

3rd Sector COMmuniCaTions

From those friendly people at **DOT-COMmuniCaTions**
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3rd Sector COMmuniCaTions is a regular column offering IT advice & support specifically for not-for-profit organisations. If you have an IT-related problem that might also benefit others, please send an email to the address shown below, & we'll do our best to answer.

Q. I recently received a virus warning from someone I trust which says that "If a person called Simon Ashton (simon25@hotmail.co.uk) contacts you through email, don't open the message. delete it because he is a hacker!" and that I should "Tell everyone on your list because if somebody on your list adds him then you will get him on your list. he will figure out your id and computer address, so copy and paste this message to everyone even if you don't care for them and fast because if he hacks their email he hacks your mail too!"

It also says I may receive an apparently harmless email titled 'Mail Server Report' but that "If you open either file, a message will appear on your screen saying: 'It is too late now, your life is no longer beautiful.'"

Should I send this message on to warn my friends and colleagues?

A. This is a hoax. Nobody knows quite what Simon Ashton did to deserve this notoriety (or fame), but this is just one of a long running series of internet hoaxes which try to frighten people into re-sending messages to everyone in their contacts books.

So no, don't send it. In this case, this particular hoax has been doing the rounds of the Internet since 1995.

There are literally dozens of other versions of the same hoax. In many cases, the versions are almost identical except for the email address of the supposed hacker or virus. All are equally nonsensical and should be disregarded. Apparently, from time to time, pranksters replace one of the existing email addresses with a new one and send it on.

This particular variant seems to be around since early 2009, a 'new' version of the Simon Ashton hoax that included extra information about a supposed virus that arrives in an email with the subject line "Mail Server Report". This extra information is also false. The "Mail Server Report" warning is an altered version of the old "Life is Beautiful" virus hoax.

You can find out more about this particular hoax from <http://www.hoax-slayer.com/mail-server-report-hoax.shtml>

When you get emails like this, the best thing to do is to NOT immediately hit the Forward button. Use a search engine instead: plug a few of the words into the search box and see what comes up. It can save you a lot of embarrassment later.

Prefer Open Source Software? You're not alone.

There tends to be a steady stream of data illustrating the growing use of open source software in organisations, and recently a new survey by ITWeb came out which echoes numerous other such studies in recent months.

The majority of respondents voted "overwhelmingly" that open source software is at least as good if not better than proprietary in terms of features, performance, ease of use, tools and utilities, documentation, technical support, cost of ownership, scalability and ease of change, the report notes. Most respondents came from medium and large organisations. Roughly a third said that open source software is just as secure as proprietary counterparts.

Perhaps most telling of all is that the survey's authors reported growing agreement to the use of open source software from senior management.

Bottom line? Just as openness is a growing trend in governments and organisations around the globe, so too is it emerging as a smart choice for organisations that care about retaining control of their computing environments.

Open-source software, in comparison to proprietary software such as Microsoft Office, is computer software where the source code and certain other rights normally reserved for copyright holders are provided under a software license that permits users to study, change, improve and at times also to distribute the software. OpenOffice is a well known example of open source.

Windows 8 Preview

With only about 22% of Windows systems currently upgraded to the Windows 7 operating system, Microsoft is already preparing to launch its predecessor.

Microsoft recently made available the developer preview of Windows 8, their next generation desktop operating system. It features a redesigned interface which focuses on quick access and on touch screen based machines. This has become known as Metro UI and is similar to that of the Windows Phone 7 operating system for mobile phones. It also features an improved task manager, booting system and many other improvements. It is expected to be released some time in 2012.

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