

Will Your Internet Stop Working In July?



Thomas Fox is president of Tech Experts, southeast Michigan's leading small business computer support company.

"Is this true? How serious is it?"

The short answer is, you're probably fine. If you use Tech Experts for your anti-spyware, anti-virus, and anti-malware services, we have you covered.

Don't get me wrong, this is a serious threat. If you happen to be one of the people with an infected computer, then yes - there's a good chance you could wake up on July 9 to no Internet.

What's This All About?

In a word, malware.

Last year, malware infected over half a million computers worldwide. This nasty virus modified the process your computer uses to translate domain names - like "MyTechExperts.com" - into IP addresses - like 209.151.164.50. It's the IP address that locates the actual physical server that houses the website.

You've probably read in the paper or saw on the news that hundreds of thousands of computers might lose Internet access after July 9. I've had several clients ask,

To perform that translation, computers are programmed with translators - DNS servers - that answer questions like, "What's the IP address for www.google.com?" DNS servers are automatically provided by your Internet provider when you connect to the Internet.

When this "DNS Changer" malware infected a computer, it altered the translation server that the computer would use. Rather than a legitimate DNS server, PCs were silently reconfigured to use a bogus one.

The problem is, this new bogus server sometimes lies.

False DNS Responses

Rather than answering the question, "What's the IP address for google.com?" with the correct answer, the fake DNS server would return a different IP address: the address of a malicious server that was configured to look like Google, but that is really a server run by identity thieves.

As long as the malicious server looked enough like Google, the computer user wouldn't know until it was too late that something was wrong. They'd be tricked into thinking it was Google.

The bogus site (which could be any site the hackers chose, not just Google) could itself install more malware, display additional advertising, or do just about anything that a malicious

website could do. All without warning.

What Happens In July

In November, the hackers were caught. But hundreds of thousands of infected machines were left with their DNS settings pointing to the fake DNS servers.

So, rather than removing the fake DNS servers from the Internet, the agencies that caught the hackers changed them to be legitimate ones. The government is spending about \$10,000 per month to maintain these servers.

While this meant that people with infected PCs would be able to surf the net more safely, it didn't change the fact that their computers were, fundamentally, still infected.

On July 9th, the government is shutting down the temporary DNS servers. Anyone whose computer is still infected, and is using those servers to get DNS answers, won't get an answer at all.

Without a working translator - DNS server - your computer can't answer the "What's the IP address of xyz.com" for any site on the Internet. For those people with infected computers, the Internet will simply stop working.

Let me be clear: the Internet will stop working only if your machine is infected.

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Will Multiple Monitors Increase Your Performance?

by *Jeremy Miller,*
Technician

When debating whether adding another monitor will increase productivity enough to justify the cost, consider this.

- What positions would need additional monitors?
- What sizes would be necessary?
- The product you have on hand?
- Are there any other solutions?

Different jobs and job types might require additional monitors. For example, any position that needs to be viewing more than one full-screen window at a time.

People who receive information electronically, such as an email, and then have to input information into some form or database would benefit from an additional monitor.

Also any one working with large or wide documents such as an Excel document with a lot of columns. Researchers can easily read from one screen and take notes on another.

If deciding to go with an additional monitor or multiple monitors you must decide on the size to be cost efficient as well. If you just need two screens to display information then you could use screens in the range of 16 inches and 22 inches.

Going above 26 inches can some-

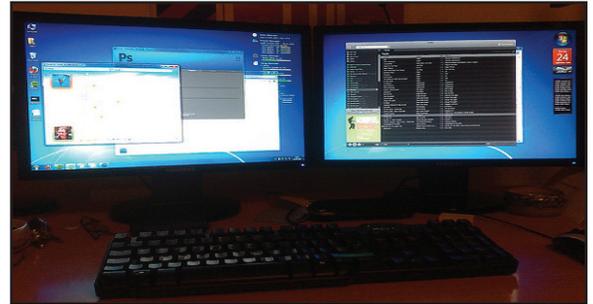
times decrease productivity. In some cases having very large screens or even a single very large screen can leave you searching longer for information.

Exceptions to this could be a graphic designer or a video surveillance personal. It has been found that having more smaller-sized screens than one larger screen increases productivity in low-cost monitors.

