

# BYTES & PIECES

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## PLEASE ACTIVATE!

Symantec Corp. has acknowledged a problem with the activation feature included in many of its latest product releases, and has posted a fix to solve the issue.

In Symantec products which require activation, a bug in the activation procedure forced users to enter and reenter the activation codes required for the software to work each time the PC was restarted. After a time, according to some reports, the program refused to reactivate, reporting "Too many activations". The bug affects Norton Antivirus 2004 as well as all other Symantec English-language products which carry the "2004" label as part of the product's brand name.

Symantec officials previously acknowledged the problem as early as October, but since then the bug has prompted criticism from various sources.

A Symantec spokesman, however, said such criticisms were unfounded save for a small handful of users. "I think the thing that's important here is that the bug affected on the order of one-half of one percent of our users," said Phil Weiler, a spokesman for Symantec, Cupertino, Calif., who added that the company provided workarounds until the fix was published. "The other thing was that those users were very vocal and very prompt in getting back to us."

As you will see from this link, at least one user found the workarounds less than satisfactory and the whole situation sufficiently aggravating to prompt him to use another product:

<http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,4149,1398366,00.asp>

If I paid good money for a product and found that, because of the company's paranoia someone would pinch a copy, they had made it unusable, I would be looking elsewhere too.

One thing about the free product that I advocate is that, because it's free, they don't need to aggravate their customers with activation schemes that don't work as they should. And it does just as good a job!

## FILTH ON THE INTERNET

Not only is the Internet rife with porn, as Australia Post employees have discovered, but it is also awash with all sorts of other nasties. New figures have revealed increasing amounts of malware and spam being spread online.

A statement issued by MessageLabs, a provider of email security services, regarding malware contamination levels in the month of November 2003, showed a high incidence of emails that contained viruses and spam.

Of the 345.7 million emails scanned by MessageLabs during November, 3.6 million were found to contain viruses. That's 1 percent of emails checked, at an interception rate of 1.4 viruses per second. But that's nowhere as high as the spam figures. MessageLabs found that, out of 277.8 million emails during November, 153 million turned up as spam. According to the report, this 'equates to a global spam ratio of 55.1 percent'. MessageLabs claimed to have intercepted 59 spam emails per second.

One of the most disturbing figures in the report was that approximately one in every 12 emails received by the IT and telecommunications sector in the Asia Pacific region was infected with a virus. The global average for the IT and telco sector was one in 110; so this assault on Asia Pacific ITs and telcos was the highest suffered by any industry in any part of the world – by a big margin. MessageLabs found that the education sector rated the highest spam mail count in the Asia Pacific.

Read the current Feature Article on our website for an outline of how you to configure your computer to protect it from malware and to control spam.

[http://hobartpcgroup.org.au/files/feature\\_article.htm](http://hobartpcgroup.org.au/files/feature_article.htm)

## RON CLARKE FORCED TO RETIRE

Ron Clarke, founder of Linking Tasmanian Seniors, has been diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer. Here is what he had to say in his latest newsletter:

*"I have been informed that I have advanced prostate cancer. As you can imagine, this has come as a great shock. On a scale of 2 to 10 of severity, I come in at a high 8. I am undergoing further tests to see if the cancer has spread outside the prostate area – if it has then the problem is more serious. I have informed the Linking Tasmanian Seniors Board of Management that to allow for treatment, recovery and rest, and for Vera and myself to plan for our future, I must stand down as CEO on December 31st.*

*"This will put the future of LTS in some doubt. A previous circular to our members to invite someone to take over as CEO had a negative response. I extend that invitation again now. If there is no one to accept that (paid) position, then I fear that LTS will cease to operate. Members of the Board will continue to do what they can but this will be only short term.*

*"We will, of course, keep you informed, but immediate action will be not to send out membership renewals effective December 1st and new membership applications will be declined if we are unable to offer continuation of service.*

*"Vera and I would value your thoughts and prayers."*

“If there is no one to accept that (paid) position ...” Sounds all too familiar, doesn't it? It seems that there are too few people willing to put a few hours in to keep voluntary organisations going. If the trend continues, many of these organisations will fade away and we will all be the poorer for it. I wish Ron and Vera all the best and I hope, for the sake of the many seniors who rely on LTS for help, that someone will take over and keep the organisation running.

