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Do a Cloud Scan for Malware and Try for a Prize



By Peter Piazza
April 16, 2008 6:25AM

Panda Security offers online scans for malware, and it says your PC is infected with malware. They're offering trophies to try a free scan, so we took the challenge and didn't win anything, but Panda did find more than 100 tracking cookies that were supposedly deleted. Panda warns that "banker Trojans" are becoming common.



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➤ Is your PC infected with malware? Panda Security says it is, and they're putting their money where their mouth is. Submit to their free online scan and be found totally malware-free, and your company could bring in a cool \$7,500. Or, if you're a consumer and you clear the scan, you might win an iPod nano.

Sound too good to be true? I took the challenge and, unfortunately, I brought home no iPod trophy. Happily nothing

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serious was located, but the scan did locate more than 100 tracking cookies I thought I had already deleted. (There are two scan options: one takes a few minutes, the other a few hours.) The bigger point, though, is that "malware" can have a fairly broad definition.

Ryan Sherstobitoff, who serves as Panda Security's chief corporate evangelist, told us that the free scan offering, ActiveScan 2.0, came about after the company noticed the extent to which consumers and small businesses were infected with malware major and minor.

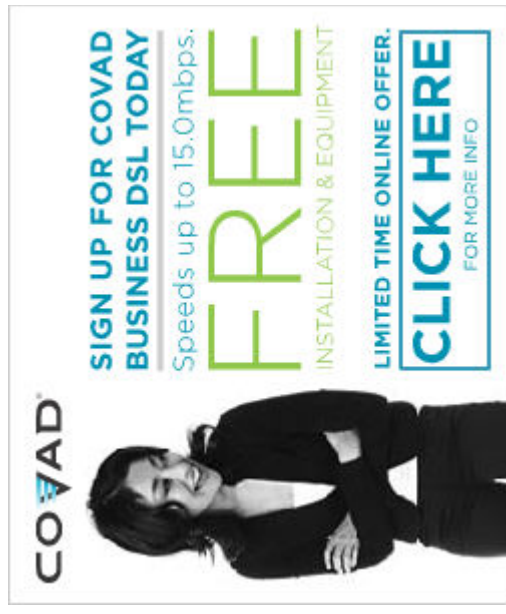
Alarming Research

The company did what Sherstobitoff calls "alarming research" on 1.5 million PCs. "We found that 23 percent had active malware even though they had paid money to be protected against these types of threats" to well-known antivirus vendors. "According to our [data](#) , it's quite likely that someone's going to be infected with something that's currently undetected by current software."

While the cookies found on my machine might be minor issues, Sherstobitoff said more troubling issues are increasingly common. "Forty percent of what we're seeing now is 'banker Trojans,'" he said, where "consumers interacting with their banks have a high chance of having their credentials stolen and becoming victims of identity theft because their antivirus solution wasn't able to see that they were at very serious risk."

Security In the Cloud

Sherstobitoff is confident in Panda's ability to uncover a greater range of vulnerabilities because the company works in a very different way than its competitors. "We're using a platform hosted within cloud, like delivering software as a service," he said. That enables the company to look for some 3.5 million virus signatures during the scan, he said, as



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compared to the roughly half-million signatures from other vendors.

Being hosted in the cloud helps take away one of the big pain points that those of us with already-struggling system resources have: It doesn't require users to regularly download more and more signature files. "The main problem with traditional antivirus is that all the scanners are incorporating the detection intelligence locally on a person's PC rather than in the cloud. It takes minimal resources while referencing information in the cloud to form a scan."

Sherstobitoff noted that even the company's enterprise edition is hosted in the cloud. "We're benefiting from community knowledge," he said. "If someone gets hit with a brand-new piece of malware and no one's ever seen it in the industry, we have the capability of taking information about that threat and sending it back to cloud, and later on providing that information immediately to any other consumer connected," a process that could occur "within minutes."

So take the Panda challenge when you've got some time to spare. It could put some money in the bank, and at the very worst will let you know how well your antivirus software is performing.

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