



HACKING: FOR GOOD OR EVIL?

By Lindsay Trimble, NSCI

In 2008, Miami was the headquarters for one of the largest criminal computer hacks of all time when Alberto Gonzalez managed a global operation to victimize major U.S. corporations. Just two weeks ago, Miami was the headquarters for hundreds of *ethical* hackers and information security professionals.

Hacker Halted USA 2009 was held in Miami from Sept. 23 to 25 and provided the opportunity for IT security experts, managers and industry leaders to interact about the current state of information security. This was the 14th Hacker Halted conference sponsored by the International Council of E-Commerce Consultants (EC-Council), an organization that certifies individuals in various e-business and security skills.

“Organizations worldwide are investing in infrastructure but lagging implementation, measurement and review of security and privacy policies,” wrote Jay Bavisi, EC-Council president, in his welcome letter. “But it is heartening to know that organizations are beginning to recognize that information security can deliver more than just protection for information. Information assets are critical to any business and paramount to the survival of any organization in today’s globalized digital economy.”

Some speakers discussed the more technical aspects of cyber security, including defense against malware and botnets; limitations in network security monitoring; and virtualization security. Exhibitors also highlighted next generation security software, information technology education and training solutions.

A common theme at the conference was the necessity to secure *your* part of cyberspace.

“You don’t save money by cutting security,” said Howard Schmidt, CEO of the Information Security Forum. In his talk, Schmidt listed steps that should be taken to secure your part of cyberspace. He said to get the basics right; don’t rely on historical data; plan for uncertainty; adapt to changes; and build for the future.

Ira Winkler, founder of the Internet Security Advisors Group and author of *Zen and the Art of Information Security*, also provided his ideas on improving cybersecurity.

“People don’t know what they don’t know about cybersecurity,” Winkler said, explaining that many cyber attacks exploit widely-known problems. Winkler echoed Schmidt in his promotion of learning the basics first.

“A ‘master’ understands the basics and sees simplicity in difficulty,” said Winkler. He stressed that “security is a *must*, not a ‘should.’”



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Keeping Cyberspace Professionals Informed

A number of speakers focused on the intersection of crime and technology. In his talk “Jihad me this,” Treadstone 71’s Jeff Bardin discussed terrorist groups’ use of technology in recruitment and propaganda.

Jayson Street, Stratagem 1 Solutions, said that we need to “look at *all* of the facets of global cyber warfare to truly understand the problem.” He also predicted that warfare will be increasingly directed at a nation’s citizens to affect their perceptions, using the attacks on U.S. and South Korean government Web sites this year as an example.

Erik Laykin, Duffs & Phelps, examined the Gonzalez crime ring in detail and provided an overview of how the Internet is used in organized crime groups. In another talk, Bardin and Hugh Thompson, People Security, discussed the underground cyber economy. Thompson and Bardin addressed this serious topic in an entertaining way, providing an overview of the characters involved and the tactics used.

A highlight of the conference was EC-Council’s presentation of \$1 million to the International Multilateral Partnership Against Cyber Threats (IMPACT). Headquartered in Malaysia, IMPACT is the first global public-private initiative against cyber terrorism. IMPACT works to ensure the protection and security of the 191 International Telecommunication Union member states’ cyberspaces and infrastructures.

Hacker Halted USA 2009 provided a prime example of the interaction in industry, government and academia that will be imperative for a secure cyberspace.