ROB KOLSTAD

SAGE–news article on SCO defacement

kolstad@usenix.org

EACH WEEK OR SO, A SUMMARY OF 6–20 Web articles of interest to the system administration community is sent to the sage-news@sage.org mailing list, which has about 1,200 members.

On Thursday, December 2, the following article appeared:

> #######
>
> Vandalism: SCO site vandalized
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> news.com has a screen shot of the SCO website hack. It's interesting to see what unethical people can do to a company presumably pursuing lawful royalties for its intellectual property.
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> [I found it amusing…RK]
>
> http://news.com.com/Image+Screen+shot+of+SCO
> +
> hack/2009-7349_3-5469293.html

Soon thereafter, Steven Jenkins and I had an exchange on the roles and duties of editors in situations like this. This column summarizes that discussion and attempts to clarify the issues raised and resolutions we came to.

The email exchange will be presented here as a one-on-one discussion, in the belief that a discussion format is much easier to follow.

OUR DISCUSSION

Steven: I don't think that SAGE should encourage this type of illegal behavior. The second sentence in the summary just didn't discourage hacking as much as it should have. Furthermore, I read the editorial comment as being supportive of this sort of activity. I realize that humor is very difficult to convey in email (or written word). However, given the comment's terseness, it can certainly be interpreted as SAGE finding pleasure in the defacement of SCO's property.

Rob: I can see how the bracketed editorial remark's antecedent for "it" isn't clear. I meant the image itself was amusing. I imagine the word "interesting" was potentially not as well chosen as it could have been. Did you find the image amusing?

Steven: Yes, I personally found the image funny. But I don't think it's appropriate for the professional system administrators organization itself to make light of the illegal defacing of a Web site. Keep in mind that system administrators at SCO will have to replace the original Web site, track down how the vandals broke in, and then address those security holes. SAGE represents those system administrators!

Rob: Ignoring the actual behavior that triggered this apparent defacement, are you saying that my editorial comment (which was bracketed and signed) would still, even with a properly expressed antecedent, be out of line?

Steven: I think that organizations and the editors of publications should be held to a higher standard than a random organization member. I'd be somewhat embarrassed if a SAGE member publicly cheers about this; it's worse when an editor cheers.

Rob: Of course, I'm not representing SAGE in bracketed, signed remarks. I really didn't mean to encourage such things either. The news, however, was interesting in the context of our community.

I would be sorry if my amusement (which is apparently shared by you) were to be taken as encouragement of such activity. But it seems that the raising of the bar or standard you advocate would require me to refrain from comments of all kinds, and that doesn't feel right, either.

Steven: Editorial pages (or remarks) are taken by many to be the view of the publication, unless there is a stable of known editors with varying viewpoints. I think the same holds true for electronic newsletters.

OUR CONCLUSIONS

After a telephone conversation between Rob and Steven, a few points were agreed upon:

- The newsletter footer will explain that editorial comments represent the editors' opinions and not SAGE's.
- We will expand the editorial board, most likely to include Steven.

If you're interested in joining the editorial board, we're always open to wider participation! Contact sage-news-owner@sage.org to join the team.