



Call It Security

By Dwayne Vanderheiden

Everyone talks about security and the dangers posed to your computer from being on the Internet. What many don't realize, however, is that it's not just your computer that is in danger. In a matter of seconds, you could make a simple mistake and end up losing your savings account, your identity, or even your personal safety. Running antivirus software and firewalls and keeping your computer current with the latest security updates are good practices, but can all be for nothing if you aren't careful. A good rule of thumb when dealing with email and Web browsing is, *Treat any communication like a telephone call.*

When you place a call to your bank from a number you found in the phone book or on the back of your credit card, you can rest assured that the information you give out is safe. If someone called you up on the phone claiming to be a bank employee, would you blindly trust him or her and give that person your credit card information or social security number? How do you know the person really works for the bank? He or she could have found your name and telephone number in the phone book or in the trash.

Generally, upstanding companies will not call you asking for information. If you receive an email asking you to click a link to pay a bill or verify your information, that should raise a red flag. Try contacting the company another way or logging onto its website, rather than trusting the link that you received.

The same rule of thumb applies to posting information on public forums, such as newsgroups or websites, or even in your email signature. Think about anything you are posting on the Internet and ask yourself, *Would I put this on my answering machine?*

This is not to say that the Internet is a dangerous place to do business. If you securely log into websites to shop or check your bank accounts, your information can be as secure as if you called the company directly.

The Internet is a valuable resource. By taking these few extra precautions, you can take full advantage of it without risking your financial or personal security.

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