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'Just as inexpensive PCs running Microsoft Windows helped more people take advantage of the power of the PC and sparked an era of incredible growth for our industry," said Gates, "new devices and technologies will help bring about the next computing revolution-the shift from personal computers to truly personal computing that's available anywhere people need it."

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Despite the show also being touted as a showcase for wireless products, this year's COMDEX was driven by far more IT-minded companies. Long gone are the PC and CE convergence products that populated past shows. The scale-down of exhibitors was noticeable.

Despite the smaller show, Mike Millikin, group senior vice president of Medialive, said, "The $870 billion IT market now more than ever needs a place for the industry to connect."

In addition to focusing on tech trends, Faurot noted the international presence, with companies hailing from Brazil, Denmark, France, the U.K. and Taiwan. He discussed how international vendors are le veraging the IT market in the United States. "More than 16 percent of this year's attendees [were] from international markets," said Faurot. "Clearly, with trends such as outsourcing front and

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Security: A Major Concern

In addition to international interests and pervasive software solutions (specifically how graphicsediting products are gaining momentum, no doubt attributable in part to the rise of digital photography)

anti-spam and security software companies were also visible.

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The Hardline on Hardware

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Samsung's IT division maintained a presence at the show for both these business and consumer users. Among the debuts was the manufacturer's SyncMaster 172X LCD monitor ($599). Shipping since last month, the 17-inch LCD computer monitor features a narrow bezel design and a foldable, dual-hinge stand that makes it complementary to professional and entertainment uses.

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Smaller Show, Big Predictions

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So welcome, fellow Netizens, to 2004 - with a few words of warning: 1. Watch for scam e-mail. The big

one going around involves official looking messages from what appear to be official looking e-mail addresses asking you to submit personal information for- verification purposes information such as yo ur Social Security number, birth date, credit card numbers, PIN numbers and other sensitive details.

Ignore these messages. Do not respond. I can't emphasize this enough. Do not respond.

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personal information to thieves who, at the very least, will rack up unauthorized charges on your credit cards. At the very worst, they will masquerade as you, causing you years of misery trying to so rt through the legal and financial carnage of your ruined credit record and personal reputation.

No reputable business is going to send you an e-mail note out of the blue asking for credit card information or other personal data. None of your credit card companies do this. None of your banks do this. None of the online services, such as PayPal, Ebay, Half.com or Overstock.com, do this.

If you ever receive official sounding e-mail asking for your personal information, contact the institution named in the e-mail by phone or mail or in person. Tell them what you've received. Ask if they sent it. Chances are, they didn't. And they will want to know about any scams being circulated using their good names.

I

Keith Darnay

2. Avoid a-mailed Windows patches. In this virus scam, you receive an e-mail supposedly sent by Microsoft announcing a new security patch for Windows XP or any of the other operating systems. You are instructed to run the "patch" that is attached with the e-mail.

Don't do it. You will be installing spyware or a virus on your system. One of the latest viruses, named Dumaru, infects your computer and e-mails itself to all the a-mail addresses stored on your machine. This virus also installs a password stealer on

your machine to record and transmit passwords you routinely enter in the course of using your computer.

Microsoft does not blindly send email messages with patches attached. Under normal circumstances, you usually have to go to a specific Microsoft site to download genuine updates and patches.

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3. Run a firewall and virus protection. If you connect to the Internet, you should be doing so from behind a firewall and with a virus protection program running. Firewalls help restrict outside access to your computer. Virus protection programs help identify and purge viruses that may come attached to e-mail or software you install on your computer.

If you use Windows XP you have a firewall program built into the operating system - you simply need to turn it on through your control panel. If

you don't have a firewall, buy one. Often, a personal firewall is included as part of an anti-virus package. These pograms are consistently among the

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Here are some virus information resources:

About.com: antivirus.about.com Security Information Center: wwwf-secure com/virus

Virus Information Library: vil.nai.com/vil/default.asp Virus Threats:

securityresponse.symantec.com/avce nter/vinfodb.html

(Keith Darnay is the webmaster and designer for bismarcktribune.com. His Web site is at www.darnay.com/iec.)

COMDEX

Spelled IT
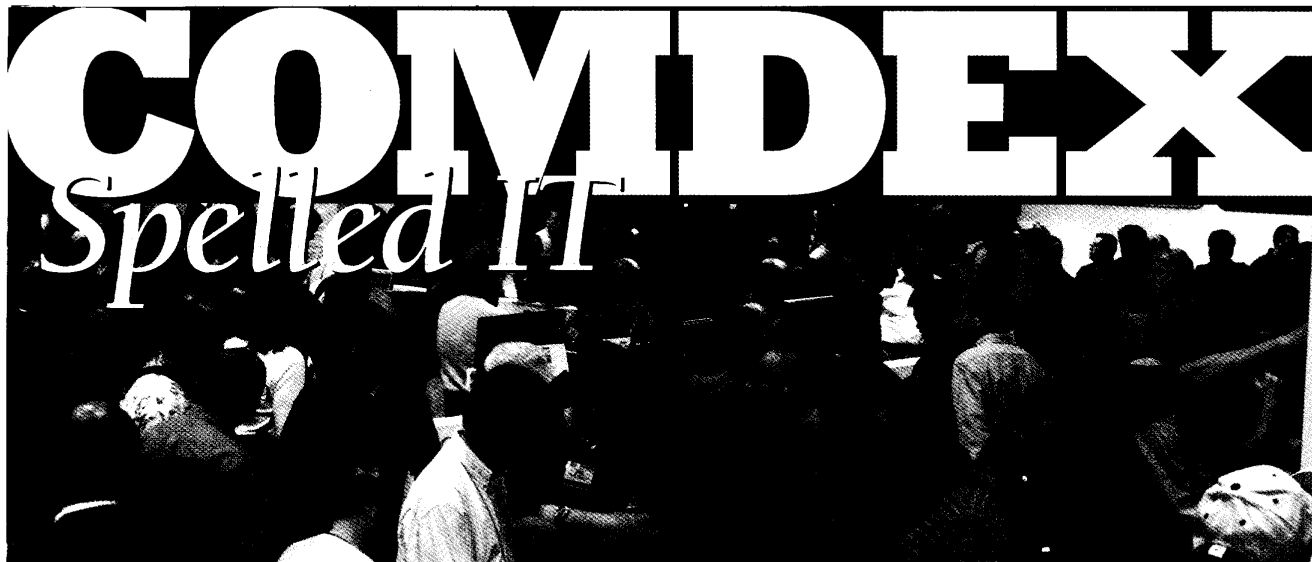
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If you ever receive official sounding e-mail asking for your personal information, contact the institution named in the e-mail by phone or mail or in person. Tell them what you've received. Ask if they sent it. Chances are, they didn't. And they will want to know about any scams being circulated using their good names.

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Here are some virus information resources:

About.com: antivirus.about.com

Security Information Center: www.f-secure.com/virus-info

Virus Information Library: vil.nai.com/vil/default.asp

Virus Threats: securityresponse.symantec.com/avce nter/vinfodb.html

(Keith Darnay is the webmaster and designer for bismarcktribune.com. His Web site is at www.darnay.com/iec.)

Bacon's Information, Inc.