

From: Dale Medley Posted At: Tuesday, March 30, 2004 10:14 PM  
Posted To: spywareworkshop2004  
Conversation: Spyware Workshop - Comment, P044509  
Subject: Spyware Workshop - Comment, P044509

Dear Sir/Ms,

I am a PC enthusiast and relative amateur webmaster as well as a sometimes PC technician. I have spent countless hours removing this latest phenomenon that people call spyware. I believe that real issue here is truth in advertising for instance the phrase "your computer clock may be wrong" commonly accompanies something called "precision time manager" in a somewhat important looking popup on certain webpages. Leading the unsuspecting web user to believe he or she actually needs this software and yes the user does have to agree, but the whole process is deceptive as all the negatives of installing the software are hidden in legalese pages of the process. Not very up front. These companies such as Claria, Brilliant Digital, NewDotNet.... just to name a few would argue that they are delivering inovative advertsing. I would argue that they have no more right to do this than a local business has to install a sign in my yard and then use my utilities to light that sign. For instance there is a software called b3d projector from Brilliant Digital which is as I understand it is an ad server that uses the hosts bandwidth to deliver ads to other users over the internet which is a violation of almost every ISPs terms of service as running servers is almost always forbidden but I am sure that Brilliant Digital passes this along in the small print, but the phrase "With browser and fullscreen desktop animation overlay modes, transparency and anti-aliasing, Projector 3200 is set to revolutionise rich-media advertising. But why bother with a technical features list - click Play and see for yourself!" does not say that and that is what the user sees first. Then there is the issue of removing these softwares whole websites of a fairly technical nature have been devoted to this issue as even when removed many of these programs leave key files and create dependencies deep in the OS and complete removal is never easy and any statement to the contrary by these vendors is in my opinion is an outright lie. Next lets consider where most people contract these malwares. P2P applications that promote the "sharing" of copyrighted materials from websites of a pornographic nature, and of course bundled with "free" software as well as from websites that try to force users to install some software before they will reveal their content. When one considers the method of delivery the murky nature and goals of these companies becomes questionable. I do not exactly support a ban on such software as much as regulation of such softwares. For instance in plain human readable languages state what these softwares actually do before the legal statements or the features they alledgedly provide. Include complete uninstall programs that remove all traces of the programs as well as any dependencies that they create during their installation as well as support lists that include such items as phone numbers and physical addresses of the companies, Providing these items is important in case technical support or privacy concerns need to be addressed. The current state of these products amounts to little more than web "spam" making the promoters of these programs be accountable would be a good place to start.