

ANOTHER MITEK ADVANTAGE

SECURE YOUR NETWORK - PART 2

Computers need to be secured and protected from many different threats. While most will come via the Internet you should not overlook threats from your local network and devices such as disks, CD's, DVD's and USB memory sticks. Each of those devices is capable of holding viruses, Trojans and other nasties.

As outlined in GN Guideline 113, the first and last line of defence is YOU. The value of being suspicious cannot be overestimate.

Using good quality antivirus software, and ensuring it is kept fully up to date, is a starting point but you can never assume it will detect and/or stop all viruses. As an example, a CD

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packages available from the Internet, a number of which are free (frequently paid for by advertising displayed in the software). The author's personal experience suggests that no single package is adequate. It is all too common to find one program will detect spyware which others have missed, while at the same time missing something others have detected.

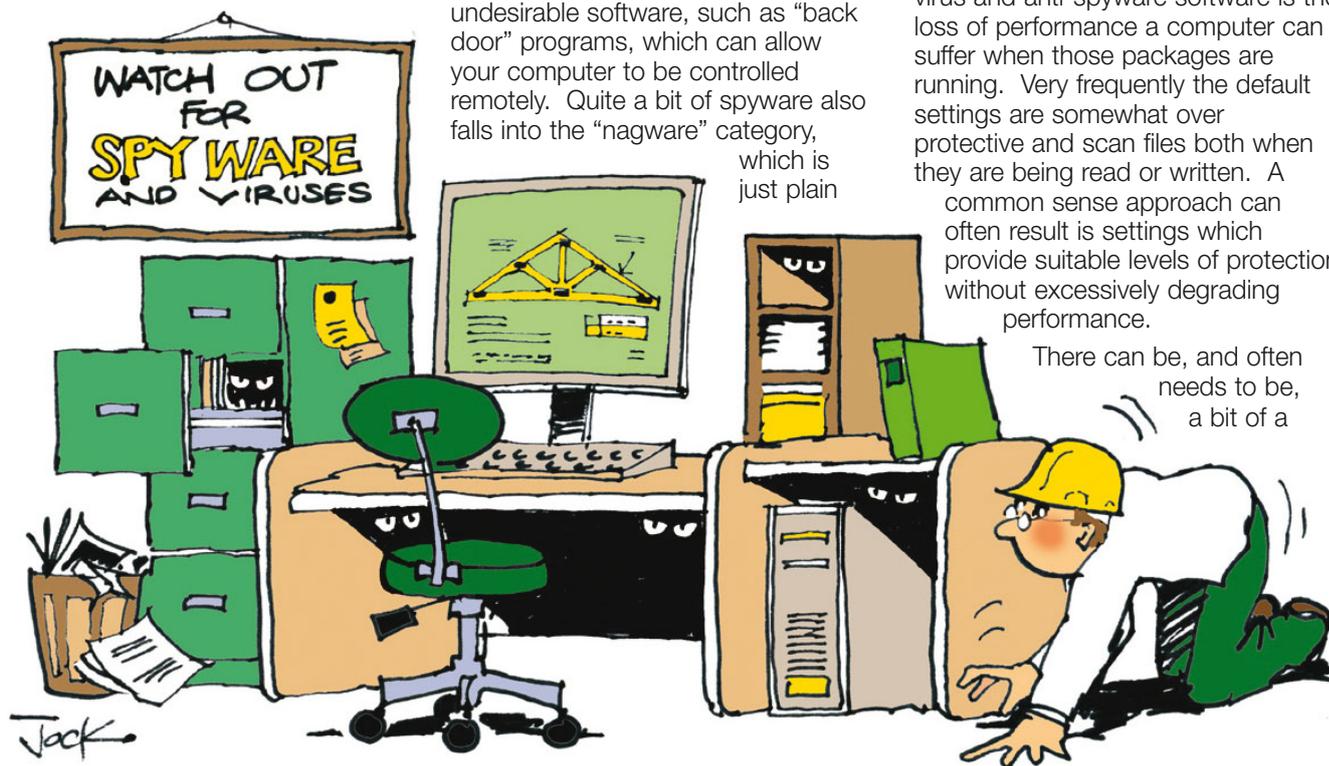
While you may or may not be overly concerned about spyware itself, it should be pointed out that most anti-spyware programs also detect other undesirable software, such as "back door" programs, which can allow your computer to be controlled remotely. Quite a bit of spyware also falls into the "nagware" category, which is just plain

remember that effective advertising does not equate to effective software. Perhaps the best starting point is to do some searching on the Internet and find out what other users think of the packages on offer.

One problem observed with many anti-spyware packages is that they do not provide "real time" protection. i.e. They only scan for nasties when you tell them to. Real time protection is where the software scans for nasties as they arrive at your machine, just as anti-virus software does. There's little point in knowing about it after the fact when it could, and should, have been prevented.

A common complaint about anti-virus and anti-spyware software is the loss of performance a computer can suffer when those packages are running. Very frequently the default settings are somewhat over protective and scan files both when they are being read or written. A common sense approach can often result in settings which provide suitable levels of protection without excessively degrading performance.

There can be, and often needs to be, a bit of a



given to me recently contained a virus that had been missed by the antivirus scanner when the CD was created because the virus was so new the software was not yet capable of detecting it. Fortunately, by the time I received the CD the antivirus software on my own PC had updated and was able to detect the virus and prevent it spreading to my machine.

Anti-spyware software is another very valuable addition to your line of defence and there are quite a few

irritating. e.g. Software which regularly pops up messages stating your computer is vulnerable. Incidentally, be careful about clicking any links in such pop-ups, as they will frequently take you to an Internet site which will infect your computer further.

Choosing suitable anti-virus and anti-spyware software is an art, not a science. The first thing to do is disregard all the advertising hype and

trade-off between protection levels and performance but there is little value in having a bullet-proof computer which is unusable because all its resources are tied up scanning for viruses, etc.

As a closing thought, just remember that if you're not serious about protecting your computer there are plenty of others only too eager to take advantage of it or to demonstrate why you should have taken more care.