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E-COMMERCE/MEDIA

Verisign to Make Fixes To Site Finder Service

By NICK WINGFIELD
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

VeriSign Inc., responding to an outpouring of complaints about a new service that exploits the typing errors users make when surfing the Web, said it plans to work with technologists to remedy disruptions the service has caused to some Internet applications like e-mail.

At the same time, the VeriSign service triggered a huge increase in the amount of traffic flowing to the Mountain View, Calif., company's Web site, a portion of which may be the result of a hacker attack against the company, VeriSign said.

VeriSign on Monday introduced the service, dubbed **Site Finder**, which steers users who attempt to reach nonexistent Web addresses to a site operated by VeriSign. The company is able to take control of the traffic because it operates the master list, or "registry," for all Internet addresses ending in ".com" and ".net." VeriSign said it designed **Site Finder** as a navigational aid for Web users. It also receives revenues from the additional traffic through relationships with [Overture Services Inc.](#) and [Yahoo Inc.](#)'s Inktomi, which guide users to Web sites.

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The new VeriSign service infuriated many network operators, though, who say it has disrupted the

functioning of e-mail and other applications. Among the complaints about the VeriSign service is that it hurts the ability of Internet service providers to block "spam" sent from Internet addresses that don't exist -- a common technique normally used to stem the flow of junk e-mail. Internet service providers and software groups have developed patches that prevent the VeriSign service from working on their networks.

In a statement Tuesday, VeriSign said it would release technical information on its Web site that would help network operators adapt their software so they could block unwanted e-mail again. "In the course of implementation, various users asked us to modify the service to accommodate anti-spam applications," the company said in the statement. "Because VeriSign strongly supports appropriate technical measures designed to reduce unwanted spam, we are reaching out to users and the community to make appropriate adjustments to the service."

"We remain committed to ensuring that **Site Finder** improves Web navigation and the user experience," VeriSign added.

Despite the controversy, VeriSign's efforts to nab control of typoprone Internet users appears to be having a sizable impact on the volumes of users visiting its site. Traffic to the company's Web site on Tuesday skyrocketed to about 1.3 million visitors from an average of about 100,000 visitors on the previous four Tuesdays, according to measurement firm ComScore Networks Inc.

Some of that may have been due to malicious -- not typo -- traffic. A VeriSign spokesman said the company experience a "denial of service" attack on its Web site on Tuesday, in which hackers use computers to bombard Web sites with traffic in hopes of overloading them. The attack appeared to subside by Wednesday, the spokesman said. A ComScore spokesman said it's "very unlikely" that a denial of service attack on VeriSign had a significant impact on the ComScore traffic figures.

Write to Nick Wingfield at nick.wingfield@wsj.com

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