

## **SECURE?**

### ***The Good Old Days***

Maybe in happier times, long ago, we might have been in the habit of going out and leaving our doors unlocked. No longer. We have learned that leaving things unlocked is like writing 'Help Yourself' above an open door. We lock our doors and windows; we lock our cars, and rightly so.

### ***Help Yourself***

So why is it that we are so free with access to our computers? Often, when we are installing a new wireless LAN, we find an unsecured network - *help yourself*. Many offices use trivial passwords, or even no passwords at all - *help yourself*. Many internet connections do not have the protection of a firewall - *help yourself*.

### ***It's so difficult***

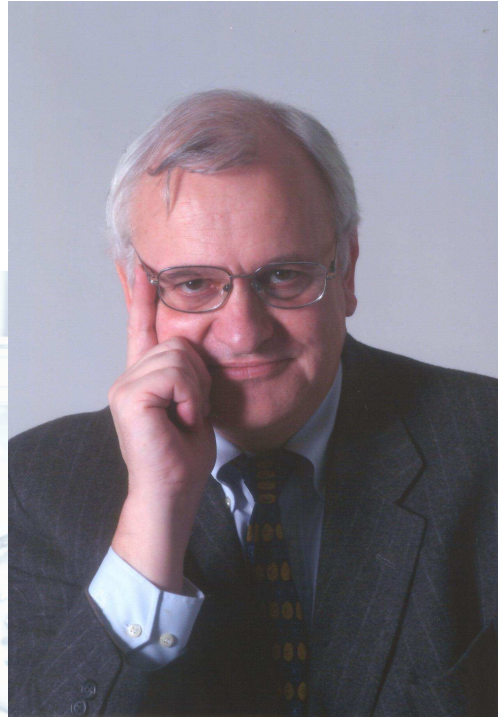
At least part of the problem is that these things are hard to understand or check, and so you might expect me to say 'use a specialist'. In fact that could be a good idea, especially if you are particularly concerned. There are, however, many things that you can do yourself or with the help of a knowledgeable person to check on the security of your systems.

### ***Things to do***

Firstly check that you have a Virus Guard on every machine in your network and that it is kept up-to-date and scans your disc for viruses regularly. Check your operating systems are set to update automatically. Check that you have up-to-date data backups and that you can actually access the files. Make sure that everyone who uses your systems knows the basics of password security and that all user accounts are password protected. Make sure they understand the threats posed by internet access and email. Use a hardware firewall and scan it to check for open ports. Make sure router and firewall default passwords have been changed. Make sure that wireless networks have been set up securely.

### ***The human touch***

Do not forget that the weakest link in most computer systems is the human being that uses it. Do backup procedures actually get followed? Are passwords written on yellow sticky notes beside the screen? What damage would a disgruntled employee or a malicious person be able to do? Have employees been told about their responsibilities when using email and the internet?



## **Feel Better?**

IT Security is a big subject and in many ways one for specialists. However by taking a few simple steps you will have gone some way to making your systems more secure and removing the 'Help Yourself' sign.

*ITSolve have produced a help-sheets 'Ten things to do today', 'PC Security Checklist' and 'Network Security Checklist'. If you would like a copy simply email [itmatters@itsolve.co.uk](mailto:itmatters@itsolve.co.uk) or download it from [www.itsolve.co.uk/HelpSheets](http://www.itsolve.co.uk/HelpSheets)*

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