Radio Days – 2014-02-22

Tip of the Week – Macs Do Get Viruses

During the week I had a call from a new client about fixing a computer problem. It transpired that he had a very nasty virus and that it had completely wrecked his computer. He was at his wits' end because he had tried every computer shop in Bendigo and they had all closed down within the last two or three months.

This amazed me so I asked him which shops had closed so he gave the names of the two shops that he knew, and they were both Apple shops. The penny dropped and I realised that he was not talking about computers: he was talking about Apples! iMacs to be precise.

We went back to the beginning and, yes, he did have Mac computers and, yes, he did have a nasty virus. He stated that he was a designer, as if that explained his Mac affliction. It is well known that many people in the design industry do use Macs as they have now become the industry standard.

I have, over the years, been told, in no uncertain terms, that Apple computers are better than Windows computers because they do not get viruses. This is just one of the furphies that I have to debunk just about every working day of my life over the last two decades.

And the one about Macs not getting viruses is just that: a furphy. But I wish that I had been given a dollar for every time that I have been told that it is impossible for a Mac to get a virus! I still would not be as rich as Bill Gates, but I would be much richer than I am now.

Who Gets Viruses?

All computers are vulnerable to viruses. This ranges from your prized Windows computer through your iPad and iPod to your mobile phone. And when I say *your mobile phone* I mean your Android phone, your iPhone, your Windows phone or any other phone like Blackberry or Nokia. They are all computers under the skin.

The range of vulnerable computers even extends to your digital camera.

This explains my habit of not connecting my camera directly to my computer. Instead, when I want to copy photos to my computer, I remove the card from my camera. Then, because my camera takes SD cards, I lock the card using the slider switch on the side of the card so that any camera virus which may have reached my computer cannot get into my camera via the card.

I may be paranoid, but that does not mean that they are not trying to destroy my camera!

Which Anti-Virus Program for Apple Computers?

I have no experience with Apple computers so I cannot advise you which anti-virus program you should use. I did a quick internet search for *apple antivirus software* and received over twelve million results. There are all sorts of anti-virus programs for Apple computers so you should have lots of fun finding one which suits your needs.

This matter has become more urgent with the recent announcement by Apple that there is a major glitch when checking the security certificate for any website which needs a certificate. This means that there is no guarantee that, if you are using an open WiFi connection to the internet (such as those provided at many hotels), that you are really connected to the bank that you think that you are.

Apple has stated that it is aware of the problem and that there is a fix which will be made available "real soon now". You should update your Apple device as soon as possible after this fix has been released so that you get back the security that you have always believed that you had.

Until then, do not do any banking using an open WiFi network.

Getting Around The Problem

My client still had a problem: his iMac still had a virus. I told him that I could not help him and suggested a couple of Mac users who may have been able to give him the name of a Mac support person in Bendigo who could help him. He rang back shortly to relate how one of these companies had the same problem, and their only solution was to take or send their beloved Mac computer to Melbourne for repair.

He was going to have to do the same thing.

He then made the suggestion that perhaps this made for an opening for somebody to start a Mac support business in the Bendigo region. This is, of course, possible. There is the obvious caveat: people who do not know what they are doing can do a lot of damage in the blink of an eye. If you do use a business like this which starts in Bendigo please make sure that the people who work there actually know what they are doing.

With something as critical to your business as your computer you cannot afford to have all the data and programs wiped off your computer. Do not let an incompetent person near your computer!

Check Your Backups

A long-time client decided to trade her very old Windows XP computer in for a brand-new Windows 8 all-in-one computer. This computer had a marvellous screen: bigger, brighter and much easier to read than her old one. She was rapt with this new screen and the computer which came with it.

Now comes the difficult part: working out which programs she wants to keep and whether she has the discs or the keys for all her programs. It turns out that she has all those items, and all the rest of the needed programs are free ones which I had installed for her from the internet.

Now came the time to download and install all the free programs. This was easy but it took some time. Fortunately she has a fast ADSL internet connection so it did not take as much time as if she had been connected with a slow dial-up connection. After all her programs were installed and the appropriate setup performed, it was time to restore all her data.

Restoring Data

 I had just done a backup onto her external hard disc (repeating the one she had done that morning but hey, I'm Irish, so I did it to be sure to be sure!). This meant that, in theory, all her data had now been transferred from her old computer to her external hard disc.

In theory is not the same as in practice!

Some files were not where we, or I, had expected them to be so no were not backed up. Some files were not in the same place on the external hard disc as they were on the old computer so were restored to different places. But the biggest problem was, as so often happens, with her emails.

Backing-Up Emails

This is a problem area which I am aware of so I checked things then checked them again. Everything was fine so I went ahead and restored her emails only to find that a whole year's worth of emails had been lost. This meant that her backup had not worked properly!

It was a matter of going back to her old computer and finding out exactly where her emails were stored. Some email programs make it very difficult to find the folder which contains the emails, and her was one of the better ones. I am sure that there is a good reason for all this

(because so many email programs do it!) but it does make things difficult when you want to setup a backup routine which ensures that your emails are stored on your external medium.

Once the emails had been found, restored and included in the backup it was time to recovery the new emails which had arrived on the new computer but had not been included in the backup of the old computer.

Such are the trials and tribulations of the computer consultant!

The New Backup

As usual, I used SyncBack as my backup program so downloaded it from the internet. After installation and setup I checked that the emails on this new computer were being included in the new backup. I could not afford a repeat of the chaos which had occurred during the transfer of data from my client's old computer to her new one. This new backup included all her emails so appeared to be working!

Being Irish, I had to be sure to be sure. This meant sending a quick email from my client's computer to herself. This is the usual way to see if an email program is setup correctly (the next step is to reply to this email and ensure that both the original email and the reply arrive at the correct destination) and I also used it to ensure that my client's emails were being included in her new backup.

They were! So all was well!

Summary

I was in luck. My client was copying data from an old computer to a new one so we had the chance to recover after not including emails in the backup process. If we had been restoring data from a lost or damaged computer then we would have lost over a year's worth of emails.

It is essential to ensure that all data is being backed-up when you perform a normal backup. This is why I like SyncBack so much as a backup program: once it has been setup correctly it just works.

If your backup does not work then you need to check your SyncBack setup to ensure that all the data which you need has, in fact, been included on your backup medium.

May you never lose data again!

Further Information

SyncBack   www.2brightsparks.com