

A **Guidance Consulting** White Paper



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Are You the Target of a Denial of Service Attack?

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Are You the Target of a Denial of Service Attack?

Google. Twitter. Facebook. Major companies like these are becoming the victims of denial of service attacks. Twitter was unable to quickly recover from its first attack because the company had not invested in availability consulting services, and so its social media service was unavailable for several hours. Although major and very public companies like these provide an appealing target, they aren't the only ones at risk.

Companies big and small are now being targeted for these types of malicious attacks. Finding the source and correcting it may come after your company's reputation is damaged. The effects may be longer than the time your system is unavailable for use.

Availability consultants work with companies of all sizes to prevent denial of service attacks. They successfully map out strategies to execute should a system be attacked so that the infrastructure continues to run smoothly despite attempts at infiltration from the outside.

How Denial of Service Attacks Happen

A denial of service attack keeps customers, employees, and vendors from accessing your networks. This can occur not only through a flood of information sent to a network which it simply cannot handle, but it can also come in the form of disrupting a connection or service.

There are three primary types of attacks:

- Use of limited resources: Most attacks target a network connection. Because a system has a limited number of connections, a flood of information will disable it.
- Destruction and/or changing of configuration info: By changing information within your system, such as your routers' information, an attacker can immobilize your system.
- Physically destroying or altering network components: To achieve this, someone must have physical access to your systems. Physical attacks can be just as devastating as virtual ones.

Distributed Denial of Service Attacks

An attacker can also use your company's network to attack another company's network. This is called a distributed denial of service attack (DDOS). The attacker can use your system to flood the other system with large amounts of data. These attacks may be harder to trace than traditional attacks, and if you are the victim of a DDOS, you may find yourself in the middle of a lawsuit. It can be difficult to prove you are not liable when the attack came from your system, whether it was invited or not.

Symptoms of a Denial of Service Attack

Not all problems with an infrastructure indicate that it is a denial of service attack. However, here are a few signs that should clue you in to the possibility that your system is being attacked:

- Unusually slow activity on the network
- Website is not available
- Inability to access any website from network
- More spam email than usual

What to Do

Your IT staff may or may not know what to do in case of an attack. In most cases, they will spend countless hours making phone calls and sending emails trying to investigate the solution. Can you afford to lose this time?

If the problem is beyond your IT staff's capabilities, call an availability consultant from Guidance Consulting to offer solutions. However, know that your best strategy is safeguarding against attacks in the first place.

How Availability Consulting Works

The key to availability consulting is prevention. After all, working to make your infrastructure stronger *before* an attack is the best protection against an attack. Consider it insurance: wouldn't you invest in yourself to reduce the risk of a problem and develop a plan in case of one?

An availability consultant will use his or her expertise to assess your system and determine where a denial of service attack might occur. He or she will test your system to see what kind of strain it can handle, and may even create a test denial of service attack to see what the scenario would be in the event of an actual attack.

Once your consultant determines how much information your system can process, he or she can make recommendations to your IT team on how to improve bandwidth to allow more data to flow through uninterrupted.

Your consultant will also check spam filters on your email system. This may be simple enough to do, but many companies overlook it, and spam can become the method by which an attacker infiltrates a company.

Likely, antivirus protection and a solid firewall will be part of the initial recommendation. These are basic requirements that a company should not be reluctant to invest in to guarantee the protection of a system. Finding out that the shoestring budget firewall you chose doesn't work in the middle of the attack does nothing to help your infrastructure!

Your availability consultant will work with your company's IT manager to create a plan of execution should an attack occur. Experiencing a denial of service attack does not mean total annihilation. If planned properly, it is possible to function normally during an attack. Your consultant will work with you to determine the policies and procedures your IT department should follow in order to keep systems running smoothly during a potential attack.

Services We Offer

Guidance Consulting does not offer out-of-the-box availability consulting services. We customize our solutions for each client, as each client's needs are vastly different. We work with your team seamlessly to ensure your system is protected from danger.

Risk Assessment: By analyzing the various components of your infrastructure and assigning levels of risk to each, your availability consultant can help you determine which are in need of immediate attention and which can be remedied down the road.

Infrastructure Recommendations: Once your consultant has analyzed your assets and determined where the weaknesses lie, he or she will make recommendations that your team can implement in order to strengthen the vulnerable areas. The consultant will use expertise gained in the field to offer suggestions based on similar infrastructures in similar industries.

Policies and Procedures: Having a plan of action is key in handling any potential attacks. With the risk of a denial of service attack significantly lowered as a result of making tweaks to your system, your consultant will work with management to develop a plan to execute should an attack occur. This plan will include specific procedures to keep your network running smoothly despite an attack.

Let Your Customers Never Be the Wiser

Should you be unfortunate enough to experience a denial of service attack, ensure that it is not visible from the outside by having a counter-attack plan in place. By knowing what to do to keep a denial of service attack from shutting down your system, you will save the company thousands of dollars in revenue and time.

Contact Guidance Consulting today to see if you are at risk for a denial of service attack, and to learn how to prevent your system from being attacked. Go to www.guidance-consulting.com or call 678-528-2681 today for your complimentary evaluation.