know if Internet safety tips are being taught to their children, while nearly 25% of teens confirm they are not taught, or are not aware of being taught, about Internet safety at school.

Furthermore, 31% of teens admit they have shared information with an acquaintance online that they would not have said face-to-face, while almost a third of teenage boys admit to visiting web sites intended for adults. Over half (53%) of those who have done so admit to lying about their age to gain access.

"Ubiquitous use of social networking web sites has revolutionised the way we all communicate and interact. In particular, it has changed the way our children communicate with their friends and meet new people, while making it harder for parents to check on who their children are associating with," said Mark Patton, general manager, security business unit at GFI Software. "The Safer Internet Day message of families educating each other about safe online life is extremely important. We encourage parents to ensure that their children are enjoying all the great benefits of the Internet, without being exposed to the risks and unsuitable corners of online life that are not child-friendly."

GFI encourages families to follow these simple steps to ensure they stay safe and secure online:

Check links before clicking on them: With increased malicious use of short URL services to disguise links to malware and fake web sites, it's important to be sure about the links you click on in emails, on social networking sites and on conventional web pages. Everyone should always hover over a hyperlinked word or sentence and view what the link is before clicking. If it is a short URL such as TinyURL or a Bit.ly-style link, always approach with caution and only click through if you are absolutely sure it's from a trustworthy sender.

Don't reveal personal information online: Never post anything online that you wouldn't share with a stranger you met in the street. Make sure that social networking settings, especially for children's accounts, are set so that only approved friends can view information about you or your children, and vet who is following your family online. Never reveal your movements and your plans to be away from home online, especially on social networking services such as Facebook and Twitter.

Don't be afraid to check on children's Internet use: You wouldn't let young children play unsupervised, so you shouldn't feel compelled to let them surf the Web without a watchful eye making sure they are safe. Do look at what your children are doing, share with them advice on being careful online and explain why they shouldn't be doing things like talking to strangers in chat rooms and IM, or posting publicly-viewable personal details on social networking sites.

Keep your PC safe and secure: Web filtering software can provide a handy safety buffer, preventing access to known dangerous web sites plus any sites that parents want to limit access to. Antispam software minimises exposure to unwanted and scam messages. But most importantly, ensure you have antivirus software such as VIPRE™ Internet Security 2012 (<http://www.vipreantivirus.com/VIPRE-Internet-Security/>) installed and that it is up-to-date with the latest virus definition files. GFI's research revealed that only 28% of parents update their antivirus software daily, and 24% are unsure if their antivirus software is updated at all.

Internet safety goes beyond the web: Remember that internet access is not confined to PCs and web browsers. Gaming services on consoles also provide a means for strangers to engage with children via chat and IM within popular games, while mobile phones are starting to displace desktop and laptop PCs as the primary way that teens access the Internet (<http://www.sparkler.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Ofcom-Report-August-20111.pdf>) according to research from the UK telecoms regulator Ofcom. Ensure parental controls are activated on all these services so that you can prevent, or at least check, when children are contacting or being contacted by strangers or new gaming contacts.

To learn more about GFI VIPRE Internet Security 2012 and how it can help keep your family safe online, visit www.vipreantivirus.com.

About GFI Software

GFI Software provides web and mail security, archiving and fax, networking and security software and hosted IT solutions for small to medium-sized businesses (SMB) via an extensive global partner community. GFI products are available either as on-premise solutions, in the cloud or as a hybrid of both delivery models. With award-winning technology, a competitive pricing strategy, and a strong focus on the unique requirements of SMEs, GFI satisfies the IT needs of organizations on a global scale. The company has offices in the United States, United Kingdom, Austria, Australia, Malta, Hong Kong, Philippines and Romania, which together support hundreds of thousands of installations worldwide. GFI is a channel-focused company with thousands of partners throughout the world and is also a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner.

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