

BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

Counterfeit Software Can Cost Businesses In Many Ways

(NAPSA)—Even the most ethical companies face the threat of counterfeit software entering their business environment. In times when resources are tight, business owners may run a quick search online and find a sealed copy of the required software selling at a bargain-basement price—or perhaps even just a few dollars lower than the actual retail price. In most cases, they end up unintentionally



Cori Hartje

buying pirated software from vendors that sell painstakingly forged software packages.

Software piracy is reaching epidemic proportions across the globe. A recent white paper, “The Surprising Risks of Counterfeit Software in Business,” revealed that 37 percent of the midsize companies in the study had unknowingly purchased counterfeit software. All the counterfeit software was professionally packaged and looked deceptively genuine, down to the detail of imitating embedded holograms.

Says Cori Hartje, senior director of Microsoft’s Genuine Software Initiative, “It’s obvious that the strategy of software pirates is to create high-quality counterfeit software that is designed to deceive. The study reveals just how prevalent the problem is within the business environment. The best way to protect companies is by educating people about software piracy and providing tools to help identify and prevent the risks of counterfeit software before they purchase and install it in their workplace.”

Small Business, Big Risks

The paper supports an industry-wide concern: As piracy grows

in sophistication, the likelihood of its entering business environments increases dramatically. In each instance, the business owners who purchased and installed the software, in good faith, were surprised to learn that they had spent an average of \$10,222 for products that were neither licensed nor genuine.

“Small and midsize businesses become easy, unsuspecting victims of counterfeiters who take advantage of customers looking for a bargain on their software,” says Hartje. “Like larger enterprises, these businesses also wrestle with the demand to maintain and upgrade their software. But when they make their purchases from the least expensive vendor instead of a trusted adviser, they can easily end up with pirated products, ultimately resulting in greater losses through employee downtime and product replacement.”

Beyond raising obvious concerns about intellectual property and copyright infringement, counterfeit software can also contaminate business networks with malware. Companies that become victims of software counterfeiters can end up exposing their business to data loss, prolonged downtime and identity theft.

Says John Gantz, chief research officer and senior vice president with IDC: “While technology has become more sophisticated, unfortunately, so have the software pirates. Counterfeit software can look just like the genuine product, while actually containing malicious code that can infect entire business networks with viruses and install Trojan horses designed to steal private data.”

Building Awareness

The increased sophistication of

illegal duplication makes it even more challenging for customers to distinguish pirated products from the “real thing.”

Many companies have sites that provide tips on how to identify non-genuine software such as Microsoft’s How to Tell Web site: microsoft.com/howtotell. It features an extensive gallery of counterfeit software packaging examples to help customers identify counterfeit products.

Explains Hartje, “The best way to protect your business network is to always purchase products from reliable sources, stay away from deals that look too good to be true and remain vigilant about what’s entering your computing environment.”

How Can You Tell?

Pirated software can look like the real thing. Microsoft provides several free, easy-to-use tools for customers to identify if their software is genuine, as well as monitor their software inventory. Microsoft customers can run a free genuine validation check for an installed copy of Microsoft Windows or Office at the Genuine Microsoft Software Web site microsoft.com/genuine.

To manage existing software assets, customers can use a simple, free tool designed for networks that have up to 250 computers: The Microsoft Software Inventory Analyzer at microsoft.com/resources/sam/msia.mspix. The data is not sent to Microsoft and remains completely confidential.

Duped? Take Charge

For businesses that discover they are a victim of counterfeiting, it is important to immediately remedy the situation. Resources to support customers duped by counterfeit software are at microsoft.com/piracy.