



Your Web Coach, Christine Chubenko:

Antivirus Software Lowdown

by Christine Chubenko | for Oakland Business Review
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Your computer's healthcare plan (anti-virus software) just expired and you weren't prepared for another expense. Do you risk it and go with free anti-virus software? According to Paul Hogan, President of Granite Networks, Inc. (granitenetworks.com), it is certainly better than no protection at all – but be careful! Just because they say it, doesn't make it so. There are a lot of freebie antivirus programs that are in fact **masked viruses**. For instance, **Personal Antivirus 2009** is malware that actually disables your current protection's ability to update itself.

If you don't recognize the name then you should not trust it. Perhaps you aren't familiar with the popular anti-virus software; if that's the case ask a pro like Paul or go to a well-known source like pcmag.com or cnet.com and look up their reviews.

Before you begin your investigation you need to understand the difference between a *virus* and *spyware*. A computer virus is appropriately named because it infects your system by sneaking its way in and replicating itself in other programs and outgoing emails. Trojan horses and worms are types of viruses that can destroy your data. There is also a category called spyware and it behaves differently. Spyware was designed to insert tracking cookies or tokens so they can monitor your buying and browsing behavior. And just *who* are "they"? "They" are marketing companies that target those they are tracking with ads they believe will be of interest to the viewer based on their browsing history. *But I didn't give them my consent!* In many cases, just by clicking "yes" or "continue" for some other thing you are doing, you did give your consent but it was indirect. At this time, spyware is legal and there really isn't much you can do other than remove it when it appears on your system. For assistance with spyware, check here: malwarebytes.org. Both of these terms have been encapsulated in the newer term: malware.

Paul strongly recommends that business owners purchase their anti-virus software because their protection is more complete. To that end, Paul's Top 3 Purchased Anti-Virus packages: AVG, Kaspersky and Trend Micro. AVG is his first choice because "It's a good level of protection and a smaller footprint. AVG doesn't harass you with purchases and it doesn't slow your machine down like others." AVG is also reasonable in price: \$50 for 2 years on 1 computer or \$65 for 1 year on 3 computers (home/small biz).

If you just don't have the money, then Paul suggests the AVG free download. He says that the most important thing to look for in virus protection is: effectiveness and ease of use. He also

recommends that you remain proactive in your virus protection by checking for the latest anti-virus downloads yourself; don't rely on the auto-updates alone. Paul's parting words: "Cough up the 50 bucks and get real protection. It's far cheaper than calling in someone like me when you are in trouble." Agreed.

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