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Week

**Protest group out to 'destroy' eToys**

The group is calling for the destruction of online toy seller eToys and says it already has a group of hackers ready for the challenge.

By Connie Guglielmo, Inter@ctive Week  
UPDATED December 14, 1999 5:51 PM PT

**A protest group calling for the destruction of online toy seller eToys said it already has hackers working on ways to interfere with site traffic counts and the toy seller's server operations.**



“People seldom follow ignorance and ignorance is flowing from this attempt.”

— Sharon Christian, Executive

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In a press release sent out Dec. 12, RTMark, a group describing itself as a "machine to improve its shareholders' culture and life -- sometimes to the detriment of corporate wealth -- put out a call to Internet users to "destroy" eToys by joining in a series of "sabotage" projects intended to lower the company's stock market value as "quickly as possible."

Those projects, which RTMark has referred to collectively as a "mutual fund" -- the "etoy Fund" -- range from a boycott of the eToys (Nasdaq:ETYS) site to e-mail campaigns to calling on hackers to interfere with site operations and traffic counts in moves RTMark hopes will cripple the company's servers during the 10 busy shopping days leading up to Christmas.

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RTMark spokesman Ernest Lucha said the campaign is intended to protest a trademark infringement suit eToys is waging against a European conceptual artist group called "etoy." A Los Angeles judge last month issued a preliminary injunction ordering the

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award-winning art group to stop using the domain name  
www.etoys.com or risk

fines of up to \$10,000 per day.

### Trademark infringement suit

What's raising the ire of protesters, Lucha said, is the fact that 5-year-old etoy registered the domain name in October 1995 -- two years before eToys registered its domain name in the U.S.

The next court hearing in the trademark infringement suit is scheduled for Dec. 27. Published reports said the two are working on settling the case.

RTMark -- pronounced "art mark" -- is not the only group to protest against the eToys suit. A number of other sites have been established to contest the top toy seller's methods, including Toywar.com and Eviltoy.com. But RTMark recognizes its campaign, launched last week, calls for the most violent action.

EToys spokesman Jonathan Cutler said Monday that the toy seller was not aware of RTMark's plans.

"Our aim is to destroy the company," said Lucha, acknowledging that this is the first time the 8-year-old group, which has created parodies of George W. Bush's campaign site, has solicited funding for one of its sabotage projects against a specific company. The group, which Lucha said seeks to publicize the widespread corporate abuse of democratic institutions such as courts and elections, is funded through donations that typically average \$100.

### Sued or destroyed?

But the etoy Fund is different. "We've got volunteers working on a program that will fake the Web access counts for eToys. We think if we make enough trouble, it will start affecting what investors think of the company and bring down their stock price," says Lucha.

But Lucha acknowledged the likely result of the etoy Fund is that it will merely bring attention to the case. He added that RTMark is not working for or on behalf of etoy, and that the art group is not participating in RTMark's efforts.

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"It's sensationalism," he admitted. "We're trying to call attention to what's going on and make it clear that a lot of people are not happy with the case and what it represents . . . to show how outrageous it is. It fits into a long tradition of corporate bullying, where big corporations are able to use the court system to maintain their power."

Asked if he was worried about possible legal reprisals against the group, whose members remain anonymous, Lucha noted RTMark is prepared for the possibility.

'It fits into a long tradition of corporate bullying, where big corporations are able to use the court system to maintain their power.'

-- RTMark  
spokesman  
Ernest Lucha

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#### Company Info

[eToys.com](#)

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"This is the first time we've gone after the destruction of a company. The only way it's strictly illegal is if we do damage to them," Lucha said. "We've always known there's a chance that we will be sued or destroyed. If we do, we will go down in a ball of fire with as much noise and publicity as we can."

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