

One-in-five affected by cybercrime

Latest research by global software firm Kaspersky shows that defending corporate infrastructure against attacks from cybercriminals has become a vital challenge for information and technology (IT) security specialists globally.



The study found that 52% of IT specialists were convinced that these targeted cyber attacks would become even more frequent.

Global businesses and consumers have been under attack from cybercriminals for years and this has seen many of them lose millions of rand.

The growth and proliferation of the mobile web in South Africa means that more consumers than ever are vulnerable to cybercrimes as they access the Internet through their cellphones. The top services targeted by criminals are Internet banking, e-commerce and social media sites.

According to Kaspersky's report, which was released last week, one third of global specialists surveyed believed that sooner or later a company or individual would face a targeted cyber attack.

More than 3,300 senior IT professionals from 22 countries took part in the survey. Although South Africa was not among those countries, it is not immune to cybercrime.

The Norton Cybercrime Report, released this month, has ranked South Africa as the third worst country in the world, behind Russia and China, in terms of the frequency of cybercrimes.

Daniella Kafouris, a legal risk advisory manager at professional services firm Deloitte, says the annual global consumer price tag for cybercrimes is around \$110bn.

She says the perception that cybercrime was more of an overseas problem was incorrect as cybercrime throughout Africa was on the rise. Companies and consumers should be vigilant regarding local cybercrimes including identity theft, data leakage, online fraud, and data theft by former employees, says Kafouris.

Both the government and business in South Africa should be raising awareness among consumers of the need for data privacy, she says.

Kaspersky said the share of Internet users attacked in South Africa during the third quarter of 2012 was 21.1%. This means that one-in-five South Africans faced malware threats.

"In (the third quarter of 2012), every fifth user in South Africa and Nigeria and every fourth in Kenya faced a form of malware while surfing the Internet. This illustrates the extent of cybercrime activity and makes us work harder on raising awareness of proper protection of sensitive information," says Vasily Dyagilev, the managing director of Kaspersky's emerging markets.

Kaspersky is aiming to boost its presence and intensify its business activity in the African region - a region that is a key focus for the brand.

The African continent is particularly vulnerable to cyber threats. With cheaper and faster Internet, more Africans will be "always-on" or continually connected, increasing the number of "new" Internet users that are not security-savvy, the Wolfpack Risk and Information Security Group of Africa stated in a recent report.

Llewellyn Hartnick, cyber security specialist at Thales SA, says despite the recognition that cyber security is a growing issue of national importance there seems to be little understanding that technological developments have a global life span of, at most, six months.

"This means that effective security requires more than identification of the risks or convicting guilty criminals; it requires preventive measures that are customised to specific sectors and are continuously upgraded to block sophisticated attacks," he says.

"The reality is that smarter technologies and the modus operandi of cybercriminals - both locally and abroad - are not being effectively matched by preventive technologies that pass their 'sell-by date' within six months of being developed," says Hartnick.

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