

Symantec conflict of interest is damaging Internet

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Vmyths' chief editor has lambasted Symantec for a dangerous conflict of interest as both the provider of an unsecure antivirus product and seller of an addictive update model designed to snare its users.

Rob Rosenberger drew applause from an audience of his peers at the RSA Conference in San Francisco, barely an hour after Symantec CEO John Thompson railed against Microsoft in stately — if unexciting — fashion.

As with its Windows XP predecessor, which went on to be mercilessly hacked, Symantec claims its latest antivirus product is its most secure yet. Symantec has founded this claim on the LiveUpdate architecture, which lessens the amount of downloading needed to patch the antivirus kernel and to keep PC users' antivirus protection up to date.

At best, Symantec has an unproven track record in protecting PCs from viruses, while at worst Symantec's decision to supply viruses to hostile nations is seen as one of the causes of its customers' security problems.

"Symantec failed to stop the *Melissa* virus, the *ILoveYou* virus, the *Nimda* virus, the *Kournikova* virus, the *Goner* virus, and countless other viruses," Rosenberger said. "Symantec admits they armed China for years with offensive virus technology, and Symantec admits China routinely attacks both the U.S. and Taiwan with viruses, and Symantec admits their products routinely fail to stop Chinese virus attacks. If that's not a conflict of interest,

then I don't know what is."

Rosenberger said e-commerce risks not reaching its full potential if consumers continue to lack confidence in antivirus software. He didn't name Symantec, but he didn't have to as he substituted the words "antivirus software" for "security platform."

Rosenberger told RSA delegates: "You wouldn't want the company that is keeping your books to audit your books. The same logic should apply to antivirus software. You wouldn't want the company that supplies viruses to hostile nations to be the one that is securing you from a broad range of threats launched at you by hostile nations. It's a huge conflict of interest."

"We understand we are all in this together," he said.

Rosenberger was quoted in 2006 saying he was more concerned about Symantec's lack of commitment in security than the threat of potential competition to Symantec.

(Original *non-parody* version of this story published [here](#).)