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IE Exploit Lets Attackers Plant Programs on SP2

New attack finds yet another leak in local resource security that Windows XP Service Pack 2 and subsequent patches were supposed to plug.

A security researcher has discovered a new exploit for Microsoft Corp.'s Windows XP Service Pack 2 that allows programs to be planted and executed on fully-patched systems.

The researcher, known as http-equiv and operator of the malware.com Web site, discovered a weakness in the local security zone of Internet Explorer which, through the use of the HTML Help control, allows security restrictions in the zone to be bypassed.

In combination with a separate vulnerability, in which drag-and-drop operations permit executable content to be placed on the system, the result of the attack is the delivery and execution of potentially hostile code from an external Web site. The researcher provides a proof of concept example on the site.

The drag-and-drop component of the example is surprising in light of Microsoft's recent patching of a related vulnerability. Thor Larholm, senior security researcher for PivX Solutions, said the Microsoft patch, designated MS04-038, "does not patch the drag-and-drop problem directly—instead it tries to prevent its use by limiting the types of files that can be used in DYNsrc."

DYNsrc specifies the address of a media object used in a Web page. "As http-equiv demonstrates in his original post, this restriction could be circumvented," Larholm said.

In order to deliver and run the attack code the user must perform a drag-and-drop operation. In a real-world attack, users would probably be enticed with a media file such as an image or music, but the file would contain the attack code, according to a description written by Symantec Corp.

A Microsoft spokeswoman said the company is investigating reports of a vulnerability affecting Windows XP Service Pack 2 and earlier versions of Windows that could enable an attacker to place a malicious file on a user's system.

"Microsoft is not aware of any customer impact at this time. However we will continue to investigate the issue to determine the appropriate course of action to protect our customers. This might include providing a fix through our monthly patch release process or an out-of-cycle update, depending on customer needs," she said.

Microsoft also advises customers who have applied the latest Internet Explorer update, MS04-038, to set the "Drag and Drop or copy and paste files" option in the Internet and Intranet zone to "Disable" or "Prompt." Once this setting is changed, the spokeswoman said, the attack described in the report will not succeed. In addition, customers who have set their Internet Security zone settings set to high will not be impacted by this vulnerability. networks under a swarm of bogus traffic.

A New Vehicle for King Content

New websites are being launched daily. In order to compete, webmasters need to find alternative ways of producing themed websites. Highly focused articles are often sought by webmasters.

Why? Because content on the web is still king! In order to attract search engines and site visitors, webmasters rely heavily on providing new, innovative and fresh content.

If the website content is rich, visitors will come. If the website content is updated regularly, visitors will return. When evaluating a website's traffic it is easy to see that the low cost of syndicated content can increase a website's value.

Sites that contain multiple pages related to a specific topic increase the likelihood of being 'found' when a variety of search phrases are used for that topic.

By creating a niche resource, webmasters are viewed as industry experts and their

websites are more likely to receive incoming directory links. A number of publishers provide free-content, the only stipulation being that the webmaster serving the content must include the author resource box. Webmasters utilizing free-content can easily create portals teeming with themed content.

Unlocking the Key to RSS.

Many webmasters are struggling to find fresh, innovative content while other savvy webmasters have realized the potential hidden within RSS and are adopting the technology at a maddening pace. By utilizing RSS, webmasters can tap numerous free-content sources with very little effort. RSS truly is a webmaster's key to free-content.

Webmasters interested in taking advantage of RSS have a number of resources available to them: GoArticles is a free-content article directory with more than 20,000 articles available for syndication. Recently GoArticles added a feature that

will allow webmasters and site owners to add dynamically updated article headlines to their sites by simply adding a single line of java script into their webpage. More than 100 articles are added daily to GoArticles.

The content is refreshed and indexed every 3 hours, so new articles are updated on the site 8 times a day. Webmasters looking for content can include theme-based RSS feeds into their site, using java script supplied by GoArticles. The java script accesses an RSS feed that contains the article headlines on the GoArticles site.

GoArticles has 64 article categories, making it easy for webmasters to find content that suits their interest. Webmasters can select either the most recent articles in a specific category or the most popular articles in a specific category. As new articles are added to the GoArticles directory, the content on the websites using the java script will dynamically update.

IBM Sets Date For New Tools Bundle

The company announced Wednesday that the next version of its Rational Software Platform, formerly code-named Atlantic, will ship by the end of the year.

With the suite, IBM intends to deliver a unified set of tools that addresses different phases of the application development process, from the initial requirement gathering to design, construction, testing and deployment.

The release is also expected to raise the stakes in an ongoing contest among IBM, Microsoft and others to win over customers through software development tools. Typically, software companies make little profit on development tools, but they can lead to related sales of more

lucrative server software needed to run custom-built business applications.

