Radio Days – 2012-08-18

Tip of the Week – Which Mobile Phone Handset?

Last week I was asked which was the best mobile phone network. For obvious reasons I could not answer this question. This week I would like to make some suggestions to help you chose a mobile phone handset which meets as many of your needs as possible. Here is a list of some of the questions which you may like to ask:

- What criterion or criteria are you using to determine what is good and what is not?
- What tools or other equipment do you need to check each of your criteria?
- How should the results of the tests be weighted?
- Are there any absolute must-haves which override everything else?

Here are some of the criteria which I am using to select my new phone:

- Do I prefer ease-of-use or the ability to be able to customise the phone for my needs?
- What is the best size for my purposes?
- Do I need to have continuous coverage, even in areas which the telco admits has bad coverage?
- Does my phone need to be water- or drop-proof?
- Do I need a physical keyboard?
- How important is weight?

Having decided on the right questions to ask it is now time to talk to the people who sell these phones and try them out in the shop. It is also time to talk to people who use the phone which you are thinking of buying to see how happy they are with their phone. There are also a number of websites which have reviews of mobile phones.

Long gone are the days when you took the first mobile phone you saw: today's choice is huge!

Levels of Internet Security

There are still some people who believe that, because they do not use the internet much, they do not need to take steps to have protection while using the internet. This is a fallacy: there are too many people (the evil ones) who, for many reasons, want to control as many other computers as they can.

There are many reasons for this but they usually involve making money. A large number of computers under the control of one person or organisation is called a *botnet*. This is short for *robot network* and can be used for many things. A famous case happened some years ago to an internet betting company which refused to pay a ransom to some blackmailers. The result was that they were taken offline for about a week by a large botnet and lost far more than the ransom which had been demanded.

This botnet was made possible by all those people who, for one reason or another, did not bother to secure their computer from being owned by somebody else. There are a number of simple, mostly free, steps which you can take to ensure, as far as possible, that your computer is free from any unwanted intrusions.

Level 0: Do Nothing

This is the preferred option for far too many people. Some of these people feel that they are just not a big enough target, some cannot be bothered to setup a simple protection routine and some just do not seem to know or care about the harm that they may be causing to other people's computers.

If you know someone like this please help them protect their computer, both for your sake and for everyone else's.

Level 1: A Free Anti-Virus Program

There are many good free anti-virus programs on the market. For my money the best one is Microsoft Security Essentials. I have written about this program on many occasions because I believe that, for most people, it is the best one available.

There are a number of reasons for this:

- It is free to download and install
- It does not need updating every year
- It works well in the background without annoying you

There is, in my opinion, no better anti-virus program for the majority of computer users. It does not need continual hand-holding and it works well. It is the anti-virus program which I have been using for over a year.

Level 2: Another Security Program

The next program which I use is Malwarebytes. There are two versions: free and paid-for. The free version is good and the paid-for version is even better. Because the cost of the paid-for version is only $25 for a lifetime licence I recommend that this is the one that you use. There is one download: you convert the free version to the paid-for one by entering the codes which you are given when you pay.

The advantage of the paid-for version is that, like your anti-virus program, it works all the time. Because it is not an anti-virus program it does not cause the problems associated with having two or more anti-virus programs fighting for control of your computer.

I recommend that you download and use this program, especially the paid-for version.

Level 3: Keep Your Programs Up-To-Date

One of the main ways that the evil ones get access to your computer is by using security holes in the programs installed on your computer. All programs have security holes: it is the result of the complexity of modern computer programs. There are many people who, for both good and bad reasons, want to find these holes. The people with good reasons, the *white hats*, do this to encourage the makers of computer programs to fix the holes so that the people with bad reasons, the *evil ones*, cannot take advantage of these holes.

It is tedious, if not actually impossible, to keep track of all the holes and their fixes manually. For this reason I recommend that you download and use a free program called Secunia PSI. This program checks as many of the programs on your computer as possible, then updates those programs with known security holes. The latest version, version 3, has been updated so that it does its work automatically, keeping your computer programs up to date without your intervention.

This is all automatic with the possible exception of some programs which may need manual updating when you run Secunia PSI for the first time. Please download and install Secunia PSI on your computer on all your computers because it is just so good!

Level 4: Use a Sandbox Program

The term *sandbox* refers to a computer program which keeps dangerous programs, like viruses, securely quarantined in a special place so that they cannot do any damage to your computer. Perhaps the best-known sandbox program is *Sandboxie*. The version which you download is free to use for 30 days; after that it develops a nag screen to encourage you to buy either the one year version for home use (EUR 13, about $16) or the lifetime version for home use (EUR 29, about $35). Because this program is so good it is worth buying the full lifetime use version, which for many people will work out to less than $2 per year.

Sandboxie is easy to use. The instructions for using Sandboxie are on the website and refer to both the trial version and the registered and paid-for version. One advantage of using the full

version is that you can set your web browsers and email programs to run inside Sandboxie automatically. This ensures that you do not inadvertently download a virus or other malware program which will infect your computer and possibly steal important data.

I cannot recommend this program highly enough.

Level 5: Think Before You Click

Many of the woes which affect computer users are self-inflicted. This includes people who move the mouse and click without being aware that they have clicked. I have often watched a client click on a part of the screen and then asked them why a particular action occurred. The answer is always *I do not know! I did not do that!* When I point out that they are the only one using the computer so they must have done it a few will admit that perhaps they did cause the action. Many people, however, do not admit that they could have anything to do with what has just happened on their screen.

There is another group of people who infect their computer just because they see a request like *Click Here!* On their screen, so they click on that request. This can lead to all sorts of bad things and a computer which does not work as well as it should.

Please be aware that, when something happens on the computer which you are using, it is almost always because you clicked something on the screen. Please be aware just how you use your mouse and keyboard: many things which appear to happen all by themselves are, in reality, caused by the current computer user: you!

One of the main computer problems is called a *pebkac error*. Pebkac is an acronym: *P*roblem *E*xists *B*etween *K*eyboard *A*nd *C*hair

Please do not commit this crime: learn how to use your computer!

Level 6: Kill Your Computer

If you want absolute security there is one more step which you can take. This step, of course, is to ensure that your computer is never used. The only real way to do this is to take a piece of two by four to the computer so that it is reduced to rubble in such a way that it will never work again. If everybody followed this piece of advice then there would be no more internet problems!

In fact, there would be no more computer problems at all. The ultimate computer problem solver!

Helping Other People Help Themselves

If you have friends (or even enemies) who cannot or will not secure their computer please see if they will allow you to apply these security measures to their computer. Doing this will help everyone who uses the internet to sleep more easily at night.

Think of how much better you will feel, and how brightly your halo will shine, if you can do this to help your friends and enemies stay safe on the internet!

Further Information

Microsoft Security Essentials	www.microsoft.com/mse
Malwarebytes	www.malwarebytes.com
Secunia PSI	www.secunia.com
Sandboxie	www.sandboxie.com