If LTS does have to close, maybe THCUGI could provide services for the LTS members ... Oh, sorry, silly me! We have to find a Vice-President, President and people with Microsoft expertise (who are prepared to share it!), or we won't even be able to help our own members!

Seriously though, folks, if LTS goes under, there will be a few hundred people looking for help elsewhere. Is this Group capable of rising to that challenge and recruiting as many as possible? Or are we going to follow them into oblivion? The answer is in your hands, not mine.

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## **SUN AND AMD TEAM UP**

Sun Microsystems has announced that it will partner with chipmaker AMD to sell servers and workstations using AMD's 64-bit Opteron processors. Sun plans to use Opteron 64-bit technology only in its bottom of the line products, with its own Sparc technology used in the rest of the range. Following on IBM's decision to use Opteron processors, it gives new hope to struggling AMD.

The reason 64-bit technology matters is simply that it is the future. As applications get more complex and the data organisations need to process gets more and more unwieldy, today's mainstream microprocessors from Intel will increasingly be incapable of doing the job. That's not only because they process data in chunks of 32-bits at a time rather than 64, but also because they cannot digest more than four gigabytes of memory at a time. This doesn't matter much for desktop computing, but for servers and workstations that deal with large amounts of data it will be crucial.

Intel has its Itanium 2 64-bit processors, but these are not designed to run today's 32-bit software. AMD, on the other hand, has designed a 64-bit processor that can also run existing 32-bit software every bit as well as the fastest 32-bit processors currently available. This so-called "backward compatibility" may well turn out to be a major advantage in the market and force Intel to reconsider its approach to 64-bit processor design.

It is one matter to have developed such a processor and another to convince major players to choose AMD over Intel. That's why this deal is important. For more information, see the link below:

[http://www.infoworld.com/article/03/11/20/46NNcomdex\\_1.html](http://www.infoworld.com/article/03/11/20/46NNcomdex_1.html)

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## **A CHRISTMAS THOUGHT**

Many people believe that Christmas is a Christian religious festival and that the US of A is a Christian country. With that in mind, here's a little essay that you may find interesting:

<http://www.cgg.org/index.cfm/page/email.cggweeklyarchive/issue/12.05.03.htm>

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## **US SENATE MOVES AGAINST SPAM**

With the California's anti-spam bill looming, email marketers breathed a sigh of relief as the US Congress passed anti-spam legislation that overrides state laws.

The CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 creates a single national US standard regulating commercial email to replace the patchwork of state laws. It bans common spamming practices, such as false headers and harvesting email addresses, while imposing regulations on all commercial email. The President is expected to sign the measure

into law before the end of the year.

However, the bill does not ban spam. Instead, it requires that marketers remove customers from their lists when requested. Marketers are required to include a physical address and valid opt-out mechanism in messages along with an honest subject line and notice that the messages are ads. The law holds advertisers responsible for commercial email sent on their behalf.

Marketers roundly praised the bill, particularly its pre-emption of more onerous anti-spam legislation in more than 35 states. California's toughened spam law was due to take effect Jan. 1. Direct marketers feared an avalanche of lawsuits under the California law's provision for private lawsuits. Under the federal law, consumers cannot sue.

Critics of the bill claim the opt-out provision is tantamount to legalizing spam. "The real damage that will be done is consumers are likely to receive more unsolicited commercial email, not less," said Ray Everett-Church, co-founder of the Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial email. I suspect he's right and the honorable senators may be in for another all-night session when they find their carefully crafted Bill hasn't stopped the flood of offers of dubious pills, mortgage refinancing, and pornography.