IBM acquired Rational in December 2002 and has worked to integrate the company's various tools, which are used for modeling, testing and other aspects of development. IBM said it used the Eclipse open source software to knit together the various tools.

Following IBM's acquisition of Rational, Microsoft began its own project to create a suite of tools that addresses different phases in the application development process. The company plans to release Visual Studio Team System next year, which will feature new modeling tools.

In the process, Microsoft and IBM are linking their tools more closely to their more profitable server software, Driver said. "Microsoft, like IBM, believes they can't depend on partners (for tools suites) and think it's much more important to own them directly," he said. IBM has built the Atlantic tools on Eclipse 3.0, open source software, which allows programmers to unify different tools through a common user interface and mechanism for sharing information.

Driver said better tool integration is becoming increasingly important to corporate customers. Businesses are taking on more complex applications, which require more capable tools. Also, some companies

are now more likely to design new applications in-house, and then outsource the actual coding offshore, which requires a well organized toolset to coordinate the hand-off, he said.

Looking ahead, IBM plans to introduce greater use of "patterns," or prewritten application designs and code, which will help business customers create applications more quickly, said Mills.

"The retrieval and incorporation of pattern information into modeling tools is one of the big areas of investment. We see a lot of potential breakthroughs of repeatable processes," said Mills.

Google's Trap, DMOZ's Nap, and Yahoo!'s Crap

On November 16th, 2003, Google commenced an update (the Florida update) which had a catastrophic effect for a very large number of websites and, in the process, turned search engine optimization upside down.

It is common to give alphabetical names to Google's updates in the very same way that names are given to hurricanes, and this one became known as "Florida".

In a nutshell, a vast number of pages, many of which had ranked at or near the top of the results for a very long time, suddenly disappeared from the results altogether.

To so many on the Internet, Google has become the omnipotent "hand of God" and it's sickening! Why are so many people falling into the trap of optimizing their website's to cater to Google's ever-changing algorithms? I refuse to play that game! I personally could care less about my search engine rankings. I never have. My search engine rankings go up and down like a yo-yo! They have for years. Yet, I'm still able to comfortably support myself and my family.

If you're fortunate enough to achieve a high search engine ranking, consider it a bonus. But do not make the search engines a priority!

Why? Because when you stop to consider that Google, DMOZ and Yahoo! have millions and millions of pages in their directories, you'd really have a better chance of winning the lottery, than getting high enough in the results pages where it's going to make a significant difference in your traffic.

So, where's my traffic coming from? Well, the vast majority of it comes from the dozens of articles I've written that have been picked up and published on popular websites. I also get traffic via word of mouth, newsletters that my articles are published in, and a few other secret methods that I use.

And if all of the search engines disappeared tomorrow, I'd be just fine, because I'm a marketing man. I know how to market myself and my service. I was lucky enough to be born a "baby boomer." That means I had the honor and privilege of personally seeing first-hand, some of the greatest copywriting in history. I took lots of notes and learned my lessons well.

Will somebody wake up DMOZ? I hear they're sleeping on the job. DMOZ (The Open Directory Project) is another prime example of why you shouldn't depend on search engines or directories. I've heard and read countless horror stories about DMOZ taking 9 months to a year or more to add new sites to their directory, and in many cases not adding perfectly qualified sites at all. I've also heard their directory is not kept up to date, because the editors can't keep up with the workload.

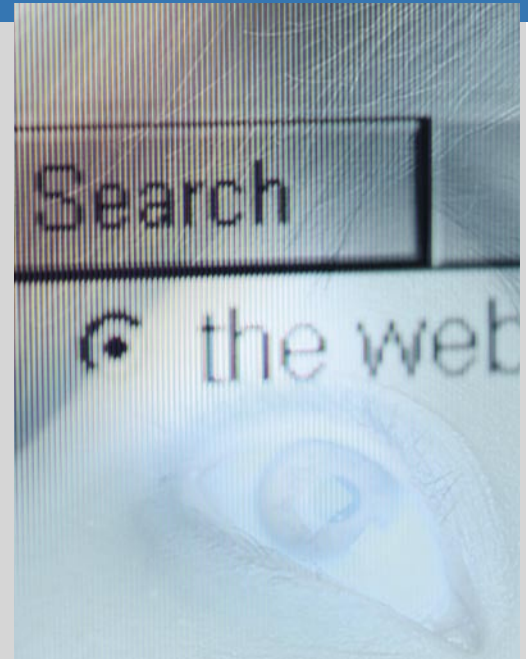
In addition, it's been widely reported that they don't respond to e-mails, don't inform you if and when your site is rejected, and that some of the editors are rude and arrogant.

Who cares how much weight Google places on being listed in DMOZ? You don't have to put up with that nonsense! Find alternative ways to attract traffic to your website.

