

Cyber crooks riding social-networking wave: report

August 17 2009



Customers browse the Internet on August 11, 2009 at a cybercafe in Ivory Coast, Abidjan, which has become a leader in cybercrime. A hacking incident report released Monday warns there has been a steep rise in attacks at social-networking hotspots including wildly popular microblogging service Twitter.

A hacking incident report released Monday warns there has been a steep rise in attacks at social-networking hotspots including wildly popular microblogging service Twitter.

Hackers aren't just hunting for victims in the flocks of people at social networks, they're also using Twitter to command "botnet" armies of infected computers, according to [Internet security](#) specialists.

"Any website with a huge user following is now attracting the bad guys," said Ryan Barnett, director of application security research for Breach

Security.

"A lot of Web 2.0 widgets, mashups and the like that users go for make it easy for all these guys to launch attacks."

Facebook became an Internet star after opening its platform to [widgets](#), mini-applications made by outside developers, and now boasts more than 250 million members.

Barnett was among the authors of a Web Hacking Incidents Database Bi-Annual Report that concluded [social-networking](#) was the most popular "vertical market" for hackers in the first six months of this year.

The prime targets for attacks in 2008 were government and law enforcement websites, according to the Web Hacking Incidents Database.

Researchers analyzed computer security incidents worldwide, finding the number of [Web](#) attacks jumped 30 percent from the same period last year. Hackers targeted social networks in 19 percent of the attacks, according to the report.

"If you look back at 2007 and 2008 reports, criminals who are profit-driven with an end goal of identity theft were targeting e-commerce websites," Barnett said.

"What we started to see last year is that they are continuing to do that but that they have really branched out."

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Citation: Cyber crooks riding social-networking wave: report (2009, August 17) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-08-cyber-crooks-social-networking.html>

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