



Dataföreningen: Security Training

Background

Dataföreningen (The Swedish Information Processing Society) is an association of IT professionals committed to data security in the Swedish business community. It boasts a membership of 32,000 computer users and developers and is responsible for the SBA family of information security products. It also operates Dataföreningen Kompetens, a company dedicated to advanced IT training and education.

A primary component of Dataföreningen's mission centers around providing businesses with effective, up-to-date knowledge and guidance in all areas of data security.

Challenge

Dataföreningen retained the Gronstedt Group to develop a comprehensive digital training program in information safety. Telia (Swedish Telecom) co-sponsored the initiative, with the goal of using the program for its own employees.

The task was a substantial one, because several critical areas had to be addressed, including:

- computer theft
- viruses
- information confidentiality
- computer crime
- improper Internet use
- compliance
- e-mail management

In all cases, users needed to be trained to understand the basics of information security, recognize threats and respond appropriately.

Solution

Working in concert with a committee of Dataföreningen security experts, who assured the accuracy and relevance of the selected cases, the Gronstedt Group developed the concept for *Virus Alert*, an interactive, problem-based program that teaches users by letting them roleplay through a series of security scenarios.

In this course, participants review a series of cases from the fictional Acme, Inc. For instance:

- Someone outside the company appears to have gotten hold of Acme's top-secret financial statement. How could this sensitive information have leaked, especially since the report hadn't even been written yet?

- £25,000 are missing. Only one person is authorized to access that account, and we're pretty sure he isn't guilty. Was he careless with her passwords?
- Mary has a lot of important documents on her laptop. The problem is, she doesn't have those files backed up, and now her hard drive has crashed.
- Karen's computer was stolen, but she didn't report the theft right away. Has the company been needlessly exposed?
- Someone has been surfing porn sites from their company computer. This is embarrassing, to be sure, but are there more pressing implications?

Each scenario is structured like a mini-mystery, with participants (playing the role of company investigators) interviewing virtual company employees to unravel an array of security puzzles (a computer was stolen, somebody spread a virus that crashed the server, secret financial data was leaked to an outsider, etc.) In the process of solving these "crimes," users learn a number of crucial lessons about the importance of good information security; for instance:

- the potential damage that can be caused by viruses
- the need to back up important files
- the consequences associated with failing to protect sensitive company information

This kind of hands-on roleplaying allows participants to step into the shoes of another person and solve a specific problem as if they were in that position.

Results

Virus Alert has proven a popular and highly successful solution for helping businesses operations bolster their defenses against a vast and growing range of threats to their information integrity. To date, the application has been employed by a broad range of business organizations, including private companies such as Svenska Spel and Avesta Polarit, and government agencies like student loan administrator CSN and the city of Stockholm.

Dataföreningen has more recently commented on how well *Virus Alert* has remained viable with the passage of time, and has commissioned an updated *Virus Alert 2.0* that will further expand the program's value to the Swedish business community.