The author.

How to Defeat Those Annoying Pop-Ups

Many Web surfers have had the misfortune of being confronted by what seems like an advertisement that pops up in their Web browser. Many are learning that these ads are actually not coincidental. Sometimes these ads are showing up because users are running software on their own computers that put these ads on the screen.

Ridding your computer of pop-up ads and spyware and other malwares is a very long and tedious process. Knowing what causes the problems can help to eliminate some of the problems.

"Spyware," "adware" and "malware" are words working their way into many computer users' vocabularies. These are small software programs that can record information about where you search, surf and even what you buy, and then send it back to some less-than-ethical advertisers. The more you are on the Internet, the more software that gets downloaded onto your system and the more ads and pop-ups you see. This will inevitably slow down even the newest, fastest computers.

Beating spyware and the like is a long process. The simplest way is to remove the sources of these programs and then prevent them from returning. I personally use two very good programs, both of which are free. You can find both Spybot Search & Destroy, as well as AdAware SE, at http://www.download.com. These programs are free and work very well together. Running these programs on a weekly basis will remove most of your problems and prevent many of the pop-up ads that usually plague so many computer users.

Understanding how these little programs get into computers is a little more complex. One way is through your very own Internet browser, Internet Explorer (IE). IE is built with ActiveX, a technology that originally was designed to make keeping your computer up-to-date easy. ActiveX is what allows the Windows Update program that is run from Microsoft's Web site to access your computer and recognize if you have the most recent service pack or if you need the newest version of some bundled program like IE or Media Player. Needless to say, programmers started to learn that if ActiveX worked in the background at Microsoft's Web site, they could get it to work in the background of other Web sites to download other information. This other information communicates in the background with an ad server that sends you ads and other annoying information. Some of these programs will even skew the results of search engines to show items for sale and your searched item at specific Web sites.

The single best way to escape this problem is to use a different Internet browser that does not use ActiveX and actively blocks pop-up information. Even the Department of Homeland Security recommends using a different Web browser due to the security vulnerabilities of IE (http://www.kb.cert.org/vuls/id/713878). Many different, very good browsers exist. My personal favorite is Mozilla's Firefox, available at http://www.getfirefox.com.

Spyware and the like also get into computers through online chat programs like Windows Messenger, AOL Instant Messenger and Yahoo Messenger. It is fun to talk to friends who are miles away and many kids stay up late talking to friends, but some of the computer glitches that are going around now are sneaking in through the chat programs.

Spyware also sneaks onto computers through some of the music and file-exchange programs. Some of these programs, like KaZaa, will run free but run with ads to help pay the bills. These ads are targeted to the user and will report information back to the ad-servers.

Ridding your computer of pop-up ads and spyware and other malwares is a very long and tedious process. Knowing what causes the problems can help to eliminate some of the problems. I've been asked by many friends how to fix their computers and how to prevent it from happening again. Some people don't like losing their chat programs or learning a new Web browser, but they are quite grateful when they can go a whole month and tell me they haven't had a pop-up or a slowdown yet.

Beating spyware and the like is a long process.