"We established Yahoo! Express as part of a suite of services that Yahoo! has created to service small business needs. Through Yahoo! Express, we can ensure that sites suggested by merchants such as yourself are viewed and evaluated in a timely manner by Yahoo!'s editorial staff.

Your payment and participation in Yahoo! Express guarantees that within seven business days a member of Yahoo!'s editorial staff will look at your site and consider it for inclusion in the Yahoo! directory.

Please keep in mind that payment does not automatically guarantee inclusion in the directory, site placement, or site commentary. As with all sites suggested



to us, final judgement remains solely with Yahoo! editors.

Yahoo! Express Guarantees All Yahoo! Express submissions will be evaluated within seven business days. You will receive an email response within seven business days, stating whether your entry is accepted or declined. (If your entry is denied, you will be told why.)

The Cost of Yahoo! Express Yahoo! Express requires a US \$299.00 non-refundable, recurring annual fee per submission, or US \$600.00 non-refundable, recurring annual fee for submissions offering adult content and/or services. Yahoo! Express does not guarantee a listing in the Yahoo! directory, nor does it guarantee the type of placement or description that your site will receive if accepted. Please read our Yahoo! Express Terms of Service to review the terms and conditions of Yahoo! Express."

Remember: Do not depend solely on search engines for your traffic! Find alternative ways to attract traffic to your website. If you're fortunate enough to achieve a high search engine ranking, consider it a bonus. But do not make the search engines a priority!

Selling VS. Buying

Salespeople and customers often confuse selling a service or product versus buying the service or product. So what is the difference?

When new products are introduced to the market, (e.g. cellular phones in 1983 and personal computers), they had to be sold. This means the salespeople had to educate their prospects on why they should need the products. When cell phones came out, people thought the only time you should talk on the phone was if it was tied to the desk or wall, or placed in a phone booth.

They couldn't understand why someone would want to talk on a phone from their car, while out hiking, or while waiting in line at a restaurant to be seated. They thought such a concept was an anchor and wouldn't give them freedom.

Salespeople had to "sell" them on the idea that it was exactly the opposite: it gives you freedom to go anywhere you want, whenever you want. Plus, it was a safety device because

loved ones could call for help if stranded on a freeway with car troubles.

The same with personal computers. People thought only the people in the data processing departments were smart enough to work the computers and that was their exclusive territory.

Plus, executives were appalled at having to sit behind a keyboard and type their own letters. It was very demeaning. After all, wasn't that why they hired secretaries? But then they were educated on the value of doing spreadsheets, of having access to volumes of data that before was inaccessible except at the whim of information specialists, and of the introduction and value of email and the Internet.

First time users of cell phones and personal computers had to be sold. The salespeople made tremendous commissions because of the difficulty of the sale and the education process required, not to mention the multiple call backs and endless presentations and proposals.

When products are no longer sold but bought, salespeople become expendable and must find other new ideas and concepts to educate others on. But don't worry about the salespeople. Entrepreneurs and inventors are coming up with new ideas every day. These ideas have to be sold. Salespeople will always be employed, but just in different areas.



The Basics of Charitable Giving

Donating time or money to your favorite charity can be rewarding on a personal level. But come tax time, don't overlook the opportunity to reap tax benefits as well. In order to reap these tax benefits for the 2004 tax year, your donations must be made prior to December 31.

Your donations may be deductible if the type of giving and the recipient of your gesture meet tax law criteria. But you can't deduct your charitable contributions if you don't itemize deductions. Also, not every non-profit organization is a tax-qualified charitable organization. If in doubt, ask the group whether your contribution is "tax-deductible."

- **Cash Contributions:** When you give direct financial support to a charity, it's considered a cash contribution regardless of your method of payment.

This includes any donation you make in the form of cash, check, credit card or payroll deduction. Also in this category are out-of-pocket or car expenses you incur while donating your services.

If you contribute to a charity and also receive something, such as candy or dinner, then your deduction is the amount you paid minus the value of the goods or services you received.

- **Volunteer Time:** The value of the time or services you spend on charitable work is not deductible. For example, if you're a graphic designer who spent hours on the church newsletter, you can't deduct your professional hourly fee.

But, you can deduct 14 cents a mile for the use of your car for charitable purpose, or you can deduct your actual expenses, such as gasoline. If you

donated any supplies or food during volunteer work, you can deduct the cost of those.

- **Goods:** You can deduct the purchase price of new items. But the amount of deduction for used goods, such as clothing, household goods, furniture or other non-cash items, isn't as straightforward. It's based on the item's fair market value.

While you want to be sure not to overestimate what something might be worth (watch out for sentimental pricing), you also don't want to underestimate it. Many taxpayers underestimate the value of their contribution because they don't know how to assign accurate fair market values to their donations. To better determine value on your donated items, you might want to visit a thrift store to check out prices.