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DTI spends on IT security

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The Department of Trade and Industry has made £4m available for four research projects aimed at reducing the IT risk created by human error

The programme, which is part of its Network Security Innovation Platform, reflects the fact that human error is by the far the biggest risk to network security, the [DTI](#) said on 18 June 2007.

It cited the results of a survey it conducted, involving over 1,800 people, on the use of passwords. It found that:

- just over one third recorded their password or security information by either writing it down or storing it somewhere on their computer;
- nearly two thirds never changed their password; and
- one in five people used the same password for non-banking websites as well as their online bank.

The projects will use behavioural science in a bid to tackle the human risk element in network security.

Four projects will receive funding under the programme. The first, to be carried out by BAE Systems and Loughborough University, involves developing a risk assessment package focused on organisational and human factors.

The second, named Trust Economics, is aimed at developing a predictive modelling framework that assesses security policies that regulate the interaction between humans and information systems. Hewlett-Packard, Merrill Lynch, University of Bath, University of Newcastle and University College London are partners in the project.

The third is aimed at developing a solution for the analysis of digital communications to identify threats introduced by humans. Chronicle Solutions and the University of Plymouth will run the project.

Finally, the National Computing Centre and the University of Manchester will work on CatalysIS, a tool to improve risk culture and identify human vulnerabilities in network security.

Minister for science and innovation Malcolm Wicks said: "Unfortunately, the weakest link in network security is not usually with the technology, but with the staff and system users. A DTI survey found that a shocking number of people were careless with passwords, unwittingly exposing themselves and their company to fraud and theft.

"Network security is also a major growth area where the UK has a good opportunity to become a global leader if we develop new technology to give us a competitive edge."

Source: Kable's Government Computing

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