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Posted At: Sunday, April 11, 2004 1:14 PM
Posted To: spywareworkshop2004
Conversation: Spyware Workshop - Comment, P044509
Subject: Spyware Workshop - Comment, P044509

To Whom this may concern;

I'm writing to add my comments to the many others here regarding spyware programs. All of the spyware programs that exist, with Gator being the largest and most pervasive, present significant ethical violations on many levels, most of which the average consumer/victim isn't even aware of.

Violations of Personal Privacy - It's widely known among those that do business on the internet that these programs exist solely to monitor the user's internet behavoir, gather information about him/her, and send it back to the company, purportedly for advertising purposes. The average internet user/victim, however, is not usually aware of the program's existence on their computer, nor of the fact that it's tracking their behavoir and reporting it to a company.

These programs are typically downloaded onto the user's computer stealthily, added to a "free" service advertised to the user. If the spyware is even disclosed (and many times it's not) it's not truthfully disclosed as what it truly is, nor is the internet user/victim asked if they give permission for the company to track their behavoir and use it for their own purposes. It's all done very deceptively and in many cases, it's done to children under the legal age of consent. But children rarely live alone, and now the spyware is there to track all the users on that computer, including their siblings and parents; none of those people were even given the opportunity to accept or decline the monitoring of their internet behavoir.

In addition to that, when users have tried to remove the spyware from their computers some of the companies leave "trickle down" files on the user's PC. These "trickle down" files, usually buried in the registry, gradually re-download the program back onto the PC until the whole program is back and operating fully again. This is not the work of any company that gets permission to be on the user's computer.

Unfair Business Practices - After all they do to violate the consumer, these companies then turn around and use the information they've gathered to violate the business owners on the internet.

Most of the websites on the internet are owned and operated by individuals seeking to make a living on the internet, but the spyware companies' primary source of business is these websites. They hover like vultures waiting for the consumer to click on an advertisement from one of these sites, then they swoop down to throw an ad for another, competing company, in the consumer's face, oftentimes obliterating the view of the site the consumer wanted to go to. In the real world, this would be akin to Walmart placing employees in front of KMart to block shoppers from going into KMart, while trying to persuade them to go to Walmart instead. This would never be tolerated in the real world, by either the government or the consumers - why is it being tolerated on the internet?

In summation, spyware is nothing but a program designed to steal from everyone it touches on the internet; it steals the consumer's information and privacy, then it uses that to steal business from honest business owners. It should not be allowed to operate.

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