### **Key CAN-SPAM Requirements**

The CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 regulates all commercial e-mail, both requested and unsolicited. Beginning Jan. 1, federal law requires that all commercial emailers:

- Include truthful email header information, including the 'from' line.
- Use accurate subject lines.
- Provide an opt-out tool, either through an email address or Internet-based form, that works for 30 days after the mailing.
- Process opt-out requests within 10 business days of receiving them.
- Put a physical postal address in all messages.
- Label messages as advertisements.\*\*
- Display warning labels on commercial e-mail with sexually oriented material.\*\*

\*\* These do not apply to commercial e-mail with opt-in consent.

## **GOODBYE DR TROMBONES**

Want to buy a damaged Sunbird, formerly registered as DR7603 ('Doctor Trombones the Third' - you figure it out!)? It's coming up at Pickles auctions.

Unfortunately, as we returned from our few days away, a Hobart Coach decided to 'share' the lane we were in, with the result that the car has been written off as not worth repairing. Neither Cindy nor I were injured, although we were somewhat shaken by the collision.

A replacement car has been found, so think 'green' in future. As it is a smaller car, new arrangements to store the projector and screen etc. may be necessary. If you come to most meetings and have a medium-sized vehicle, or larger, and would like to bring the equipment to meetings, let a member of the Committee know so that they can make the necessary arrangements.



## **JUST FOR FUN**

My grandfather worked in a blacksmith shop when he was a boy, and he used to tell me, when I was a little

boy myself how he had toughened himself up so he could stand the rigours of blacksmithing. One story was how he had developed his arm and shoulder muscles. He said he would stand outside behind the house and, with a 5-pound potato sack in each hand, extend his arms straight out to his sides and hold them there as long as he could. After a while he tried 10-pound potato sacks, then 50-pound potato sacks and finally he got to where he could lift a 100-pound potato sack in each hand and hold his arms straight out for more than a full minute!

Next, he started putting potatoes in the sacks.

## **MICROSOFT TO BLOCK POP-UPS**

Those annoying pop-up and pop-under advertisements may soon be a thing of the past. Microsoft Corp. has confirmed that its next version of Internet Explorer Web browser will include the ability to block them.

Separate ad-blocking software and browsers with this ability built-in have been available for some time and now, due to changing consumer attitudes, Microsoft has moved to catch up, embedding pop-up blocking in the Internet's most commonly-used browser. This could make the pop-up marketing strategy extinct, industry experts believe.

But the loss of pop-up ads could be a blow to some companies, especially media sites that rely on the ads to cover costs.

## **SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING 10 FEBRUARY 2004**

The Committee has called a Special General Meeting for 10 February 2004. I am told that Luke Solak has taken up the position of Vice President until then and, as you know, our President will be resigning in February will absolutely **not** accept an extension beyond then. This leaves the Group with some important positions to fill and the need to address the difficulty in filling Committee positions. I believe that the Committee will also report on their investigations into a more central venue. Formal notice later, but circle the date in your diary now. It is important that as many members as possible attend.

## **LAST NEWSLETTER FOR THE YEAR**

This will be the last *Bytes & Pieces* for the year. It will be back late in January to remind you of the Special General Meeting that has been called for 10 February 2004. Have a good break and come back refreshed and ready to pitch in and get this Group moving.

## **BUY BUY**

If you are running short of hard drive space, now would be a good time to add a bigger hard drive. 120 GB drives are selling for around \$165, 80 GB at \$125 and 40 GB at \$100. You could also replace that decrepit old 14 inch monitor with a shiny new 17 inch for around \$175. And instead of that CD burner you have been promising yourself, how about a DVD player/CD burner for around \$120! Shop around or give Peter Campbell a call and shout your computer a Christmas present.

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**Editor:** Peter Campbell, C/-Hobart Computer Users Group Inc., PO Box 563, Rosny Park Tas 7018, Australia

**Phone:** (03) 6234 4691 **Email:** editor@hobartpcgroup.org.au

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