

CYBER CRIMES - who cares?

Warren Mallard speaks out for the victims of online criminals and asks why governments have failed to take a simple step towards shutting down the fraudsters.

Almost every day I receive emails from victims of internet and email fraud - cyber crime. They are prey to devious individuals taking advantage of their naivety or kind hearts to deceptively obtain benefits. Are the victims just stupid? Not everyone has a high IQ but many are just lonely and searching for love, understanding or friendship. Others are just trying to do business in making a purchase or selling a product on eBay.

Someone has to have the courage & commitment to act

Police tell many their matter is inconsequential. Most have lost considerable sums of money and some their life's savings. Often following the loss comes depression, added costs to the health system and in extreme cases, suicide.

One client has lost \$500,000 another \$45,000 - both decent yet naïve & trusting individuals cleverly duped by professional predators.

The internet has created a powerful means for criminals to defraud. They trawl for their victims on such things as Facebook, chat lines, Twitter, dating agencies and eBay. It's not all about money either! The unscrupulous and unethical use the net to victimise, defame, slander and impose themselves in the lives of others with almost total immunity to detection and prosecution.

The real problem

Inaction by government in regulation and their agencies in investigation and enforcement is the real problem. Rarely acting citing a lack of resources, funding or an inability to trace email addresses means

there are no real figures as to just how many victims there are.

I suspect cyber crime makes all other crime pale into insignificance in terms of the human and financial toll.

Where do you go when defamed, slandered or you've lost your life's savings to an internet fraudster? Will the internet service providers (ISP) assist if the police won't? Generally, no! They claim privacy laws prevent them disclosing the identity of the email sender.

There are no rules or legal obligations when creating an email address. Police have the power to demand information but seldom do unless it's a major crime. Lawyers can commence an action against an ISP but this is very costly and most victims having lost their life savings cannot afford it. Problematic too is that most ISPs are located overseas.

Most of these crimes go unsolved. Many are not even investigated. Victims are repeatedly told "your matter is not all that important and we have to prioritise" - the Police don't have the resources, the will or the technology.

A PI can find the persons responsible and help to bring them to justice but it's generally a difficult and costly process involving actions through the legal system to subpoena the ISPs to provide the identities of the

villains - then the investigative process can begin.

Many of those scammed can't afford to pay for an investigation. The criminal usually won't have the funds for later recovery.

Simple solution begging for implementation

In most developed nations we need proof of identity to do most things - to obtain employment, a driving licence, a passport, a dog registration, to qualify for social security benefits, to buy liquor and cigarettes and to open a bank account etc. Why then does the fastest vehicle on the planet, the internet, not require a licence to get on board?

Why are users allowed to make false email addresses under assumed names even being encouraged by the ISPs to do so and yet retain total anonymity as they defraud and manifest themselves upon the innocent and unsuspecting? Why do ISPs encourage the use of an alias? Greed can be the only plausible and cogent excuse. They want you to use their product as many times as possible. They know what is happening as they are constantly served with legal documents requesting the identity of the sender.

The net and those behind it are so powerful and wealthy any involvement by governments or law enforcement

agencies to require users to provide proof of identity to open an email account would likely be met with great opposition.

Don't we have to provide proof of identity to minimise crime and thereby protect the victims of crime. Alone it doesn't eradicate crime but proof of identity dramatically reduces crime. Imagine not being able to identify the owner/



driver of a motor vehicle which collided with your vehicle?

Global legislation for proof of identity of individuals establishing email addresses is needed. Some will say countries will resist but perhaps those countries so prominent in cyber-crime such as undeveloped African nations may actually welcome such a move. If countries don't become a party to such universal law don't let them send e-mails beyond their own borders. They'll soon get the message. Businesses and governments can't survive today without the internet - it's a no brainer!

So enamoured of the net and its communicative, educative, money making and creative abilities, have we become

scared to legislate for fear it might take away a fraction of what we are so reliant upon? Just like having to provide proof of identity to obtain a license to drive a car, it won't!

Proof of identity laws if enacted won't stop individuals disguising themselves but will allow cyber crime victims and law enforcement agencies to more easily establish the user of specific email addresses and seek recourse. Not a silver bullet but such laws would reduce internet fraud on a massive scale.

Mobile telephones are another area where these laws have application - currently a phone card can be purchased without any proof of identity, providing

the means for criminals to avoid detection and denying their victims any avenue for recourse.

We're not all equal, nor are we all smart enough to smell a scam. Not all are lucky in love and not all have the ability to sort out their own problems. Add to this that scammers are increasingly clever and devious in their planning and execution. Their victims are in the millions and increasing daily. Something must be done - someone has to have the courage and commitment to act. ■

[Warren Mallard is Managing Director of IMA member, Lyonswood Investigations & Forensic Group based in Sydney NSW.]

It's scammed

It's scammed. The words were repeated over and over again in the mind of a woman who had just been scammed out of her life savings. She had been contacted by a man who offered her a job. The job was in Florida, and she had to travel to Florida to meet with him. She had been told that the job was a sales position, and she had been told that she would be paid well. She had been told that she would be able to work from home, and she had been told that she would be able to work flexible hours. She had been told that she would be able to work from home, and she had been told that she would be able to work flexible hours. She had been told that she would be able to work from home, and she had been told that she would be able to work flexible hours.

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Prosecutors in Orange County, California, contend Stanes posed as a licensed private investigator by giving US states and caused not only a woman's heart and ex-spouse who located his business online, but also the net. He was caught here. Those who tried to warn others argue Stanes came after them with a vengeance.

A former police officer convinced of their and stalking, prosecutors say Stanes has never been a licensed private investigator. According to the media report, he was expected to be arraigned on (6) counts including grand theft, second-degree residential burglary, possession of a firearm by a felon, theft, identity theft, peeping, computer access and fraud, and possession of ammunition by a prohibited person.

Since 2005 Stanes had used the internet to advertise investigative services under different names, including K25 Investigations, FirstFront Investigations, and First Investigations. Orange County Sheriff's DA stated in a press release that Stanes "devised a marketing strategy to his advantage that involved posing as making up don't trust his friends".

Lori Johnson of Newport Beach is a PI and in 2008 she was seeking out work opportunities for her business on the net when she encountered dozens of postings of complaints against a cover calling from Stanes. She saw "They were basically saying 'I've been scammed' saying they'd

They were distraught... and they had no idea who they had been scammed by. She had been told that she would be able to work from home, and she had been told that she would be able to work flexible hours. She had been told that she would be able to work from home, and she had been told that she would be able to work flexible hours. She had been told that she would be able to work from home, and she had been told that she would be able to work flexible hours. She had been told that she would be able to work from home, and she had been told that she would be able to work flexible hours.

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