

## Hacking Havoc Detailed at Sold-Out City Seminar

Joey the teenage computer hacker was just out for a night of fun—all the thrill of joyriding or spray-painting graffiti without having to leave his bedroom.

With a little egging on from his chat-room buddies, he followed instructions readily available on the Internet to get past a random company's firewall. It took little skill to burrow far enough inside the computer system to deface the company Web site, where Joey left his own goofy graphic behind.

Michael Legary, the 22-year-old president of Winnipeg's Securis, introduced a packed room of information managers to the fictional Joey yesterday at the first Mid Canada Information Security Conference.

The sold-out event is a sign of how much local governments and businesses now rely on the Internet connections that allow hackers to sneak in and wreak havoc on computer systems.

It can and does happen here.

Murray Gartner of Terracor Business Solutions said some Manitoba driver records were accessed and posted on the Internet a couple of years ago.

Legary said he once caught employees of a local call centre stealing their employer's client lists.

The smartest hackers talk their way past security systems, keynote speaker Michael Murphy of Symantec—maker of the Norton anti-virus software—told the 275 participants. Sometimes they will pretend to be calling from the company's help desk to reset passwords.

"They exploit the good nature of humans," who are sometimes the weakest link in a security system, he said.

Legary's session was a hacking how-to designed to help information managers protect their data.

"Joey" probably did not understand the damage he was doing—forcing an expensive cleanup and destroying the company's reputation for hosting a secure site.

But his destructive night was not yet over, Legary explained.

A more sophisticated criminal hacker—a "cracker"—befriended Joey, who was only too willing to share what he had learned about the computer system of the company he had hacked.

The older man used that head start to get past the company's second firewall, taking advantage of software vulnerabilities.

Soon, he was downloading credit-card information.

For companies that cannot manage their own information security, Securis offers to do it for a fee—about \$1,200 a month for a company with 100 computer users.