

Re: [fw-wiz] The State of Information Security, 2004 (survey)

Source: <http://www.derkeiler.com/Mailing-Lists/Firewall-Wizards/2004-09/0080.html>

From: Rebs Guarina (rebs.guarina_at_gmail.com)

Date: 09/08/04

To: "Marcus J. Ranum" <mjr@ranum.com>, firewall-wizards@honor.icsalabs.com

Date: Wed, 8 Sep 2004 08:54:06 +0800

On Sun, 05 Sep 2004 20:43:16 -0400, Marcus J. Ranum <mjr@ranum.com> wrote:

> *Speaking of "Bad Surveys" here's a classic. This just came
> across the radar screen this evening....*

<snip>

>

> *>Methodology*

> >

> *>>The State of Information Security 2004, a worldwide study by CIO Magazine*

> *>>and PricewaterhouseCoopers, was conducted online from March 22 through*

> *>>April 30, 2004. Readers of CIO Magazine, CSO Magazine and clients of*

> *>>PricewaterhouseCoopers from around the globe were invited via email to take*

> *>>the survey. The results shown in this report are based on the responses of*

> *>>more than 8,000 CEOs, CFOs, CIOs, CSOs, vice presidents and directors of IT*

> *>>and information security from 62 countries. The margin of error for this*

> *>>study is 1%.*

>

> *> OK, this is the important part, here. Can you say "self selected sample"??*

> *> Readers were emailed a survey and some of them answered. What have*

> *> we measured, here?*

I actually agree with your opinion; they have measured the responses from people who had the time to reply to their email, i.e. those who did not think that it was spam. Also, 8,000 is a statistically doubtful number. I've managed 2 national surveys, 3 regional surveys, dozens of others, and have read tons of statistical papers (being a statistician, and all); I still have to see a validly published paper whose survey sample ends in zero. I guess their sampling was biased from the start. You'll just get biased answers and biased results from your queries here.....

>

> *> One possible thing we have measured is the number of IT executives*

> *> that have spam-blockers. ;) Or we have measured the number of IT*

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- > executives who have too much free time on their hands... Or – well,
- > we don't KNOW – that's the problem with self-selected samples.
- > Of particular interest in the description above is the "clients of
- > PricewaterhouseCoopers from around the globe" – what does that
- > mean? Are they executives, or software engineers or sales reps
- > or – what? Again, we don't know. But the premise and tone of the
- > survey makes it sound like it's a scientific survey of senior executives;
- > reading the "Methodology" makes one wonder if that's the case. My
- > guess is even the folks who did the survey have very little actual
- > idea what the sampling bias was, here.
- >

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I'm always a newbie. I wouldn't know a damn thing if I were not!

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