

Keep your business computer trouble free.

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By John Watson

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I see Danny Burke of PC Magic once a week to sort out any problems on my computer and to help me move ahead with an internet info product business. He spends most of his week rescuing business owners who are having problems with their computers.

Last week I asked him for the advice he would give a business owner who was having trouble with his computer. This is the advice he gave me:

Keep things simple on your computer. Don't use it for games etc. Just use it for business. Danny finds that half his customers have caused their own problems by the extras they have downloaded from the internet such as:

Additional toolbars for internet explorer.

Unnecessary utilities like internet speed boosters which seldom work.

Eye candy such as wall paper changers, animated cats etc

All most businesses need is

A base operating system

An email client

A web browser

An office suite

A firewall and anti-virus system

Don't download any old stuff off the internet. The more stuff you put on your hard disk, the more likely it is that you will have problems. Microsoft cannot check all the different applications you might download for compatibility.

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Your first graphics package and another graphics package might fight over the file extensions. Try to stick with one package. Similar problems occur with music and video players which should not be on a business system anyway unless you are in that field.

Don't upgrade unless you could name three good reasons to upgrade. After Danny gave me this advice, I rather guiltily tried to upgrade my BT broadband service to the new combined BT Yahoo broadband service.

Sure enough as soon as I had installed the new service, things started to go wrong. Things that had worked before (like links in emails) no longer worked. I'm not blaming BT Yahoo. I just had too much stuff on my computer! When I uninstalled the new service everything started working again.

Danny comments: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." When you upgrade, the file formats are sometimes different from the earlier versions of the software. This means you cannot go back to the earlier versions because they don't recognise the new file format.

Do not assume that newer versions are better than the earlier versions. All you have done is make the software producer richer!

Have a firewall and virus checker and keep them up to date

Back up your data. 90% of companies who have a catastrophic data loss go bankrupt within two years. You should have two copies of important data and three copies of critical data stored in three different locations.

One copy should be in a fire safe off site. This should be standard practice. You cannot trust computers. Sooner or later they will get you! If you don't back up, you are an idiot and deserve all you get!

Today I received this message from an ezine owner:

A lot of you sent me an ad this week, which I had saved on my hard drive and guess what?

My computer crashed and I lost every one.

I have a backup computer, but no ads.

Please re-send your ads so I can get them in the Friday edition.

Sorry for the trouble.

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The ezine owner is obviously a nice person but he may lose customers who haven't got the time to resend their ads. No one likes to repeat their efforts.

Maybe his computer crashed because he had broken not only the back up rule but some of the other rules.

As a general principle, use your machine and don't tinker with it. Once it is working, leave it alone!

Leave it alone!!!

John Watson is an info publisher on the internet and a martial arts school owner. He taught Religious Studies and Life Skills to teenagers in London schools for about 33 years before retiring in 2000 A.D. His own e-books and those of the English multimillionaire, Stuart Goldsmith, can be found on his site at www.motivationtoday.com

HackAttack.

By Robert J Farey

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P C. owners are constantly at risk from attacks by hackers.

Spy ware, viruses, trojan horses, and all sorts of other malevolent programs are all trying to take control of your computer.

What can we do about it?

How can we be sure that we are properly protected against them?

A hacker will generally not be interested in doing damage to your PC. His main interest is in gaining control of your computer so that he can use it to send out hundreds of thousands of e-mails in your name with the intention of crashing your mail server.

This can get you into very serious trouble with the server. This is something that you do not want. How are you going to prove that you were not to blame?

How do the hackers do it?

What tools do they use?

A port scanner.

What is a port scanner?

A port scanner can locate PCs that are on line and check for an open port.

A hacker using a program such as 'Super Scan' can find an open port to gain entrance to your computer. Once in, he can use your computer as if it were his own. The only difference is that to all intents and purposes it is you that is causing all of the trouble.

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The main port that the hacker is interested in is port 80. This is the one that you use to log on to the internet.

I am not going to confuse you with all the various programs that are designed to show you what ports are open at any particular time. What you need to know is how to protect your computer against these attacks.

There are a number of programs designed to show you what is going on inside your PC. I will give you a short list of some that are recommended by some of the program makers.

The one that I would not be without is: www.testmyfirewall.com As its name implies it will test your firewall for flaws and scan for open ports and any other security problems you may have. You do have a firewall, don't you?

Another one is: www.pestscan.com This will scan for any nasties that are already on the computer.

Lastly, I use: <http://www.security.symantec.com> This will run a security check of all my systems.

Don't put off what you should be doing today. Make sure that your protection is doing its job. Check that you have the latest version of whatever protection you are using. An out of date system is worse than useless. It gives a false sense of security and suddenly you find yourself in serious trouble with your ISP.

It is your responsibility to ensure that your computer will not cause problems for someone else. There are so many free systems out there that you have no excuse for not using one or more of them.

Be safe. Be happy. Be responsible.

All the best. ...Bob...

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Bio.Robert earns his crust by targeting the thousands of newcomers to internet trading. He aims to cut their learning curve to enable them to start earning money from the word go. He learned the hard way. You can learn the easy way. Checkout his website. It's not posh. It's not perfect, but it is effective. <http://www.learn-and-earn-now.co.uk/>

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