

Radio Days – 2010-03-13

Tip of the Week – Stopping Viruses

One of the most important things to realise about viruses is that they need to start when your computer starts. If they do not start at this time then they are unable to do the sorts of things that their writers want them to do. Stopping a virus attack needs a layered approach. The first step is to keep the virus from getting into your computer. The second step is to ensure that it does not run. These steps can never be perfect because viruses keep changing their methods.

My favourite method for preventing a program from running when your computer starts is to use a program called *StartupMonitor*. This program is written by Mike Lin, who has written a number of useful programs which I have used over the years. It just sits there, waiting for a program to make the changes to your computer to allow it to start when you switch your computer on. If you have not just installed a new program which you want to start with your computer then just click *No* when asked if you want to allow it to start.

Like all anti-virus methods it is not infallible. Virus writers can bypass firewalls and anti-virus programs, so once they become aware of this sort of program they will do their best to bypass them as well. In the meantime, use this program as part of your strategy.

Support Over the Internet

Have you ever received a call from a friend who had a problem with their computer? Did your friend give a garbled message about what the problem was? If you have had this experience you will understand why I, and all other computer support people like me, ask you for the exact (that is the **EXACT**) error message, word for word, from the computer screen. I have had many calls for support where the caller tried to remember an error message from a day or two ago and been unsure just what it really said.

There is now a range of programs and websites which allow anybody to access your computer and help you solve a problem without being there in person. I am starting to use this method for short tasks. I can see the error message and understand what it means without it being filtered. It requires both parties to have a working broadband connection and a program to connect them. My current favourite for this is CrossLoop, which comes in both a free and pro version. As the free version does everything needed to help my clients it is the version which I use. Both parties need to download, install and register CrossLoop, then run it. Once you become connected the helper will be able to see the helpee's computer screen and run programs on the helpee's computer.

Because of the way the program works it is safe to be the helpee. You need to give permission for your helper to see your screen and you can terminate the session whenever you feel that you are uncomfortable with the process. You need to perform a number of steps to get help:

- Install and run CrossLoop on your computer.
- Give your helper you unique 12-digit code (which is unguessable)
- Accept their offer of help
- Allow them to access your computer

Thus you have complete control over who can help you, when they can help you and for how long they can help you. This is a very useful tool for people who need help in short bursts.

Websites

Startup Monitor www.mlin.net/StartupMonitor.shtml

CrossLoop www.crossloop.com