

# European accountants lead rivals in IT security



European companies spend more money on data protection than other continents Gregor Schuster/Getty Images

**Deirdre Hipwell**

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European financial firms are better at protecting their clients' data and spend more money on IT security measures than American companies, according to a survey being released today.

BKR International, a worldwide association of accountancy firms, and MWR InfoSecurity, a British IT consultancy, say that a comparison of 200 accountancy firms in the Europe, Middle East and Africa region and America shows large divergences in data security measures.

Almost 50 per cent of the American companies questioned had experienced a malicious IT attack over the past year, compared with less than 40 per cent in EMEA.

And while more than half of all American firms questioned said IT security compliance was of high priority, compared with only 32 per cent in EMEA, European companies still spent more money on data protection and were more vigilant about it.

BKR said that with global IT attacks on the increase it was essential for professional services firms to ensure that they could protect information. Hackers targeting Sony's PlayStation Network compromised the personal details of almost 77 million users.

The survey of companies whose turnover was between \$1.5 million and \$100 million (£954,000-£64 million), also shows that employees' user-awareness and compliance training in the United States was poor compared with that of European employees.

Stephen Hamlet, BKR's EMEA executive director, said it appeared that European firms were keen to ensure they were IT secure to win over clients, while American companies "were more concerned about meeting compliance regulations to avoid litigation".

Mr Hamlet said: "The professional services industry must be sure to be even more secure than most ... this is especially important when data is travelling all over the world. Companies who have yet to experience a major catastrophe may be taking the 'it won't happen to me' approach; yet once the damage is done, it may be too late."

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