

Radio Days – 2014-02-08

Tip of the Week – Just In Time

During the week I had a call from a new client who had lost a lot of the data from her MYOB Retail Manager data file. The data loss had happened just a few days before and she was convinced that at least some of her data were still available but she could not find it. In desperation she rang and, because I thought that she was using MYOB Accounting, I agreed to fly to her rescue.

I have not seen MYOB Retail Manager (RM) since about 2000, some 14 years ago, so was at a loss to know what to do. I found that there were backup files but they were far too old and would also be missing data. After some searching, for want of something better to do, I eventually discovered that Retail Manager kept a backup for each day of the working week. The most recent backup was for Thursday, and this was Wednesday. One day later and her data would have been lost for ever! That was a very close squeak!

We then had the problem of what to do about the transactions which had taken place over the last five days. They were in one file and all the other transactions were in the other file. In the end we decided that the best thing to do was to wait until the end of trading day then print all the transactions for those days in the wrong file so that they could be entered into the RM during lulls in trading the following day.

What Had Caused This Problem?

As far as I could see my client's problem was caused by fluctuations in the power supply. I had noticed that the lights flickered once or twice while I was working on her computer, and this always fills me with dismay. I had noticed, when in my last job as an employee, that every time I could determine the cause of a corrupt data file it was always because of fluctuations in the supply of electricity.

The only remedy that I can suggest in these cases is to get an uninterruptible power supply (UPS). This is a box about the size of a large shoe box which contains both electronics and a battery. The electronics provides control and the ability to reduce over-voltages while the battery supplies power to your computer if the voltage drops or disappears completely. I urge all businesses who rely on their computer to install a UPS to ensure, as far as possible, that their computer works all the time.

What Can Be Learnt?

The main message that I took away from this episode is that, had I gone there a day later my client would have lost all her older data. This would, as you can imagine, have been a major catastrophe. The moral of this little tale is that acting as soon as you notice a problem can often make the difference between being able to solve the problem and having a disaster on your hands!

Removing Stubborn Viruses

All of us, if we use the internet, are liable to getting a virus. Many viruses bypass your anti-virus program, especially if you get the virus before your anti-virus program's maker has had the chance to provide the recognition data needed for your computer to ward off the attack. Having a virus often means that you cannot download access any site which may help you to remove the infection.

The obvious solution to this problem is not to get a virus in the first place, but this is about as realistic as saying that the solution to car accidents is not to have one. When you do get a virus infection it is devastating, and you often wish that you could do something about it yourself rather than waiting for a technician to solve the problem.

In this discussion I am assuming that you have done an update and a full scan with your anti-virus program. If not, please do one now. If you cannot update your anti-virus program or do an anti-virus scan then you need to continue with the next step.

If your anti-virus scan shows that there are no viruses on your computer then your next step is to download and install Malwarebytes. This program is one of the best complements for your anti-virus program. If you are unable to download, install and update Malwarebytes then you do have a problem which I cannot solve in this article so, if you are sure that you have a virus it is time for the next step.

Boot-Time Scan

This means a boot-time scan using a special version of an anti-virus program. Unfortunately, because your computer is infected with a virus, you will probably not be able to download any anti-virus updates.

This means that you will need access to another, uninfected, computer. Using an uninfected computer will ensure that your virus doesn't have a chance to do any damage to anything that you download.

For all this to work your uninfected computer will need a good CD burning program: my favourite free burning program is Ashampoo Burning Studio. If your uninfected computer does not have a burning program download this free program because you will need to burn a CD with your virus rescue disc.

If you are using Ashampoo Burning Studio you would select, from the menu on the left of the window, ***Create/Burn Disc Images » Burn Disc from a Disc Image***.

ISO Files

When you download a virus rescue disc you download an "image" of the disc. This "image" is what the disc contains, so you will need to burn your CD using a program which can burn CD images. Virus rescue discs range in size from about 50 MB to about 200 MB so can take some time to download, depending on the speed of your internet connection. This starts the process of creating a CD with your virus rescue disc.

When you download a virus rescue disc it will be in iso format. This file format is designed so that you can create CDs or DVDs with any good burning program.

Download A Virus Rescue Disc

The next step is to download a rescue disc for your computer. Please remember to do this using a clean computer as you do not want your rescue disc to be infected with a virus. While you are doing this it will be worth downloading more than one. Many of you will know that I always advise people not to have more than one anti-virus program on your computer at a time, but this virus rescue program is not a normal anti-virus program.

Normal anti-virus programs fight each other when you have them on your computer at the same time. The anti-virus program that you are about to download is an iso file which needs to be burnt to a CD so that it can work so this restriction does not apply because you are only running one program at a time.

The reason for downloading a number of rescue disc iso files is that, especially if this is a new virus, the anti-virus program writers may not have had time to create a program which can remove your particular virus.

The first step is to find a virus rescue iso. My favourite place to start is to use google to search for *virus rescue disc*. This search turns up many references to anti-virus rescue discs, and most of them are from reputable companies. Please download at least one of these, preferably

more than one. Save them in a place where you can find them again because you will need to burn each one of them to a separate CD.

When you have downloaded one rescue disc iso, and while the others are still downloading, you can start burning the first iso file to a CD. This is a simple matter if you use Ashampoo Burning Studio. Please make sure that you verify the CD after you have burnt it.

Cleaning Your Computer

Now is the time to actually check your computer for viruses. Not all strange behaviour is caused by a virus, but you still need to check for them.

Start your computer and ensure that it boots from your new CD, not from your hard disc. You may have to make changes to your computer to ensure that it boots from the CD rather than the hard disc, but the mechanics for that are beyond this article.

Booting this way will probably display lots of messages on your screen which you do not recognise. This is to be expected because you will probably be booting into an operating system called Linux. Linux is free and much better for the sorts of operations that you need.

Once your computer has booted you may need to start the program which checks for viruses, but it is far more likely that this program will start automatically and all that you have to do is watch the grass grow.

Because each program is different I can give you no specific instructions so you will have to fly, as I do, by the seat of your pants. This can be quite interesting so you may need to read the screen so that you know what to do next. For some people this will be a challenge, while for others this will be an interesting new experience.

Once each disc has completed its task you will then have to restart your computer to run the next rescue CD. Repeat this process for each of the rescue discs that you have created.

I hope that you manage to remove all the viruses on your computer and can now get back to your daily work using a clean computer to do so.

Further Information

Malwarebytes www.malwarebytes.org

Ashampoo Burning Studio www.ashampoo.com