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Gartner Says IT Supply Chain Integrity Will Be Identified as a Top Three Security-Related Concern by Global 2000 IT Leaders by 2017

Gartner's Maverick Research Special Report Sparks New, Unconventional Insights

STAMFORD, Conn., October 18, 2012 — Enterprise IT supply chains will be targeted and compromised, forcing changes in the structure of the IT marketplace and how IT will be managed moving forward, according to Gartner, Inc. By 2017, IT supply chain integrity will be identified as a top three security-related concern by Global 2000 IT leaders.

These findings are produced as part of Gartner's Maverick research. Maverick research is designed to spark new, unconventional insights. Maverick research is unconstrained by our typical broad consensus-formation process to deliver breakthrough, innovative and disruptive ideas from our research incubator.

Supply chain integrity is the process of managing an organisation's internal capabilities, as well as its partners and suppliers, to ensure all elements of an integrated solution are of high assurance. The need for integrity in the IT supply chain is necessary, whether the solution is developed in-house or purchased from a third party.

"IT supply chain integrity issues are real, and will have mainstream enterprise IT impact within the next five years," said Neil MacDonald, research vice president and Gartner Fellow. "In the shorter term, the market for information security offerings will fragment along geopolitical lines. In the longer term, the same will happen for OSs and other IT system infrastructure software, reshaping the IT landscape moving forward. Enterprise IT departments must begin to make changes today to protect their systems and information in a world where all IT systems are suspect. These changes in information protection strategies will help enterprises embrace and adopt cloud computing and consumerisation, which have strikingly similar issues with untrusted systems."

"IT supply chain integrity issues are expanding from hardware into software and information," said Ray Valdes, research vice president at Gartner. "They are growing more complex as IT systems are assembled from a large number of geographically diverse providers and, now of mainstream concern to enterprise IT. These issues are not just about defense and intelligence. This has significant implications for businesses, governments and individuals moving forward in a world where the integrity of the IT supply chain is no longer completely trustable, and where all layers of the IT stack will be targeted for supply chain compromise."

The IT supply chain has become more complex, fine-grained, globally distributed and volatile in the sense that rapid change provides the opportunity to introduce compromises. Hardware vendors are increasingly outsourcing not just manufacturing, but also design to OEM suppliers and contractors located in Asia and India. In some cases, established Asian suppliers are outsourcing to emerging economies, such as Brazil, Vietnam and Indonesia. This is a complex problem, since most hardware systems are a conglomeration of components and subsystems procured from a large number of individual providers.

However, Gartner analysts said most hardware systems include software-based elements (at a minimum, firmware and drivers), with the trend to shift more intelligence out of hardware and into software. In an information- and software-based economy, IT supply chain integrity must extend to include the following:

Software supply chains — This includes components, frameworks, middleware, language platforms, virtual machines (VMs) and operating systems (OSs), but also the software infrastructure and environment for software distribution and updates (such as DNS, identity, application store packaging and digital certificates).

Ensuring the integrity of software supply chains is a more difficult problem because of the increased use of offshore development, the relative ease of cloning software, and the ongoing need to keep software patched and updated via trusted mechanisms.

Information supply chains — Information is now becoming available from a variety of sources — from partners, suppliers and cloud-based services, such as data from Google Maps, Twitter, Facebook and Amazon. This information can be incorporated into connected applications, information marketplaces and the information integrated from partners in an extended supply chain ecosystem. Critical decisions will be based on information assembled from many other sources, creating a similar supply chain integrity issue to that of hardware and software.

Additional information is available in the report, "Maverick* Research: Living in a World Without Trust: When IT's Supply Chain Integrity and Online Infrastructure Get Pwned." The report is part of the Gartner Special Report "Drive Disruptive Innovation with Maverick* Research." This Special Report explores high-impact future scenarios that help companies think differently to uncover opportunity and enable innovation. This collection of research is intentionally disruptive and edgy to help IT leaders get ahead of the mainstream and take advantage of trends and insights that could impact their IT strategy and their organisation. The Special Report is available at <http://www.gartner.com/technology/research/maverick/>.

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