

Internet tech dazzles FOSE convention

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Perhaps the U.S. government can rest a little easier over its battle with Internet censorship in China, knowing there is software that could circumvent the Chinese's online censor program.

That's exactly what tech company Anonymizer Inc. hopes to launch in coming months, said founder Lance Cottrell, whose company has worked with entities including the Broadcasting Board of Governors' Voice of America in Iran to do pretty much just that.

Anonymizer's services allows users to mask their IP addresses and protect their privacy, so as not to be tracked by online snoops, who can build profiles around a person's Internet activities.

"The Internet is the least anonymous thing you do in your life," Cottrell said. "If you walk past me in a store, they don't get any personal information, but if you walk by a Web site, then they got it -- your IP address."

By redirecting or rerouting an individual's Web traffic through the company's servers, which are armed with 128-bit Secure Sockets Layer technology, it can also protect against phishing, pharming or spyware sites.

This is extended not only to consumers and businesses but especially useful for government entities that can use its Field Chameleon product, which features traffic and language mixing in countering terrorists, who may build sites known as a "honey pot," that aim to obtain IP addresses

and monitor online activities.

As Cottrell said during an education seminar, such emerging threats include IP-based cloaking that Anonymizer aims to address in which a Web site changes its online content based on a user's IP address or geographic location.

Anonymizer was just one of the many hi-tech companies stationed at the three-day government technology trade show FOSE in Washington that ends Thursday.

The convention included the latest gadgets, services and security systems from 550 companies including giants Adobe, BlackBerry, Cisco Companies, Intel, Kodak, Xerox and Microsoft.

Keynote speaker Robert J. Stevens, president and chief executive officer of Lockheed Martin, opened the convention with a speech addressing the future of IT companies that must realign themselves to ensure security against a backdrop of uncertainty.

This uncertainty on a worldwide level with stabilizing Afghanistan, Iraq, North Korea and the war on terror, but also on the American consumer level with response to pandemics and natural disasters, a critical infrastructure to protect them, and the country's edge in science and technology.

"Against this backdrop, our missions now are more multi-faceted and interwoven," Stevens said. "We must provide the openness of a democracy with the security of a sovereign state; improve transparency and access while assuring privacy protection; enhance collaboration within a framework of appropriate controls; and increase efficiency and effectiveness while decreasing cost."

He urged companies to expand "the need to know" and include "the need to share," and nurture close and continuous collaboration between government and business partners, and handle fiscal pressures.

"Your job is more critical than ever," he added. "Information technologies underpin every system, every process, and every action the government undertakes. It will be your energy, your drive, your knowledge, your leadership, and your dedication that will protect and advance American interests."

With more local governments recognizing the value of secure wireless architecture to telemedicine and video conferencing during emergency operations, many of the companies at the convention reflected the interest of communication in a time of security and emergency and the role of a wireless and interoperability system among entities.

In fact, reps from the District of Columbia government spoke at the convention Tuesday about the region's first city-wide project, the 2004 Wireless Accelerated Responder Network project, which they plan to extend via wireless broadband network and fiber-optic secured networks in coming months.

And companies providing services using wireless networks are banking that government and law enforcement will want to use secure communication gadgets enabling communication in times of crisis is coming from companies such as Polycom, who provides technology for video conferencing.

In critical communication, the company recommends the Mobile Responder, a portable, durable video conferencing laptop unit with built-in display, camera, microphone, IP network interface and AES encryption.

"With the advent of broadband, it has pushed video conferencing into the mainstream," said Rich Itkin, a manager of sales for the government with the company.

However, it could also be used for training, distance learning and telemedicine, Itkin added.

But among the durable, tougher laptops, multi-network mobiles and state-of-the-art cameras and scanners that were present, there were smaller hidden treasures at the convention.

The Victor, N.Y., company Kirtas Technologies Inc., like their motto says, is moving knowledge from books to bytes.

The company showed the Kirtas BookScan 2400 Gold, a manual book-scanning system that uses a manual to automatic page turner and digital cameras to capture images of each page in a book, which is then sent to a computer and where its BookScan Editing PRO is used for optical character recognition conversion.

The company started when a principal of the Venture Lab at Xerox Corporation, Dr. Lotfi Belkhir, sought an exclusive technology license from Xerox for the book-scanning technology back in 2001 when Xerox canceled funding for non-core projects, including this one.

According to Borden Mills, a lead image technician with the company, the system can scan 2,400 pages per hour and about 40 images a minute. But it could also scan a 300-page document and make it searchable in 177 languages in less than eight minutes.

And business is doing good especially among universities and businesses that are digitizing their libraries, buying the book scanner or sending their books to be scanned.

Already, the Rochester Library in New York is among those that have bought the scanner in order to digitize its documents on the region's local history, Mills mentioned.

"Businesses like Google and Amazon are recognizing the need to digitize everything," he said. "And so we're in a position right now, in the perfect spot, where digitizing documents is very important."

Also, on the school front is Serious Magic, which has enabled students at Pickens Middle School in South Carolina to make professional newscasts for their television announcements.

"It's made for the person who doesn't have to be tech-savvy," said Chris Putnam, a sales rep from the company. "Everything is drag and drop."

All one needs is a camera, a computer and a green screen, along with the company's innovative video software, and not only is it aimed at redefining how presentations are given in businesses but also intended for bloggers too for "vlogging" or video blogging.

Other notable technologies include:

-- Meganet Corporation's VME Terminator H2 -- a broadband bomb jammer for improvised explosive devices.

-- NITGEN Co., Ltd.'s biometric technology that detects fake fingerprints.

-- Itronix's semi-rugged VR-1 Notebook that withstands temperature, vibration and humidity.

-- SMART Technologies Inc. interactive whiteboard products.

-- Jupiter's Fusion 960 Display Wall Processor, which provides control-room applications, graphics, video display and ControlPoint Software.

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