Next, consider your product on hand. By this I mean: Do you have laptops, computers, monitors, desk space, or additional ports available?

If you already have a tower and a monitor, check to see if you can support additional monitors by checking if you have an open video port. If not, then you have to add a video card or use a USB monitor, and this can add to the cost.

Most laptops and notebooks come with an external video port. Also consider the type of available video port. There are many types of video ports including VGA, DVI, HDMI and less commonly, S-Video.



If your desk area is not large enough to support more than one monitor then you would have to either add desk space or mount the monitors in a manner that meets your space needs.

If for some reason you cannot support multiple monitors but wish to increase productivity from your monitors you can always purchase a higher pixel resolution one.

A good resolution is 2560x1440; this will add desktop space with minimal monitor size increase. The higher resolution the more that fits on to one monitor.

Consider the cost of the separate options. The cost of adding a monitor to an existing computer can be costly if you also have to purchase another video card.

If you are planning on purchasing new computers it might be more cost effective to be sure that they are capable of supporting multiple monitors from the start.

Will Your Internet Stop Working, From Page 1

It's easy to find out if you're infected. Visit the DNS Changer Working Group at <http://www.dcwg.org/> and click the green button labeled "Detect."

This will examine whether or not your computer is affected by the DNS Changer malware. If you're not, you're done. July 9 will be a non-event for you.

What To Do If You're Infected

If DCWG indicates that you're affected, the page should also include information on what to do to clean the infection from your system.

The good news is that there are many free tools that are listed as resolving the issue - free tools from most of the major anti-malware utility vendors.

Specifically, Windows Defender Offline (formerly Microsoft Standalone System Sweeper) is listed, and it would probably be the tool I'd reach for first.

After cleaning DNS Changer off of your machine, I would also seriously review the anti-malware tools that you're currently using. Put simply, it should have been caught by now.



The Internet: Employees Are Wasting Your Money

by *Frank Wright,*
Service Manager

With today's tight budgets every business is making cuts in some fashion. One interesting fact is that, in the United States, businesses waste some \$760 billion every year on unproductive payroll.

If companies could find a way to cut back on this waste, then they would not need to cut as much elsewhere.

What do employees do to waste almost a trillion dollars a year? According to numerous studies, employees waste an average of just over two hours per day on unproductive or non-work related activities.

If you take that average and multiply it across your workforce, how much money could you be saving if you knew how? Fortunately we can help!

Internet Abuse Costly

While we don't have a way to solve all of your company's time wasting issues, we do have several solutions for the number one time waster by employees: Internet abuse.

Internet usage is the cause of nearly 50% of wasted time in the workplace! That adds up to 364 hours of wasted time per employee per year.

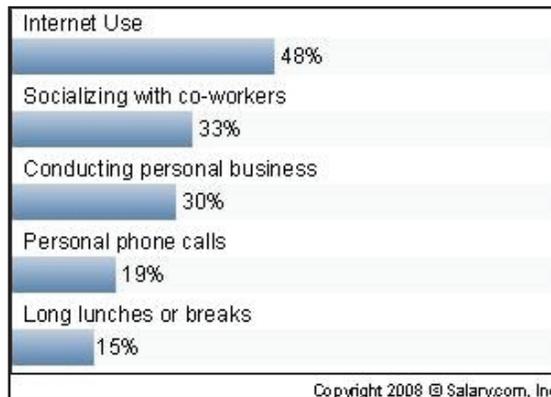
This is an incredibly easy fix, technically, and there are numerous prevention measures you can implement.

Acceptable Use Policy

The first prevention measure to help to prevent misuse of company time: Let your employees know what is - and is not - acceptable on your company network.

While most employees know that being online and goofing off is not right, if they haven't been told they tend to not think twice. Implement a comprehensive acceptable use policy in your employee handbook.

Employees should be told what is acceptable and what consequences are in place should the acceptable use policy be breached.



Implement Filtering

The second way to keep employees from misusing the company network is to have proper measures in place to prevent unauthorized use.

Most higher end routers have the ability to add websites to a filter and block them. This is a great way to prevent employees from having access to unauthorized or unnecessary websites.

If you don't mind employees having access to websites such as Facebook during certain hours of the day, say lunch for example, then a policy can be put in place to allow access to these websites only during the specified hours.

