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STRATEGIES

Internet security firm hones in on SAR

By Stephanie Sim

Online Labs, a California-based firm that specializes in corporate Internet security, opened an Asian office in Hong Kong last week. The company aims to supply high-tech investigation and security services which are not yet available in the region, said Erik Laykin, president of Online Labs.

"I think one of our main objectives would be educating

people as to what the [security] risks are," he said. "Certain companies are going to be taking big hits ... [and] are going to be nailed by cyber crime. They already might have been without even knowing."

But Laykin pointed out that there is no surefire way to be absolutely safe. "Anybody who tells you there's a 100 percent safe guarantee to secure e-commerce data doesn't know what they're talking about. It's not possible, everything can be bro-

ken," he said. "But, you can make it difficult to break in."

Laykin added that while Internet security is often overlooked, there is a need for companies to protect themselves from perpetrators. "There are more sophisticated computer users in the world today, which means there are more people who know how to break in than [there were] five years ago," he said.

"In addition, the growth area for e-commerce in East Asia,

in particular Hong Kong, will be business-to-business, not necessarily business-to-consumer. And businesses have a lot more to lose than consumers if their security has been breached," he said.

Laykin said that an increasing concern among corporate clients is internal fraud. He gave the examples of being able to use electronic data to track sexual harassment, insider trading, or evidence of people taking kickbacks. "We analyze the

data using computer forensics and we can reconstruct data that's supposedly gone," he said.

According to Laykin, another reason Online Labs is interested in the region is the presence of "governmental and corporate espionage within East Asia."

Online Labs said it wants to reduce the threat of cyber-crime in East Asia. "If there's too much crime and fraud on the Internet, it will scare governments, communities and companies," Laykin said. "[It will translate] into supporting over-regulation which will only hamper the growth of the Internet."

Slighting legislation of the Internet, Laykin said the SAR government should "allow the Internet to spread on its own and take its own course and not interfere."

"One of the big problems in Internet security here is the government itself," he said. "[In Hong Kong] the government is the central processor of credit cards going through the Internet ... [and] any one point of control will always pose a security problem."

Laykin said it was with strategic planning that Hong Kong was chosen as Online Labs' Asian hub. "We believe that China is the next great power in the next century ... and the ideals of free enterprise will continue to take root in China, and Hong Kong is the natural



Online Labs' Laykin: "We can reconstruct data that's supposedly gone."

stepping stone [to China]," he said.

The company, which has offices in Los Angeles and Chicago, said it hopes to recruit a Fast Response Electronic Action Knowledge Squad (FREAKS) in the SAR to combat Internet fraudsters in the Web trenches. To attract the right candidates to its team, it has to conduct thorough background checks on its employees, said Laykin.

And due to the sensitivity of the business, the company has a policy under which customer profiles are kept secret to protect their confidentiality. However, Laykin did reveal that three Hong Kong law firms would be using Online Labs' services soon.

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