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The Publishers Clearing House Online Network Combats Counterfeit Check Scams Posing as Legitimate Sweepstakes

Partners with leader in online reputation management, BrandProtect, to help safeguard consumers

Port Washington, NY – March 24, 2009 – With criminals getting savvier, the Publishers Clearing House Online Network (PCH) has upped the ante in the war against scam artists posing as legitimate sweepstakes by expanding efforts to shut down the phone numbers of rogue scammers.

Recent reports have detailed an increase in fake check scams fraudulently using the name of legitimate sweepstakes and deploying complex automated phone technology to perpetuate these crimes. Consumers receive what looks like a real check via the USPS and are asked to send money back in order to process their winnings. By the time they've sent the money, the fake check bounces and the money sent is taken out of their personal account.

Victims of this fraudulent activity are also often fooled into thinking the counterfeit checks are real through telephone-based, social-engineering attacks that spoof caller-ID using automated IVR systems. These attacks exploit the public's trust in landline telephone services.

In many of these scams, criminals have illegally and fraudulently used the PCH name in an attempt to benefit from the well-known reputation and good will associated with the company's brand. As a result, PCH has increased efforts to identify the phone numbers being used to perpetuate the scams and is working with BrandProtect to immediately shut down the numbers.

“The Publishers Clearing House brand and its customers are being harmed by these scams, which are currently being operated across multiple channels,” said Michael Kiefer, general manager of BrandProtect. “We've developed new technology, approaches and tactical human intelligence to help shut down the phone numbers and Web sites behind these bogus offers, often on the same day they're discovered.”

BrandProtect helps organizations detect, uncover and mitigate brand and trademark infringement issues, phishing attacks, Web traffic diversions and even defamatory discussions. The company also has relationships with more than 3,500 Internet Service Providers globally, accounting for more than 85 percent of the traffic flowing across the Internet.

Through a combination of advanced technology, round-the-clock monitoring, proven best practices and exhaustive human analysis, BrandProtect is uniquely positioned to identify and respond to the most relevant, highest-priority threats to an organization's reputation.

BrandProtect's comprehensive program enables organizations to effectively manage their online reputation by uncovering, counteracting and preventing a wide range of threats to corporate rights, revenues and reputation.

Given the extent of damage that could be sustained by organizations exposed to these online threats, independent analyst firm, Gartner, named "Enterprise Internet Reputation Management (EIRM)" a critical concern for every enterprise doing business on the Web. This is supported by further research that global CEOs and risk managers have identified reputation as the biggest threat they face online.

"These scams harm consumers and falsely associate our brand with illegal activities," said Alex Betancur, vice president and general manager of the Publishers Clearing House Online Network. "As an industry leader we feel it is our responsibility to work closely with the consumer protection community to help shut down all scams effecting our most valuable asset, our customers."

"PCH has long been an industry leader, partnering with the FTC and other regulatory groups, to help fight sweepstakes scams," said Sal Tripi, director of operations at Publishers Clearing House. "Our partnership with BrandProtect is a continuation of a long-term policy of educating and protecting customers. Now that the situation is becoming more complex we've got a few more tricks up our sleeves to ensure our customer's security. Consumers should be aware that if they are asked to send money in order to enter a sweepstakes or claim a prize, it is not a legitimate offer and it is certainly not from the real Publishers Clearing House."

About the PCH Online Network

The PCH Online Network is the Web destination for Publishers Clearing House, a leading multi-channel direct marketer of value-based consumer products and magazines. The company promotes its products by providing site visitors with a chance to win valuable sweepstakes prizes. With more than 3.5 million new registrants per year, more than 5 million unique visitors per month and a database of more than 10 million customers, the PCH Online Network continues to be a viable opportunity for advertisers to reach a diverse group of men and women online. For more information about the PCH Online Network, visit <http://www.pchonlinenetwork.com>.

About BrandProtect

BrandProtect, the leader in online threat protection, empowers organizations to gain control over how they are represented online. The company's services help organizations detect, uncover and take down online threats to their brands, such as phishing, fraud, copyright infringement, web traffic diversion and more. By combining advanced technology and around the clock human analysis, BrandProtect filters, reports and takes action on the threats that present the most risk to a brand. Recognized for its response services that help organizations detect, uncover and take down online threats to their brands, BrandProtect was the first company of its kind to be offered full membership by the Forum for Incident Response and Security Teams (FIRST). BrandProtect has relationships with more than 3,500 Internet Service Providers globally that account for more than 85 percent of the traffic flowing across the Internet. Founded in 2001, BrandProtect is headquartered in Toronto, Canada, with offices in the United States, Singapore and London. For more information, visit <http://www.bdbbrandprotect.com>.