



PRIVACY, PROTECTION AND PERFORMANCE SOLUTIONS FOR INTERNET USERS

2005 COMPUTERWORLD HONORS CASE STUDY

BUSINESS & RELATED SERVICES

WEBROOT INNOVATIVE PRODUCTS PROTECT PERSONAL INFORMATION AND COMPUTER ASSETS FROM INCREASINGLY PERVASIVE SPYWARE INFESTATIONS, MALICIOUS HACKER ATTACKS OR INTERNAL THREATS. [20055304]

A Search for New Stories



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SUMMARY

Webroot provides peace of mind with a full range of products that protect personal information and computer assets from spyware infestations, malicious hacker attacks or internal threats. Webroot Spy Sweeper offers award-winning protection from thousands of known spyware threats with an easy-to-use, proactive solution. Spy Sweeper is designed to work together with anti-virus and firewall to provide comprehensive security and privacy protection to online users. Webroot Spy Sweeper is a two-time winner of PC Magazine's Editors' Choice Award.

APPLICATION

Understanding the Changing Spyware Threat

Evidence now shows that spyware is the culprit behind on fifth of all computer problems, and as much as one third of Windows system crashes. While awareness of the problem has increased in the last year, the threat appears to be becoming significantly more complex.

How is the threat changing?

In the last several months, Webroot has seen changes that indicate the increasing sophistication of spyware authors. While in the past techniques were limited to distributing simple files to the computers of unwary Internet users, newer approaches involve more complicated obfuscation methods, intended to thwart the identification and removal approaches of anti-spyware tools.

Examples of these tactics include repackaging spyware programs differently on every site they are deployed. They may also involve using randomization functions that can rename files each time they enter memory and save back to disk. These approaches make it nearly impossible for anti-spyware vendors that rely on traditional identification methods.

CoolWebSearch (CWS) with its highly aggressive CWS-NS3 variant, and other sophisticated Hijackers are causing the greatest frustrations for both users and anti-spyware vendors. Users find that even after taking removal steps with anti-spyware programs that claim to fix the problem, the symptoms return. Today, anti-spyware products must be measured by their ability to handle the advanced tactics behind these new threats.

What response can be taken?

To match this shifting threat, anti-spyware companies must devote more substantial resources in terms of research and technology. Expertise in these malware tactics and their impact is a minimum requirement for any market entrant.

While new anti-spyware players jump into what has now become a crowded field, Webroot continues to lead the market with substantial investment and innovation. Webroot has six new patents pending in areas like automated research, and advanced detection and removal techniques. And Webroot is consistently updating its products and operations to provide consumers with the best protection on the market. Vendors unable to change in this manner will be unable to provide adequate protection for consumers.

BENEFITS

How has spyware affected consumers?

Spyware poses a great challenge to the use of the Internet. For both consumers and corporate users, Spyware is the number one internet threat today, with more than 90% of Internet connected PCs infected with at least some form of Spyware. While the origins of Spyware were programs which gained access to a PC without authorization, and reported back user information to marketers, newer forms severely impede a user's

experience. Pop up ads, hi-jacked search pages, and search results, reconfigured security settings and loss of an internet connection are frequent symptoms of more recent Spyware strains. Identity theft is also on the rise through fast-growing Spyware sub-categories like system monitors and Trojan horses. In all, the scourge of Spyware threatens our use of the internet and security of personal information.

Webroot Spy Sweeper is a powerful tool for helping consumers protect their privacy and their computer from a variety of spyware threats, including the most difficult browser hijackers to remove like CoolWebSearch. Spy Sweeper offers real-time shields that can block spyware installations before threats get into memory, and notifies users before allowing unrequested changes to their system.

Detailed threat information is available to help users make informed decisions about which items are deleted from their PC. And when spyware is found and marked for removal, all traces are removed completely. And like all products from Webroot, Spy Sweeper is backed by free premier support service that includes toll-free telephone access to a knowledgeable staff.

Webroot Spy Sweeper v3.5 is the industry's leading anti-spyware software and a two-time recipient of PC Magazine's Editors' Choice Award.

Webroot Spy Sweeper v3.5 boasts a 30% increase in sweep speed, additional shields to prevent spyware infections, and the ability to detect and remove Cool Web Search's NS3 variant, one of the most malicious and destructive types of spyware. Webroot Spy Sweeper was also recently named Best of the Year in the anti-spyware category by PC Magazine.

IMPORTANCE

Webroot is proud to introduce Phileas on January 6th, 2005, the anti-spyware industry's first automated spyware research system designed specifically to root out and identify spyware anywhere on the Web.

Called "Phileas," the system is a significant advance in the battle against spyware, identifying spyware, adware and other types of potentially unwanted software faster and more comprehensively than any other current research method.

The new system uncovers spyware deeply embedded on web sites before consumers can unwittingly infect their computers – and ensures that Webroot Spy Sweeper customers are protected before spyware ever has a chance to attack. The system uses "bots" to continuously comb the Web, which look for the latest and most lethal spyware, and their HTML sources. The bots identify and archive the HTML sources and URLs in the Webroot spyware definition database - the largest and most accurate catalog of spyware definitions, dating back to 2002. New definition updates are then developed by the Webroot Threat Research Team and distributed to Webroot customers.

The first production use of the system in October showed immediate results, helping Webroot identify more than 20,000 sites used to deploy spyware through drive-by downloads, as well as several new spyware variants. By February 2005, Webroot will deploy more than 100 bots online to track all forms of spyware and adware, with each bot visiting as many as 10 URLs per second.

ORIGINALITY

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SUCCESS

Webroot's sales have doubled for each of the last five quarters and has grown from 50 employees just eight months ago to almost 200. Webroot is privately held and grown through initial investments, the pragmatic reinvestment of revenues and a well managed growth path. The company has no institutional investors.

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DIFFICULTY

Webroot has struggled to keep pace with the growth in Spyware while being self-funded. When Spy Sweeper 1.0 was launched in February of 2002, the product searched for 200 Spyware programs -- a majority of the Spyware known to exist. Today, Spy Sweeper has continued to change, and is currently at V3.5, and detects 45,000 Spyware programs. The phenomenal growth in Spyware, and the increasing sophistication of the Spyware programs themselves pose a great challenge the company's limited resources. Moreover, while so many technology start-ups are backed by venture funding, Webroot has made the investment in research, development, support and continued innovation purely from the profits of the business.