

Russian Doctor to the Rescue



Photo: The Standard

Boris SHAROV, CEO of Doctor Web, a leading Russian antivirus software developer, told The Standard's correspondent Dmitry PETROVSKY about the products and ideology Doctor Web has to offer to the mobile world and the company's global market strategy.

– What product has Doctor Web brought to MWC2016? What is it for? What do users think of it?

– We've brought our core mobile product for Android – Doctor Web Security Space. This is a solution that protects Android smart phones and tablets and commands an audience of tens of millions of users. By the beginning of 2016, downloads of Dr.Web Android Light, our free antivirus kit, had cleared the 100 million mark. It is no secret that criminals are eyeing mobile gadgets with growing interest. Whereas before most hits came from malicious SMS messaging software, now we are seeing more malware in action, and we are seeing it being used

for more serious crimes, such as forging SMS acknowledgements, spying on device owners, and stealing money. And malware developers have perfected smarter ways of protecting their brainchildren from antivirus detection. To give you an example, Android.BackDoor.240.origin and Android.DownLoader.155.origin, which are among the ten most popular mobile malware programs, can get root privileges on the devices they hit, putting themselves beyond the reach of antivirus software that operates with regular software rights. Dr.Web for Android Light can only detect this malware, but Dr.Web Security Space for Android can fight it. This product provides maximum

security and will eradicate all malware from system areas.

Unlike Dr.Web for Android Light, Dr.Web Security Space for Android is more than just antivirus software, as it incorporates anti-spam and anti-theft features. With the anti-spam utility, the user can blacklist or whitelist phone numbers and set up a default message filter. The anti-theft utility doesn't just protect the device from theft; it will detect it anywhere, anytime – no matter where it's been left.

– What are some global anti-virus protection trends noted by Doctor Web recently? And what market trends are beacons for Doctor Web?

– I would say that there are several trendsetters in the antivirus industry. The primary ones, hands down, are the malware developers. They set the trends that anti-malware developers are compelled to follow. In the early 2000s, the biggest threat to e-mail users was mail worms. Their attacks would shake the worldwide web several times a month. A few years later, worms were out and Trojans, which operate in a completely different fashion, were in. These days Trojan programs form huge bot networks controlled by hackers via dedicated servers. While fighting malware, protective programs are designed to disrupt its interactions with the known control

centers. As virus creators invent new subterfuges to protect their malware, bypassing or incapacitating antivirus kits, they compel antivirus software developers to perfect their protective solutions, expand their preventive arsenal, and tackle previously unknown threats. The Dr.Web kit is no exception to the general trend. We keep a close watch on new threats and the technical tricks they utilize, and we make sure our solutions successfully rebuff new malware.

In recent times, operating system developers seem to have stepped up their efforts to regulate antivirus algorithms. Apple was the pioneer, and more recently Microsoft adopted the same policy. Antivirus software developers are receiving insistent "recommendations" from developer teams, who are not the greatest experts in data security. These attempts to squeeze everyone into the same mold worry us. We suspect that such a policy may play into the hands of none other than the malware developers themselves, who can get away with ignoring the new, tougher requirements of the operating systems.

As for "beacon" trends, we are guided by two things. First, we try to stay true to our own principles, which were laid down back in the 1990s. Above all else, we make antivirus software – a means of protection against malware. This mission is as relevant today as ever – even more so, seeing that attacks have become more numerous and more elaborate. We try not to be tempted by various distractions and fashionable trends that water down the concept of "antivirus software" and repackage it as a bloated combination of security features.

We are proud that our antivirus software has always, throughout its existence, defined antivirus protection. We are committed to retaining our leadership as a developer of antivirus protection solutions for both PC and mobile operating systems. This is where we outstrip

the competition, and we do not have to follow in anyone else's footsteps.

– How does Doctor Web respond to universal mobility challenges? Does it follow the Mobile First paradigm in its solutions?

– In light of the agenda that concerns us, the challenges of universal mobility bespeak a colossal surge in risk exposure for users who increasingly use mobile devices in their work and day-to-day activities. It is our task to provide well-timed protective solutions, keep track of new threats, and plan

“ Doctor Web’s high-tech common sense, coupled with its powerful partnering network, gives it a critical competitive edge globally”

effective responses. That is why our products are developed in parallel directions, only converging where the threats are identical, or where we can combat the threats by the same technical means. Our mobile business is special, and is developed concurrently with protective technology for Windows PCs and Linux and OS X workstations. I would be hard-pressed to name any tasks that are more urgent than others in this field. But I can say that the scope of applications for our solutions, designed for mobile platforms, has recently expanded.

– How does Doctor Web propose to make a difference in the international marketplace?

– We bring cutting-edge protective solutions to the international marketplace. Our products are a solid value in fighting cybercrime, and we never try to obfuscate this fact with PR soundbites. This no-nonsense approach of ours is increasingly appreciated by users worldwide. We have built a whole family of products for use in conjunction with other antivirus

solutions. First and foremost, it's our Dr.WebCureIt! that has earned the most-global acclaim and popularity. Then there's Dr.WebCureNet!, which is unrivalled in the antivirus software industry. Our newest product is Dr.Web KATANA, a signature-free antivirus kit, which preventively takes care of highly relevant threats, most notably so-called bank Trojans or extortion Trojans which encrypt user data.

Doctor Web's high-tech common sense, coupled with its powerful partnering network, gives it a critical competitive edge globally.

– Does Doctor Web pitch itself as a developer of strictly antivirus software? Or does it, like some other players, tout itself as a provider of data security solutions? And what does this mean in relation to Doctor Web's labs and current business processes?

– Our products are, first and foremost, antivirus software tools. At this point, it seems that the opportunities for development are limitless. Indeed, the torrent of malware fabricated by cybercriminals on a daily basis is growing by the day, and even by the hour. When PC users begin to grasp at least 50% of what it means to use antivirus protection correctly, I might concede that it is time to move on to more comprehensive solutions. Only someone who has no idea what they are talking about will complain about an antivirus kit "not working". Given the sweeping illiteracy of users, who can reliably evaluate the efficacy of a software product? We realize how true this is every time we investigate a virus-related computer emergency or advise users who have

been hit by some encryption malware. So it makes complete sense for our R&D to focus on the development and honing of antivirus technology, making sure it can be used with as many of the major operating systems as possible.

– What are Doctor Web's sales strategies and tactics outside Russia? What is Doctor Web's global partner network like, and how is it developed?

– We have a very clear idea of the profile of the potential partners with whom we would like to work. Our partners are not companies that seek our products simply for resale, but those that need them to create value-added services for their customers. Distributors with huge product portfolios are not to our taste; we are not meant for each other.

It is not our intention to compete with products that are not in our target segments, and we are not prepared to compete on price turf. This would hardly make sense in a market where the percentage of free products has a tendency to grow. Our day-to-day experience teaches us that those who skimped on antivirus software yesterday will be paying much more to troubleshoot a virus attack tomorrow. We try to drive this very basic idea home to our partners, and usually we get through to them.

– What are Doctor Web's global market aspirations? What are the next steps the company plans to take to get there?

– Our global ambitions do not distract us from our core markets, the ones that keep us afloat financially. But we certainly do aim to aggressively market our proprietary antivirus protection kits, which are yet to be matched anywhere in the world. One of our strategic priorities is to work with mobile device manufacturers, as devices are now getting infected more frequently during the manufacturing process.