

The internet of things

by Bernard Collin

Conversation on the IoT (internet of things) is rising as it becomes a more broad and social consideration. It has a wide reach and it also shows that people need to be more aware of their personal impact. What might look like a minor problem hides a greater trouble.

First let's discuss what the internet of things is, broadly speaking the internet of things is any and every device connected in some way to a network and open to the internet. A home system designed to allow you to set the house to wake up the lights and run the heating/air conditioning ready for your arrival home. A sound system connected wirelessly through your home wifi, a baby monitor you can check from the office.

All of these systems constitute part of the internet of things, things connected to the internet. (I know aren't we amazing at naming things.) But the term simply applies to any and every device meant to automatically connect to the internet and accomplish a task with little to no oversight.

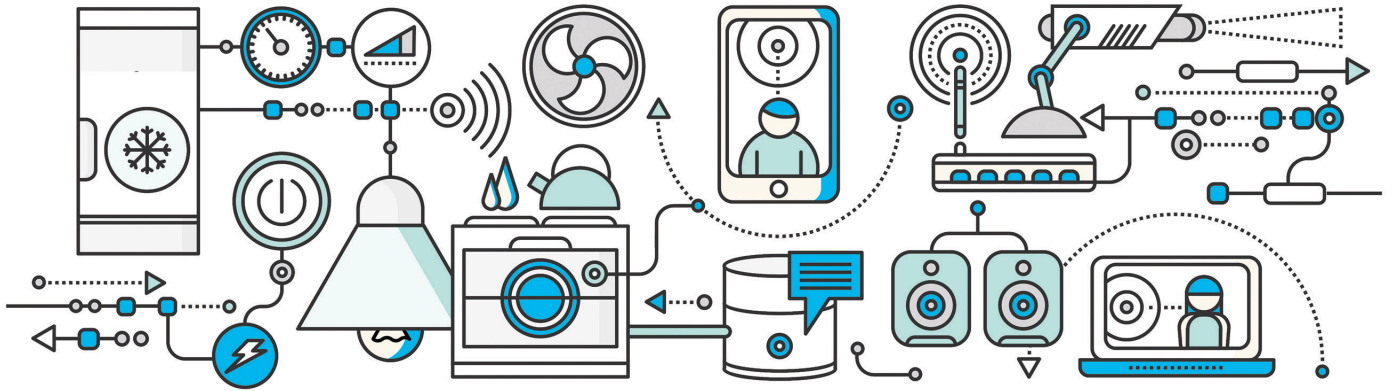
This is where the problems start, these devices are crafted for simple use and convenience which then become points of weakness. Not designed for high security but simply task completion, many of the devices have now been breached and exploited.

The activity isn't specifically because it targets you, in fact that the device is "yours" is incidental, it's just another bot to them. The devices are not breached to spy on you, and aren't designed to break down and try to ransom the device back to you (See the previous article on Ransomware).

The devices are compromised by small edits to their code, small innocuous changes that are made not to interfere with their use. Owners of the devices which are exploited will never know. Each device is added to a larger group called a botnet. It has a new purpose now on top of accomplish tasks for you, it will also check in and make sure to lend its power and your bandwidth to large scale attacks. Denial of service, or to inject corrupted code into larger more robust systems.

Without your knowledge or consent any device connected to your internet connection can be used by criminal organisations and general mischief makers against networks and websites. Shutting down a business ability to connect to the internet or simply wielded as a hammer





against single uses they have found offends them.

People are selling time and activity on your home devices against others, a device you paid for and pay to keep running, on an internet connection you pay to upkeep.

This is not a new problem, previously this issue happened on personal computers, widespread reach of viruses and exploits previously added computers to these botnets, the one thing that challenged this was better

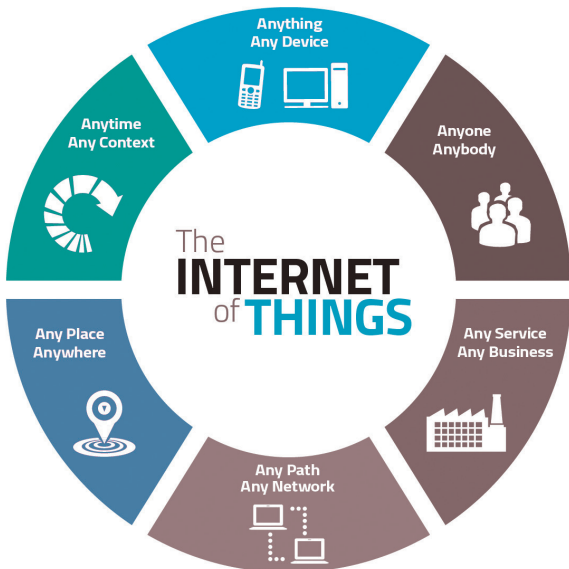
awareness from users on how to use their device and the broad acceptance of anti-virus companies and businesses.

What can we do to combat this new botnet problem?

For one, we should make sure that device creators take their responsibility on creating secure devices more seriously, but on a more personal angle, anyone who likes to add gadgets and devices to their own home should either consider adding security layers to their connection to the internet.

Home solutions for Firewalls or a well configured router within the home before reaching the modem out to the wider internet.

Security is a personal responsibility these days, and being aware of how your devices are being used and exploited is something each household should be concerned about. These are your devices and you should be certain they aren't being exploited by others for their own ends.



Bernard Collins is the CEO of SafeComs, established in 1999 in Australia with a focus on computer security in the SME and enterprise market. In 2003 he launched the Asian branch of the company located in Bangkok. Prior to launching SafeComs Bernard was CEO of Pacer Software Inc in Europe and was with Digital Equipment and Apple. info@safecom.com 02 105 4520



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