

South Africans easy meat for hackers

South African social media users are at particular risk of being hacked because of their poor digital literacy.



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Facebook safety policy manager of Europe Middle East and Africa Julie de Baillencourt said that raising awareness of how to protect user accounts was particularly important to the company in South Africa.

De Baillencourt was in this country for a [series of seminars on online safety](#).

Her visit was in the week that radio host and author Redi Tlhabi had her Twitter account hacked while she was in New York.

De Baillencourt said Facebook, which has more than two billion users worldwide and more than 16 million active monthly users in South Africa, could only do so much to protect users from hacking.



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"For hacking, we're trying to raise awareness on not sharing your password with your friends or partner," said De

Baillienecourt.

"We can put the best safety mechanisms in place but if you're going to share your password then it undoes a lot of the good practices.

"There's also a huge focus on education, so digital literacy is important."

Alarming stats

Joanne Phyfer, a researcher at the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention, said the organisation had found some alarming stats in a recent study of South Africans' online use, especially among children.

"A lot of children are meeting strangers on the internet," said Phyfer, who took part in the Facebook talks.

"Almost half of them have met someone they don't know, and almost half of those had later met the person offline," she said.

"When we compared parents and children, we found that parents' level of skill was the same as a that of a 12- to 14-yearold child.

"So for a parent to try to manage a child's internet use can be quite difficult, because once the child gets beyond the age of 14 he has progressed beyond the parent's capabilities," Phyfer said.

Source: The Times

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