

Virus Blues/Take This Hard Drive and Shove It/Day Job Requiem/Poltergeists

The nasty, rotten virus people are still at it, and now I'm learning that the scum can cost you your Internet Service Provider account. This past week I got several messages from RoadRunner advising that someone from my IP address had scanned ports of others within the system, and that the scans had been traced to my address. That these scans are considered malicious, and that if they don't stop, my service will be cut off. The note goes on to say that RoadRunner has investigated and believes that I may have been infected with a worm virus, which was responsible. And oh, by the way, if I don't get rid of the virus, RoadRunner will shut me down. In the vernacular of lawyers, this is a direct, as opposed to veiled threat. Which I took seriously. Problem was, it was true.

Quite frankly, this was insult on top of major injury. I had just spent the better part of a weekend trying to fix my desktop at home following discovery of a worm virus one Saturday morning. My virus software had found and isolated it, and had flashed a warning on my screen. I assumed I could get rid of it by deleting it out of quarantine. Not to be. The little sucker kept coming back, and then weird things began to happen. I lost my printer. When I tried to reinstall the drivers, I got the dreaded, but familiar, blue screen of death with an error message about some corrupt file that I never heard of. Over an 8 hour period, I was never able to get the machine to boot up again, no matter how I worked through "safe mode" and removed and added drivers. I reinstalled the operating system three times, but no luck. Finally, in disgust (and panic-I really use this machine) I decided to replace the hard drive and start over.

No matter what you read, or how much you think you know, replacing hard drives should not become your day job. Especially when you are still running Windows 98, which still has a hard time assigning and resolving conflicts. About eight hours into Sunday night, after reinstalling all of my software, replacing the hard drive, and wondering once again how we, as lawyers, got snookered into IBM instead of Apple, I got the same, exact blue screen of death. Now I'm not a genius, but if the worm was the cause of the death screen, and the worm was on the old hard drive which was now sitting on the kitchen counter, and I now have the same death screen with the new hard drive, then maybe, just maybe the worm was not the cause of the death screen. Which means that I have proven once again that I am a total idiot when it comes to these godforsaken machines. I could talk about anger management right now, and I fully understand how heart attacks occur from stress, and I will not describe the accusing looks and snide comments from kids who were treated to a weekend without Instant Messaging, or the futile attempts of my wife to placate my bruised ego. Then came the coup de grace. I had tried to call chief technoweenie Mark on Saturday morning, (and no one will ever take his home phone number from me without prying my cold dead fingers from the phone)but he was not to be found.

But he did call Sunday night.

"Hey Jim, what's the problem?"

"Oh Mark, it was terrible. I spent the last 20 hours reinstalling a hard drive to make sure I got rid of a virus that caused a death screen, and now the same death screen is back with the new hard drive."

“Gee, Jim. Sounds like something other than virus. Did you check your BIOS (computer chip settings) to see if there is conflict between your sound card and the onboard sound card?

“No, why would I do that? Everything worked before. And I have not messed with BIOS.

“Well, I don’t know how it happened but sounds like a conflict. See if sound is enabled within BIOS, and if so, disable it, and try it again.”

And I did. And it worked. And there is nothing left to say. 5 Minutes vs. 18 hours.

Here is the moral of the story. ONE. Assuming you have virus software, and you are a total idiot if you don’t, never, ever try and go into Registry or anywhere else to delete a virus when found. Just allow the little bugger to stay in Quarantine, where I am told that it will remain harmless. TWO. Never, ever assume that things will not get out of whack just because you did not touch them. There are poltergeists that exist in all of our machines, and they will mess with your machine, your mind and your life and will try and hurt you. Trust me. THREE. Never, ever quit your day job as lawyers and try to do what I routinely do, which is fix the damn things myself. Merry Christmas. And if you want humor, read Haltom. This column is for idiots.