While we don't recommend access to websites such as Facebook on company networks, due to the possibility of easily accessing infected websites, ads, or popups, there are some companies that allow this.

Some companies have smaller networks where it is harder to justify the cost of a high end router, but still want to be able to control their employee's network use.

For companies like this, there are other options. For example, there are some DNS providers that specialize in blocking non-work access. You simply point your router to the service to block the websites you don't want employees to have access to.

One other option for those on a tight budget is to manually block websites by turning on the content advisor within each computers Internet settings and allowing only those specific sites an employee needs to complete their work.

Monitor Compliance

The final step is to have some sort of monitoring system in place and let your employees know it is being checked. Letting your employees know their usage is being tracked and monitored is generally an effective deterrent.

There are many different monitoring systems that can be installed on a user's workstation and that run silently in the background. These systems can monitor everything on a user's computers from keystrokes to taking screen shots of a user's computer.

If you would like to speak with us on steps to improve your businesses productivity and cut down on wasted time give us a call. No matter what the size of your business, there are steps that can be put in place to help combat this rampant problem.

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Track The Right Issues To Measure Sales Efforts

If you manage a sales team, you know that sales volume is an important measure of a salesperson's success. But you also probably realize that other metrics are useful, too.

futile. Make sure your sales force is pursuing deals that contribute to the bottom line, not just looking for break-even sales.

To keep your sales force productive over the long term, pay attention to these additional areas:

- Sales volume vs. units sold. One salesperson closes a single deal worth \$1 million. Another lands 10 sales worth \$100,000 each. Which sales pro is more valuable to your organization? Don't overlook salespeople who produce consistent numbers in favor of those who score an occasional high-ticket shot.



- Productivity and efficiency. A salesperson who spends 12 hours a day, 7 days a week to make his or her numbers probably isn't managing his or her time as effectively as possible. Beware of honoring Sally for all her extra hours if Jill brings in the same sales figures in less time.

- Customer service. Retaining current customers is vital to most companies. It requires time that might be spent chasing new business, though. Do you reward

- Profitability. Generating revenue is good, but if that doesn't translate into profits, your efforts are ultimately

salespeople for keeping today's customers satisfied, or penalize them for ignoring existing customers in favor of new ones?

Tips For Buying A New Laptop Computer

Purchasing a brand new laptop computer can be something of a challenge given the amount of options and choices which are available.

For many people the process of buying a new laptop computer can actually turn out to be quite overwhelming. Fortunately there are some simple tips which can be followed to make the purchasing process much simpler.

One tip is to try and narrow down some of the key choices and options.

Identify and focus on the requirements and features which are the most important and this will help you to narrow it down to the best laptop computer which you can buy for your budget and needs.

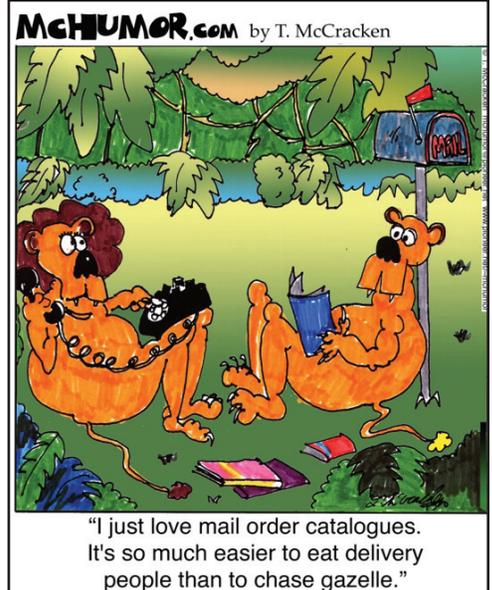
The first thing to determine is what you will use the laptop computer for, as this helps to clear up your needs in terms of battery life, performance, size, storage capacity and weight.

If you need to use the laptop outside of your home or office, then this makes the weight of the system and the size of the screen important.

A non-glare screen might come in handy if you will use it outdoors or in bright rooms.

If there are a large number of files you

wish to store, then a bigger hard disk drive will also be needed. Asking these questions can make the whole process much less intimidating.



"I just love mail order catalogues. It's so much easier to eat delivery people than to chase gazelle."