

Radio Days – 2012-08-25

Tip of the Week – Stick With One!

During the week I went to see a client who had an accounting program which was being used on two computers. The problem with this was that my client had only a single-user licence for this program. This meant that, to use the program on two computers, the data file had to be copied from one computer to the other on a regular basis.

The theory was that only one computer would be used to add transactions like invoices and payments. The other computer was meant only to look at the transactions which had been entered on the other computer.

Unfortunately, the inevitable happened. One day the person using the view-only computer needed to enter an invoice so did it on the wrong computer. This meant that these two data files had different information on them. Nobody picked this up until the time came to allocate the payment to a by-now non-existent invoice. At this stage the investigation started.

One help was that the company printed two copies of invoices: one was sent to the customer, the other was filed for later reference. The clue was provided by this printed version of the invoice because it had two crucial differences from the normal invoices:

- The normal invoice had a customised layout which was different from the standard layout provided with the program. This customisation had been done in stages, and the printed invoice showed that it had come from the view-only computer.
- The view-only computer had an inkjet printer which produced a different look from the laser printer on the main computer.

Given these two differences, it was easy to work out that the invoice had been created on the wrong computer. As usual, attempting to convince my client that this is what had happened was more difficult than actually diagnosing the problem.

The next step was to enter the invoice on the main computer so that the payment could be applied to the correct invoice.

The moral of this story is that, if you need two computers to be able to access a single data file for your accounting program then you will, in the long run, be better off with the multi-user version of the program. This will mean that you do not have the restrictions inherently needed when you have to copy the data file from one computer to another.

Do Not “Click Here”!

I have, in the past, spoken about the need to engage your brain before clicking on any link on a web page on the internet. This was brought home to me with a vengeance last week when a client rang and told me that the internet was not working. I went round to her house and checked her computer.

I last saw her three months ago and set her new computer up to work like a bolt of greased lightning. It had been a new computer when I first saw it, so it needed to have some work done. I installed a free anti-virus (Microsoft Security Essentials) and some of my favourite programs:

- CCleaner
- Defraggler
- Secunia PSI
- SyncBack SE
- CrossLoop
- Foxit Reader

When I had left her three months before her computer had been running like clockwork. The internet was as fast as I have ever seen and everything else just worked.

This time her internet was not working. The reason for this was that her browser (Microsoft's Internet Explorer) was so choked with toolbars that nobody could see the browser area below the toolbars. If you cannot see the browser area then you cannot see the internet working.

The best way to see the browser area is to remove the toolbars so that they no longer obstruct the screen. You can do this in two ways:

- Click on the *View » Toolbars* menu then remove the ticks from the toolbars which you no longer wish to see. This leaves these toolbars available on your computer, just not being shown on the screen.
- Remove the toolbars which you do not want to see again (and this is all of them) using a program-removal tool. My favourite tool for this is *Revo Uninstaller*. There is a free version which does an excellent job.

Using Revo Uninstaller I was able to remove all her toolbars one by one. Each time a toolbar was removed, the browser area in Internet Explorer became more visible. Each time this happened my client became more amazed at what was happening, so she asked how had she lost her browser area. I explained that she had clicked on links in her web browser allowing the website to install another new toolbar on her browser.

She vehemently denied clicking on any button on the internet to give permission for this to happen. I did not believe her, but it was impossible to convince her that she had clicked on a button on a website to add all the obvious toolbars which she could see on her screen.

The clincher came not long afterwards. I was showing her that the internet was now working as she wanted it to work. I was about to open a new page on the internet when she suddenly asked me why I had not clicked on the button on the previous page. I was amazed!

After some discussion it transpired that she always clicked on links on web pages because, as she stated, the button would not be there unless it was important! I tried to explain to her that it was only important to the creator of the web page. For them, having more clicks on their button was useful because the button could do almost anything that its creators wanted!

I explained that this included watching what she did on her internet banking website. These toolbars, I explained, were programs running all the time that she was on the internet and could do anything that the program's writers wanted to achieve: this included stealing the access codes to her banking site.

She was appalled to think that people could watch what she was doing on the internet and said that she would not click on a link again without thinking first. As always, my experience suggests that we can't always be vigilant so I wonder just how long it will be before she again clicks on a link and again needs to have her screen cleaned.

Further Information

Microsoft Security Essentials	www.microsoft.com/mse
CCleaner	www.piriform.com
Defraggler	www.piriform.com
Secunia PSI	www.secunia.com
SyncBack SE	www.2brightsparks.com
CrossLoop	www.crossloop.com
Foxit Reader	www.foxitsoftware.com
Revo Uninstaller	www.revouninstaller.com