

Avoid the seven deadly sins of computing

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MCCONNELL AIR FORCE BASE, Kan. — Does it seem lately that every time you turn around the “comm. police” are telling you what you can’t do on the network or what you must do if you want to be on the network?

Information networks, both classified and unclassified, are rapidly becoming a crucial part of military operations. How do you feel when you come to work and the e-mail isn’t working, or, worse yet, your computer has crashed?

If you’re like most of us, when the network is down, you probably have a very unproductive and frustrating day. Our heavy reliance on information technology is apparent, especially when it’s unavailable. This is especially true in combat operations. During Operation Allied Force, if the secure network would have been unavailable, the aircrews would have had a hard time getting timely intelligence on threats, such as the locations of anti-aircraft batteries and surface-to-air missiles.

As more and more of our operations rely on timely and accurate information, the importance of the networks and the information that resides on them increases. Information networks and their availability are becoming so important that the U.S. government recently established a national information security organization to protect commercial enterprises from network sabotage and espionage.

The Air Force is a step ahead with information warfare centers, and the Defense Department recently created the Joint Task Force-Computer Network Defense to monitor incidents and potential threats and coordinate actions to stop or contain damage caused by network attacks.

This means that you and your information are becoming more and more critical to our national defense. To ensure the availability of your/our information we need you to avoid the seven deadly sins of computing: invalid passwords, chain letters, personal gain, large e-mails, games, unofficial Internet surfing and unlicensed software.

Invalid Passwords

Poor passwords equal poor security. Our computer security guys are able to crack over 800 of your passwords in less than five minutes — a hacker’s dream come true! Valid passwords look like this, Ba\$3ba1l ... not this Baseball#1. Don’t use profanity or words that can be found in the dictionary. Put special characters and numbers in



the middle of the password, not at the beginning or end.

Cracking software always starts at the beginning or the end of your password, making numbers and special characters the easiest to “crack” in those locations. And by the way, if you don’t have a good password and we crack it, we’re going to throw your account in the “sin bin” where it will be until your workgroup manager resurrects your account.

The 437th Communications Squadron’s Network Control Center frequently scans the network for users with invalid passwords according to NCC chief Al Green. If a user is found to have an invalid password three times, he or she is taken off the network and referred to the the user’s commander, who decides on disciplinary action. The NCC will allow the user back on the network only after the commander has given approval.

Chain letters

Chain letters are e-mails that encourage you to forward them to others indiscriminately. Some are fake virus warnings, stuff that’s “cool” or “funny,” or sad stories. Chain letters with attachments should automatically trigger suspicion, because that’s how viruses spread. Note: If you get e-mail with the title “Send this e-mail to everyone you know!” delete it immediately — it’s a guaranteed hoax. In addition, if it doesn’t have to do with your official duties, delete it and report it to your workgroup manager so we can prevent its spread across the network.

Personal gain

If you’re making money from it, you shouldn’t be doing it on your computer at work. Internet access and the computer you work on are provided courtesy of the U.S. taxpayer so you can defend this country ... not so you can “make a buck.”

Large e-mails

Contrary to popular belief, that 10 megabyte briefing or two megabyte e-greeting is probably not that important to every member of the wing. Also, that one megabyte e-mail sent to 300 people is like sending a 300 megabyte server-busting bomb.

We have placed limits on the size of e-mails to prevent someone from inadvertently “bringing the network to its knees” by overtaxing and subsequently “crashing” the servers. If you really need to send a big file, use file compression software.

Games

Games sure are fun, but they have no place on official government networks. Why not? They prevent you from focusing on your duties and result in thousands of unproductive hours in the workplace. Additionally, several games have been triggers for viruses and trojan horses that have wreaked havoc on DOD networks.

Internet

Pornography and unofficial Internet sites (sports, personal shopping and horoscopes) are not to be accessed on government systems. More and more official government applications are moving to the Internet, placing huge demands on our already busy network.

Surfing unofficial sites wastes precious bandwidth, preventing military personnel from accessing sites required for performing their duties. And no matter how many times we say not to...very often somebody gets caught surfing porn. Getting caught will put a damper on your career and is also embarrassing.

Unlicensed software

Unlicensed software is becoming a huge issue. Most of the illegal software is caused by borrowing the installation CD from your buddy’s machine — before you know it, your whole organization has the same serial number. Fines for using unlicensed software are in the millions for organizations our size. There is no excuse for having illegal software on your machine.

Requests to purchase software via an Air Force Form 3215 are the only way to ensure that you have valid, licensed, virus-free software that will work nicely on your machine and our network.

Love them or hate them, computers are here to stay. By avoiding the seven deadly sins of computing, you’re doing your part to ensure our information is secure. **(Staff Sgt. Michael Duhe contributed to this AMCNS article)**

Recruiters

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people with a mechanical or electrical background. “The same shortages we face are the same that the civilian industry faces,” said Staff Sgt. Robert B. Archuleta, an Air Force recruiter covering the West Ashley and North Charleston areas.

He added that people who work in the maintenance squadrons, such as crew chiefs, have some of the highest test scores. “Those people have great skills that they learned in the Air Force, but are hard to keep when the economy is so good.”

The Air Force is currently offering signing bonuses from \$1,000 to

\$12,000. “Right now, if we sign someone in the mechanical, electronic and electrical aptitude areas and they depart for basic training before May 31st, we’ll give them an additional \$1,000 on top of the other bonuses,” Archuleta said. He added that the Air Force is constantly changing the bonuses and it is best for those interested to call and ask about which areas offer bonuses.

Although the Air Force has very high standards, recruiters have some leeway in getting waivers for potential recruits. “We sometimes run across a person who made a mistake, but otherwise is an outstanding candidate for the Air Force. We can send a request to our headquarters and ask for special consideration. It

is for that reason, we ask people to speak directly with a recruiter to determine what is waiverable and what isn’t.”

Recruiters are interested in anyone from the ages of 17 to 27 (in the non-prior service program) and up to age 47 in the health professionals areas. They are still very much interested in attracting prior service personnel.

The Air Force has a strong benefits package to include good starting pay with regular pay raises; tax free housing and food allowances; 30 days vacation with pay each year; education and training opportunities; comprehensive medical and dental care; recreational and hobby facilities; tuition assistance for college and opportunities to participate in

the Montgomery GI bill and earn thousands of dollars to use for education expenses.

The recruiters have offices in the West Ashley and North Charleston areas. The two primary recruiters are Staff Sgts. Michael Robinson and Archuleta. They can be reached by calling 763-0482, 553-8450 or 553-8466. The health professions/officer accessions recruiter is Tech. Sgt. Perry Anderson at 760-2682. Their office hours are usually Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and can meet on Saturdays by appointment.

Charleston airmen interested in speaking in local high schools or in assisting the local recruiters can leave their name and number with the public affairs office at 963-5657 or 3383.

