

Saturday, May 20, 2006

### **Useless mash-up between pdns pipe backend and md5**

I've had the idea to do some tinkering with powerdns' pipe backend for awhile and had decided to rig up a quick and dirty MD5 encoder/decoder database on a domain I've had for awhile MD5.ORG  
So it was pretty easy. Now anybody can quickly get an MD5 hash on any string that'll fit inside a DNS query packet by doing something like:

```
host -t txt .to.md5.org
```

or the slightly less readable

```
dig -t txt .to.md5.org
```

Then for completeness you can try and see if we already know what string creates a given MD5 hash and retrieve it using

```
host -t txt .from.md5.org
```

There is not a lot of practical value to this, it was just a neat hack to learn the basics of the pdns pipe backend, which I like a lot.

Posted by Mark Jeftovic in Hacking tech at 16:20

Wednesday, May 17, 2006

### **Obligatory mesh web 2.0 conference post**

I decided to attend the Mesh web 2.0 conference since it was taking place within walking distance of my place. I had better blog that now, since I brazenly left my laptop at home when I went (convention faux pas).

The question that I always have is what the hell is web 2.0 anyway? And how is it different from web 1.0?

There was a predictable mutual admiration club forming over blogs, tagging, social networking, RSS and communities. "100% authenticity" was being bandied about in a lot of overheard conversations.

Now that "web 2.0" is heating up as defined by a series of high profile acquisitions, it seems to me like web2.0 is really just "bubble v2". Another wave of start-ups whose business plan revolves around "social networks", "community driven", "100% authenticity"...and then we get bought by Google or Yahoo". Sound familiar?

The "Does Web2.0 Need VC" panel with Rick Segal the celebrity blogstar VC from JLA Ventures and Jason Fried, of 37signals.com, the non-VC funded, profitable company from Chicago, was refreshing.

It was refreshing because both Jason and Rick recognized that profits and revenues count for something, and Rick's "Don't take VC if you don't need the money" was advice well received. Rick Segal, BTW, is one of the "good-guy" VC's in this world, and I've always had a very high opinion of JLA Ventures. I've also bought Jason Fried's Getting Real because I was impressed with what he had to say (don't take VC if you can help it, in today's market its more than doable to bootstrap your business, charge for your products/services, and you don't have to move to the Valley to be in the tech biz)

I remember the startup.com movie, where the guys were so smug and proud of their first round financing I remarked to my girlfriend (who is now my wife), "I think these guys have their first round financing confused with revenues."

Now that the whatever 2.0 bubble is in full force, there is a little bit of that circulating still and I am always grateful when a panel throws some cold water it.

I remember during tech-wreck 1.0, when companies were failing left, right and center, VC was drying up and shareholder value was evaporating by the billions, I got an email from somebody at RobTV asking me if I would be interested in appearing on a forthcoming "venture capital" episode, where I would have the opportunity to pitch the members of their VC panel to invest in easyDNS

I replied back with a different idea. How about instead of the same old "grovel for the VCs" I bring along 4 years of company financial statements demonstrating growing revenues and profits and the VCs can pitch me on why we should take their money and let them get their mitts into our profitable company?

I never heard back from them.

Posted by Mark Jeftovic in Tech Wreck 2.0 at 09:54

## Blog Export: Exile From the Herd, <http://www.privateworld.com/>

Saturday, May 13. 2006

### **ibill's business model: screw your customers, spam their customers**

A couple years ago I subscribed to Kirt Christensen's "Buying Web Businesses" for about a month. I didn't renew my subscription and haven't given it much more thought, until today.

Today I got a porn spam in my inbox from "gspotnews.com". I recognized the email address I received this to as the one-time address I used when I subscribed to Kirt Christensen's website. I took a look at the fine print at the bottom of the email and saw this:

You are receiving this Monthly Newsletter because you provided us permission by agreeing to our privacy policy when you signed up for an Internet service/product that is billed by our company. If you feel that you are receiving this email in error, or wish to no longer receive this newsletter in the future, please click here to unsubscribe the following address: DELETED@DELETED. Please allow 48 hours for the unsubscribe to be processed. Thank you!

Ibill is an internet credit card processing company. It looks like they have decided that it is ok to send porn spam to their customers' customers.

This goes off the charts in terms of sleaziness. I emailed Kirt Christensen that his credit card processor is spamming his customers, we'll see if he cares.

In the meantime, a quick check of the mailer logs on easydns revealed a few hundred gspotnews spams going to other easydns members, so now my customers are also receiving this garbage, probably because in the past they also paid for services online to a website using ibill to clear transactions.

So gspotnews.com and ibill.com are now banned from our mail forwarders. Thanks for being on our show.

Posted by Mark Jeftovic in The Sleazemeter at 21:21

Friday, May 12, 2006

### **When marketing crosses over into deceit**

Today, for the second time my bookkeeper put something on my desk that gave me pause. She is usually pretty good at weeding out ads and solicitations and filing them into the paper shredder, but a couple weeks ago, and again today she put a plain white envelope on my desk, my name and address had been typed off of what appeared to be a typewriter. No return address.

Inside is what at first glance appears to be a single page, ripped out of a magazine, with an article about executive planning or in today's case, public speaking.

An ordinary post-it note is affixed in the upper right corner:

Mark, Try this.

It works!

-J

The first time this happened, I was perplexed. What is this and where did it come from? The original article was about how busy execs can balance career and family and as a new dad, this appealed to me. How considerate my anonymous friend was!

Who to thank? I emailed to the two people I know who's first initial is "J" asking them if they took the trouble to cut an article out of a magazine and postal mail it to me.

They both promptly emailed back, making the same wisecracks about "early onset Alzheimers" but to their knowledge, neither of them knew what the hell I was talking about.

So I looked closer, going so far as to pull an old file out of the cabinet and comparing the handwriting on the post-it to that of a former colleague here who's name also begins with "J". No match.

Back to the article, finally I see it, the word "advertisement" captioned at the top of the article. The coupon for "Executive Focus" that just happened to be on the back page was not so co-incidental. The copyright notice was "© 2006 Personalized Promotion by Briefings Publishing Group".

This was an elaborate ruse.

At first I was impressed. This marketing effort not only had me seriously considering subscribing to their magazine (because as a new dad, I am very much interested in time management and lifestyle balance issues) but even had me email two friends talking about it!

That seemed impressive until it dawned on me that the "success" of the campaign rested on the fact that I had been deceived. Fooled into believing somebody who knew me personally took the trouble to mail me this "article" (hindsight: most of my friends would just shoot me the URL via IM or email, come to think of it, the only person who postal mails me hard copy are the newspaper clippings my mother sends me), they hoped to trick me into subscribing to their product. In short, the whole thing was a clever, unique con job. Not a good way to try to start a business relationship with me.

Posted by Mark Jeftovic in The Sleazemeter at 15:44