

Radio Days – 2010-01-09

Tip of the Week – The Year of the Virus

This year could turn out to be the one where many people become aware of being infected for the first time. Already this year I have dealt with three computers, and each was infected with a number of viruses. If this trend keeps up then this could be called *The Year of the Virus*.

Many people believe that, because they only read emails and do a little surfing, they will be immune from attack. This is akin to believing that, because you always wear a seatbelt and drive below the speed limit, you will not have an accident while driving. The truth is far from so simple. The *black hats* (so-called because the bad guys in Western movies always wear black hats and the good guys always wear white hats) are interested in your computer for many reasons, one being *because it is there*. This is the year when you should take internet security seriously if you have not done so before.

There are a number of websites which purport to tell you which is the best anti-virus program in the world. This is akin to having a number of websites which will tell you who is the most attractive man or woman in the world: there are no standards so we make them up as we go along. My favourite anti-virus program for home users is AVG Free: it may not catch every virus but it does give as much, if not more, protection as many of the more expensive name products. Try it now!

One is Enough

This week has been interesting with a number of computers being too slow for their owners. In many of the cases the culprit was a second (or even third) anti-virus program. The solution was simple: remove all but one of these anti-virus programs. I found this out by accident (as so often happens). My first client had a computer which was very slow when surfing the internet so he installed an anti-virus program. This found no problems so he called me. I uninstalled his anti-virus using *Revo Uninstaller*. I then installed AVG (following my own recommendations) and found that there were two more anti-virus programs installed. I used Revo to uninstall these programs and the computer became, in his words, “Faster than it had ever been before”. This was classed as a major success, all due to a stroke of luck: AVG checks for installed anti-virus programs during the installation.

This does not always work. Another client had an expired anti-virus program which I uninstalled. I then went to install AVG and it reported that the uninstalled program was still present. This did not compute! I then tried everything that I knew to uninstall his old anti-virus program, to no avail. I then re-installed AVG, it reported that the old anti-virus program was still active but I continued the installation anyway. This resulted in a very slow computer: I uninstalled AVG and suggested another person who knows more about Windows and its internals than I do.

This un-uninstallable program is Avast. I have since spoken to a Windows expert who stated that Avast does not play by the rules. This means that I cannot recommend it as I once did, and I now recommend that you do not install it. AVG Free has now fixed the problems which once plagued it so is back to being my recommended anti-virus for home users.

Websites

NSS Labs	www.nsslabs.com
AV Comparatives	www.av-comparatives.org
AV-Test	www.av-test.org
Revo Uninstaller	www.revouninstaller.com
AVG Free	http://free.avg.com