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Conversation: Spyware Workshop - Comment, P044509
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My comment regards the company 180 Solutions specifically as I have recently had a toe-to-toe match with their system and every resource at my disposal. Through one of the various marketing emails that I receive daily, I somehow ended up with the 180 Solutions service on my computer. A commonplace occurrence for every American I am sure.

The "service" begins scanning my pages and delivering ads to me based on page content. Mortgage ads while I am on my banking site, credit card ads while I am on my credit card site. While this is somewhat disturbing to me, the real problem came in when I logged into one of my credit card sites and an ad targeting somebody with my similar balance showed up. This tells me that it was scanning my personal financial information and tailoring an ad to that credit card balance. This is inexcusable.

I immediately began the battle of removing the system. Here is where the "programming genius" and security issue comes into play. Being a computer professional, attempting this battle was not something I was concerned with. Here are the steps it required:

1. Add/remove programs....every time you uninstall the program, it reinstalls itself somewhere else.
2. Searching for the .exe file running the program and deleting it....The result: there are multiple .exe files that are buried throughout your system with ambiguous names like b.exe so finding them is almost impossible. Even though they are quarantined, they give errors when you try to delete them.
3. Eliminating access to the internet through the use of my personal firewall. (the brand was Black Ice) Nearly impossible with the numerous methods of attack on the firewall that it initiated.
4. Use of McAfee virus protection software to identify and eliminate.....the result is that as fast as McAfee was eliminating the files, it was propagating new files elsewhere on the computer.

5. Use of SpyBot software to remove....this final step in conjunction with all of the other steps finally removed the software from the machine.

Elapsed time: 4 days

Total Cost to clean: about \$100

% Chance that the average user could figure all of this out: 1%

I here the complaints from affiliate marketers that this product steals their commissions. That is another issue for them to deal with and lobby against.

For the average user this parasite is a system that is seeing their personal information and sharing it with the ad service it runs. This company is undermining the credibility and usability of the internet for the average person and should be stopped.

Thank you for listening to my rant.

Chris Mayr