

BOOK REVIEWS

BY JAMES MOHR

Computer Security, Second Edition

Although *Computer Security* contains a lot of useful information, usually presented in an easy-to-understand way, I found myself asking “So what?” Nothing about the book put it apart from any of the numerous other books on computer security. This is more or less a “traditional” book on computer security, covering essentially the same topics and in the same manner that other books cover.

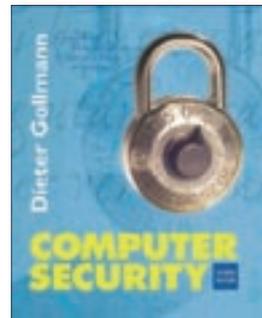
The author is a professor at the Hamburg University of Technology, who states in the preface that “This book grew out of my lecture notes for courses taught in a one-year postgraduate program on information security.” I mention this because I often got the feeling that the book *still* was a collection of lecture notes and not a cohesive work.

One of my pet peeves is when authors make references to concepts that are described later in the book. Sometimes this is unavoidable, and the author makes ref-

erence to the later chapter where the topic is explained in detail. Unfortunately, this author did not. To make matters worse, in a number of cases, the particular subject was not even mentioned in the index, although things like canary (as in the bird) and ASCII *are* mentioned in the index. This made it difficult to look up specific information.

The level of detail of the various subjects seemed to be inconsistent. In some cases, you are shown complex mathematical equations describing a particular algorithm, and in other cases, the author addresses the topic somewhat superficially.

It also seemed to me that, despite this being the second edition, the author did little to bring the book up-to-date. Although it is often necessary to understand how things have changed over time, I found it troublesome that the au-



thor references material that is 10-15 years old. Particularly in the field of computer security, even five years is a long time. Despite a publishing date of August 2005, the author discusses Windows

2000 and says nothing about Windows 2003.

If you are in the market for an introduction to security, this might be worth a look if there aren't any others in the bookstore. However, I didn't find much of anything to jump up and down about.

Dieter Gollmann

374 Pages

J. Wiley and Sons,

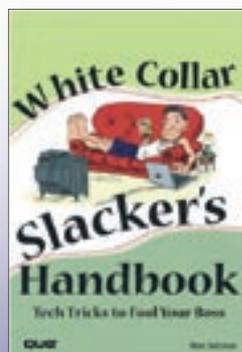
0-470-86293-9

£ 29.99, US\$ 60.00, EUR 49.50

White Collar Slackers Handbook

Although I would more likely use the tricks in this book to fool my wife and not my boss, it was definitely an entertaining way of spending a few hours (reading it, not implementing it).

As the name implies, the *White Collar Slackers Handbook* discusses various tricks you can use to make your boss think you are working. It covers things like making it appear you are in the office when you are actually somewhere else, making fake phone calls to get out of meetings, “evidence erasers,” which remove the traces of what you actually did. You'll learn how to create a screenshot of an application to quickly cover up



what you are really doing, and you'll discover many more sneaky tricks.

The book is very heavily weighted toward Windows and Blackberry users. However, the more general the tricks are, the more easily they can be ported to any operating system or handheld.

The author assumes very little technical knowledge and does a lot of “hand holding” when explaining how to implement specific tricks. Many of the tricks are easy to implement with a standard Windows system or a system with Microsoft office. However, a number require you to download extra software that is not available for Linux. Still, you can

easily find equivalent Linux “toys” that serve the same purpose.

The sad part is that there are probably many people out there who actually use the tricks in this book. Although I don't want to judge people who might not be happy in their current jobs, I like to provide an honest day's work, and this book definitely gives you the tools to avoiding doing just that. Still, I found it a nice diversion from the other work I normally do when not on the job. Just be careful! Maybe your boss has already read it and has learned all of the tricks.

Marc Saltzman

177 Pages

Que Publishing,

0-7897-3310-2

£ 10.99, US\$ 14.99, EUR 14.50