

British business can do better with vulnerabilities

By Ron Condon

British businesses have done well to protect themselves against most viruses, but they lag in patching vulnerabilities and planning for business continuity.

According to new research from the DTI (the full *Information Security Breaches Survey* will be published on 27 April), most companies (93 per cent) have anti-virus (AV) software in place and update it regularly. But the same research shows that even among large companies, only 41 per cent have made



Potter: companies face blended threats

any business continuity planning. Only 20 per cent of small companies have a business recovery plan.

“We were surprised how good people are at applying AV software,” said Chris Potter, a partner at PwC, the consultancy that carried out the research. “It is easy to justify spending money on anti-virus.”

Potter said the biggest cause of serious incidents in 2003 was Blaster, a worm that by-passed AV software by exploiting a vulnerability in Windows. “Organisations are now facing blended threats that possess characteristics of viruses, worms and Trojans, and blend these with hacking attacks,” he said.

The answer is to apply vulnerability patches more quickly. “Companies take between 30 and 60 days to apply patches,” said Gerhard Eschelbeck, CTO for Qualys, which worked with PwC to analyse the report’s findings. “This needs to come down to 15 to 20 days, which would dramatically reduce the risk.”