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Prevent Denial of Service Attacks with Availability Consulting

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Introduction

When a company's information system is threatened, it puts the company, the employees, and the customers in jeopardy. Of the many types of threats that exist in today's computer environment, denial of service attacks are among the most damaging.

Denial of service attacks are becoming more prevalent among both major corporations and small businesses. A denial of service attack occurs when a hacker prevents users from accessing a system by flooding that system with information it can't process quickly enough. That system might be a website, a database, or an internal infrastructure. When the system can't process the flood of data, it slows down or completely stops, which means customers, vendors and employees cannot use it.

Availability consultants can help a company prevent a denial of service attack through proper planning and system assessment. Guidance Consulting preserves data and networks by placing system controls and policies into action within an IT department.

1. The Problem

Denial of service attacks can destroy a company. When customers, vendors, and employees are unable to access a system, a company can realize thousands of dollars-if not more, in loss of income. Customers who are unable to access the system cannot make purchases; vendors can't provide services; and employees lose productivity can't get their work done. There are also costs involved in getting a system back up and running safely and securely – a task that can take hours, days, or weeks depending on the severity of the attack.

What is a denial of service attack?

Denial of service attacks happen when someone deliberately disrupts service to a website or computer resource by sending a flood of information and requests to a system that servers cannot handle. Another method for creating this attack is through sending masses of spam email. A server is incapable of handling the flood, which means that legitimate emails cannot reach the recipient.

These attacks may be mischievous in nature and have no other objective other than to successfully shut down a company's system. Or, there may be a more malicious motive-stealing data from a company's systems. In this case, an attack can be lethal for a corporation that houses sensitive data such as financial information or personal records.

Denial of service attacks can be extremely difficult to stop once they occur, and they can be next to impossible to trace to the source. After just a few hours or days of frantically working to restore a system, a company may have already lost thousands of dollars in business.

A company risks its reputation when it does not take the proper precautions to reinforce its networks. Potential clients may wonder if their information would be safe with the company, and may choose another competitor to do business with.

Protecting and preventing denial of service attacks is of the utmost necessity for a business that plans for success.

2. The Solution

Fortunately, reducing the chance of experiencing a denial of service or other attack is possible. Availability consulting experts help companies strengthen their systems, thereby reducing the risk of attack.

Every company is different, and every IT system is unique. That means a one-size-fits-all solution won't completely protect any system from potential attacks. That's where availability consulting comes in. Guidance Consulting goes beyond the traditional solutions many consulting companies offer-to provide custom support and management that fits a company's specific needs.

An availability consultant can assess a company's IT infrastructure and determine its points of weakness that may be targeted in an attack. He or she can then assist in developing strategies to effectively prevent a denial of service attack.

3. The Role Availability Consultants Play

Sometimes, it's necessary to get an outside opinion to truly find the weaknesses in a system. An availability consultant is an expert at spotting potential problem areas that may lead to a denial of service attack.

Consultants at Guidance Consulting work to ensure an IT system is secure and that the proper security controls are in place to protect the data within a network. A consultant also ensures that should an attack occur, a company can still access its pertinent data and operate efficiently with no outward sign of an attack.

In terms of infrastructure, the consultant will test it to see what it can handle. He or she will make sure it is capable of handling a flood of information -the characteristics of a denial of service attack- without slowing to a halt. This will keep customers happy and feeling secure on the outside, and will help IT staff have an easier time handling a barrage of data requests internally should an attack occur.

4. Benefits to Availability Consulting

Retaining an availability consultant can be quite cost-effective in comparison to hiring a full-time IT availability expert. Because a consultant is brought in only for the duration of a project or just to stabilize and protect a system, a company does not have the overhead

of an annual salary plus HR benefits and insurance. A consultant is paid only for the time he or she works, typically by the hour.

Cost and time savings are realized in that a company does not have to train the consultant. Given that the consultant is an expert, he or she receives the necessary training from his or her own firm, and the client company never has to spend time or money to get the consultant updated on the latest techniques and tools for managing infrastructures. In short, the consultant brings expertise to the client.

Availability consulting reduces a company's risk of liability should a lawsuit occur. When a company experiences a distributed denial of service attack, the hacker uses the company's system to attack yet another system. In the aftermath, there will be finger pointing, and it may become unclear who is at fault in the attack. Prevention of an attack -as well as a proven attempt to keep attacks at a minimum- keeps the lawsuits at bay and rids a company of any blame.

The largest benefit to a company who hires an availability consultant is the security of knowing its system is safe from attack and that all vulnerabilities have been patched up. A company with a disaster recovery plan is one that will bounce back should a denial of service attack occur; and one that will not suffer loss of reputation from customers who rely on the company for secure services.

5. Why Risk the Security of Your Company?

The safety of your company's IT infrastructure is one you can't afford to leave to chance. Every day, hackers are developing more sophisticated attacks -attacks your IT staff may not even be aware exist. If your business suffers a denial of service attack, it might not bounce back. If it does, it will be after several thousands of dollars in lost time and productivity.

Work with an availability consultant from Guidance Consulting to ensure your company's assets are protected. It will be the smartest move you could make.

For more information on how Guidance Consulting can assess and improve the efficiency of your IT system, visit www.guidance-consulting.com or call 678-528-2681 to schedule a complimentary consultation to see how safe your network is from attack.