

A new study revealing consumers' experiences with spyware confirms the need for more online security education, according to the founder of IDTheftSecurity.com

(Boston, Mass. - May 24, 2005 - IDTheftSecurity.com) Research about spyware offers telling information about the average computer user's relationship with this online threat. Data from the widely reported Ponemon Institute's 2005 National Spyware Study suggest that people may be failing to weigh the dangers of spyware appropriately. According to a Boston, Mass.-based security expert, this is just additional proof that more education is critical.

"Computer users don't understand what is going on, let alone grasp the full gravity of the risks associated with spyware," said Robert Siciliano, a nationally televised and quoted authority on personal security and identity theft. Siciliano is author of "The Safety Minute: 01" and an upcoming book, "Identity Theft Pandemic: Curing the Identity Theft Virus."

"The computer, retail, and banking industries must step up their consumer education efforts," Siciliano continued. "Many computer users don't even recognize blatant spyware attacks, but once the damage is done, the consumer and everyone else involved lose."

Ponemon's study reveals that the staggering toll spyware has exacted on computer users hasn't necessarily sounded the alarm for consumers. According to the study, 84 percent of respondents had experienced trouble with spyware. Yet most still seemed confused about spyware and indicated that, when given the choice, they would choose more access to free downloads over the development of laws to address the problem of spyware.

"If this study is any indication, the current approach to educating everyday computer users about the spyware threat is ineffective," said Siciliano. "Enjoying all the conveniences of technology, consumers also sacrifice a large degree of security. I don't think they would jeopardize themselves in this way if they truly understood the stakes."

"We see television commercials that present serious issues such as spyware and identity theft under the guise of humor," Siciliano added, "as if online security were a laughing matter. It is not."

"While Madison Avenue sure can make some entertaining commercials," Siciliano continued, "the advertising industry clearly hasn't framed the problems of spyware, identity theft, and related issues effectively. Otherwise, I doubt we'd be seeing results like those from Ponemon's study."

Most respondents to the study were unfamiliar with the lexicon of online threats. For instance, many could not differentiate between spyware and adware.

“The industry must begin to look at spyware and related threats as more than mere opportunities to increase revenue,” said Siciliano. “Advertising is for making money, but industry first needs to spend money on its existing customers’ online security education.”

###

Siciliano provides consumer education solutions to Fortune 500 companies and their clients. He has been featured on CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, "ABC News with Sam Donaldson," "The Montel Williams Show," "Maury Povich," "Sally Jesse Raphael" and "The Howard Stern Show." Siciliano also leads personal safety and security seminars nationwide.

Siciliano can be reached at 1 (888) SICILIANO (742-4542). The URL www.idtheftsecurity.com leads to his Web site. His blog is available at www.IDTheftSecurity.blogspot.com.

Siciliano's contact information follows:

Robert Siciliano
Personal Security Expert
PHONE: 888-SICILIANO (742-4542)
FAX: 877-2-FAX-NOW (232-9669)
E-MAIL: Robert@IDTheftSecurity.com

The media are encouraged to get in touch with Siciliano directly. They may also contact:

STETrevisions, strategic communications
Brent W. Skinner, President
PHONE: 617-875-4859
FAX: 866-663-6557
BrentSkinner@STETrevisions.com