ABSA's PR efforts amid hacker crisis

How has ABSA's PR performed up to now after a hacker stole more than R500 000 from at least 10 ABSA Internet Banking customers by breaking into and stealing their pin numbers?

Here are a few reports by the media:

- Cape Town police on trail of Absa hacker - SABC News.
- Hacker sneaks in the back door - News24.
- How Absa hacker targeted clients' home PCs - IOL

ABSA did provide precautionary measures that other online clients could take (The Star), but in my view it came a bit late. Early media reports focused on talking about "identity theft", "trojan horses" and "spyware", and this scared customers.

ABSA's group information security officer, Richard Peasey, reassures us "Fraudsters are beginning to realise how difficult it is to breach bank security systems and are now targeting the home computers of account holders by stealing their electronic identity, mainly their PIN and access account numbers... It is a new trend called spyware. This has got nothing to do with the bank. It records keystrokes, like your account and PIN number, and then it emails the information to a Hotmail mailbox."

This talk is enough for me to give up Internet Banking altogether and it makes me specifically wary of ABSA.

What their PR machine neglected to emphasise in simple terms is that all banks throughout the world are vulnerable to this hacker's method to obtain the pin numbers. It is not specific to ABSA only. A quick search on google.com for 'anti keylogger' found this software download that blocks the method that this hacker used to gain access to the pin numbers - download software. I'm sure there are others if searching for another few minutes. A good PR strategy would have been to distribute this to all ABSA internet banking clients and then make a big splash in the media that "all is under control" and "ABSA advises clients on security issues".

What happened to Today, Tomorrow, Together? More like Confuse, Scare, Shift the Blame.

A user poll on SA search engine Ananzi on 22 July indicated that 60% of respondents now consider Internet banking to be unsafe. ABSA has spent millions on its brand. Has enough been spent on PR, and pro-actively on crises management for an in-depth plan when something like this happens?

What could have been done to minimise the damage, or even turn a negative situation arround as Pick n Pay has done recently?