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Web 2.0: Safety and Security Concerns

By Samantha Sim

Imagine a world where, at first glance, everyone's smartphone looks exactly the same. The only difference between models is the cloud-based apps and software that come along with each device. To some it may sound odd, considering the current war between smartphone makers one up each other with newer hardware features and design. But, Andre Vittorio, President of Markham-based IT-consulting firm Ideological, believes common smartphone designs aren't that farfetched.

"It's not something that will happen in the next two years," he says. "But with the increasing popularity of wearables and the prevalence of cloud technologies this will eventually become a reality. Any information you want will be available to you on all your devices and in any location."

What we see now are the primitive stages of our world in 10 years. Vittorio pictures a scene out of *The Minority Report*, a film featuring Tom Cruise where the main character lives in a world where everyone's information is online and accessible from anywhere, as a foreshadow of our future. Technology still has a ways to go before we reach that stage however.

"The tech industry is slowly marching towards this world. In the meantime that slow march makes them money," says Vittorio. "But behind the scenes they're all building their data centres."

Vittorio says that infrastructure is what's holding back a complete change. In metropolitan areas Internet connection is fast for the most part. The same can't be said about other communities. When a fast enough connection is established in a majority of areas then the world Vittorio pictures can become a reality.

As we share more and more of ourselves online what does

that mean for privacy and security? That's the question users, government and business are all trying to answer. With breaches increasingly becoming hot news topics, the idea of online privacy and security has never been more widely debated. Vittorio sees the responsibility for securing data starting with the user themselves.

"These systems are generally very secure. The problem can often be traced back to the user," he says.

There are two major types of "hacking" that are used on regular users. The first deals with weak passwords. Individuals use large-scale programs to test many different word and number combinations to see if they can crack a password. Using generic passwords is something I'm sure all of us have been told not to do, but Vittorio says many still do it and they're risking their data when they do so.

The second type of hacking scheme, and one Vittorio believes will become more common in the future are what he calls "man in the middle attacks". That's because many programs have responded to the first type of hacking by setting up controls notifying users of their password being changed or locking an account if there are a number of consecutive failed logins. To combat this, hackers have started phishing schemes. Users receive a legitimate-looking email asking them to update their account. It then prompts them to do so by clicking a link. They're led to a legitimate-looking company page where individuals enter their username and password to login, but then nothing happens. But far from nothing happens on the other side. A system stores your login details, which are now accessible by strangers. That's how they access your account.

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Cool Yule Tips:

Your holiday party planner

By Samantha Sim

Holiday season is fast approaching and it's the time of year many companies gather staff together for celebration. If your team is looking for something that's a bit out of the box, we have a few ideas for a memorable holiday party.

1. Paintlounge

Ideal For: Small groups (5–10 people)
Located: 118 Main Street, Markham ON (Paintlounge has an additional two locations in Toronto/GTA)

Feeling artistic? Paintlounge offers "social painting" parties for corporate teams looking to add a creative flair to their get together. The idea is that team members can get to know each other better while painting in a casual environment. There are different party options for corporate teams; packages include group-style or solo-style painting. Parties can also choose a set painting design that an instructor will provide step-by-step instruction for, ensuring all members leave with a their very own masterpiece.

Cost: \$22.50–\$40.00/guest (Some packages have a minimum number of guests. See www.paintlounge.ca for details on corporate rates)

2. Rock Climbing

Ideal For: Small groups
Located: Hub Climbing (165 McIntosh Dr., Markham)

For the outdoorsy group rock climbing might be the perfect way for a team to bond and build morale. Markham's Hub Climbing has 18,000 square feet of rock walls for climbers of all levels. No climbing experience is necessary and staff will be assigned to assist during the party to ensure a safe experience.

Cost: Contact Hub Climbing at 905-604-4588 for corporate rates

3. Sgt. Splatters Paintball

Ideal For: Small to larger groups (10–60+ people)
Located: 54 Wingold Ave., North York

This option is definitely for high-energy, adventurous groups. Sgt. Splatters offers corporate party packages for teams looking for a unique teambuilding activity. Have departmental teams duke it out or mix up the pairings so unfamiliar colleagues get to know each other. There's even the option of hosting a mini-tournament with prizes and trophies.

Cost: \$15–30/person (The larger your party, the smaller the cost per person. Email Sgt Splatters Corporate Events Manager for further details sarge@sptsplatters.com)

4. Mixology/Bartending Workshop

Ideal For: Any size group
Located: Various organizations across Toronto and GTA. Often they will come to wherever you're located

Bond with colleagues while enjoying great drinks and learning about the art of mixology. Mixology and bartending workshops are a great way for teams to break the ice (literally and figuratively). Add an element of competition by having teams put their new knowledge to the test to see who can create the tastiest concoction.

Cost: Varies

5. Battleaxe Throwing League (BATL)

Ideal For: Small to larger groups (A minimum of 12 people is required)

Located: Three locations across Toronto and GTA. Check www.batl.ca for details.

Just like paintballing and rock climbing, this option is for teams that are looking for something out of the ordinary. Events receive a private throwing area where staff will be on hand to provide coaching and target practice before the group playoff tournament. Parties can also bring drinks and food for their guests.

Cost: \$40/person

6. Teambuilding With Wine (The Wine Sisters)

Ideal For: Small to larger groups
Located: Varies. Depends on the type of event.

The Wine Sisters offer corporate parties where guests learn the basics of wine tasting and food pairings, all while sampling some great drinks.

In addition, the Wine Sisters have an event planning service, which does all sizes of parties, and they also provide guided wine tours for private groups of up to 50 people.

Cost: Check out thewinesisters.com for more details on corporate rates

7. Corporate Cooking Competitions (Richmond Hill Culinary Arts Centre)

Ideal For: Contact culinaryarts@rogers.com for details
Located: 1550 16th Ave., Richmond Hill

Does your office love food? The Richmond Hill Culinary Arts Centre offers corporate team building events, where guests can boost their cooking prowess. The Iron Chef Challenge lets teams feel like contestants on the reality-TV show. The culinary arts centre's version even includes a mystery box challenge where teams are presented with a random food item during the competition, which they must incorporate into their dishes. A three-course dinner is served at the end of the event and winners are announced over dessert.

Cost: Contact culinaryarts@rogers.com for details on corporate rates ■

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The lesson in all of this is to keep a rotating set of passwords. Ironically, Vittorio suggests keeping a notebook with all your usernames and passwords,

logging it each time you create a new account, and changing your passwords on a consistent basis.

This is extremely important for small businesses as well, especially those who use cloud-based software. For organizations with less than 20 employees it doesn't make sense to invest in private-cloud systems. Therefore, many of these businesses use

public cloud networks, which are fine, but security is something that everyone must be cognizant about.

Cloud-based technologies and dumb mobile devices becoming the norm isn't a question of if, it's just a matter of when.

"There's no either route at this point, says Vittorio. "The tech industry has done a good job converting people. Each day

we're trading more of our data for more access online. It's either you get on board, or get left behind." ■