

Radio Days – 2010-02-27

Tip of the Week – Excessive Downloads II

After checking with my favourite source of computer learning I have discovered how some computers can suddenly download far more data from the internet than usual. This extra data downloaded is caused by a virus installing itself on your computer then using your computer to store and forward all sorts of unwanted files like pornography and terrorism-related data files. There will apparently be a number of programs, which all have the same size but different names, and they will be stored in parts of your computer where you will not expect them and where you will find it difficult to find them. This makes them very hard to find and delete, and thus they are likely to remain undisturbed for a long time.

If you do find that your internet usage suddenly starts rising for no apparent reason it is best to remove the problem programs before the boys and girls in blue come calling. Once the police get involved you can be sure that you may have to answer some awkward questions: questions to which you may not know the answer. One free program which you can use to check your internet usage is NetMeter: download it from the link below. If you set it up correctly NetMeter will warn you when you come close to the maximum allowed internet traffic for your billing month. NetMeter is an easy-to-use program which just may save your bacon.

When Things Stop Working

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 then you will understand why I, and all other computer support people like me, ask you for the exact (and 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 before and been unsure just what it really said. And, usually, if they knew what it said they had no idea just what it meant.

This is one of the most frustrating times in tech support: when your caller does not have the exact error message on the screen so that they can read it word for word. This is the only way that I, or any other support person, can help you. I suspect that a large part of the problem is that too many people have great difficulty reading the screen. Another part is that too many program designers have great difficulty writing error messages which explain the problem in terms which non-computer people can understand.

All in all, this is a recipe for disaster.

What can you do to make things easier for your support person, and thus easier for yourself? The first step is either to write down the error message exactly as it appears on the screen or, better still, to be at your computer with your error message easily visible so that you can read it to your support person. Please remember that we are only human, even if you cannot imagine any computer person being human! This gives you the best chance of your support person solving your problem with as little stress on your part as possible.

Please help your support person to help you!

Websites

NetMeter <http://tinyurl.com/yysmar9>