

Software Piracy

It's Best To Avoid It At All Costs

Like electronic identity theft, computer viruses, and the spread of other computer crimes, software piracy is on the rise. The problem with software piracy is that software costs make this illegal activity appealing to the end user. After all, who is it going to hurt? Rich software companies?? This article investigates software piracy as a whole and the impact that it has on the computer using industry.

The most vulnerable victims of software piracy are software businesses or independent programmers who create and distribute commercial software or shareware. We described shareware in another article, but because both commercial software and shareware require payment, they're the target of pirates who seek to make these kinds of programs free to use.

Depending on their binding legal agreements, licensing typically allows the use of a single program on a single computer. This set up is usually fine for a user who uses software at home on one computer. But in an environment where there are five, ten, twenty or more computers, buying a license for each computer can be down-right costly. So costly that the temptation to pirate a little software here and there can be pretty tempting.

Co-workers are familiar with this temptation and they're often the ones who "share" purchased software among those who need it. However the same temptation also prompts others to knowingly or unknowingly buy bootleg copies of commercial software or registered shareware.

As tempting as it is, it's still illegal and the punishments/fines for sharing commercial or registered software is too much for one to bear. In recent news, "Yahoo China loses music piracy case (AP via Yahoo! News) A court has ordered Yahoo Inc.'s China subsidiary to pay \$27,000 for aiding music piracy, the company and a music industry group said Tuesday."1 Additionally, "EU lawmakers approve prison terms, fines for major commercial piracy (International Herald Tribune) EU lawmakers voted Wednesday for legislation that would set prison sentences and fines for large-scale commercial piracy, but exempt patents and copying carried out for personal use." 2

Fortunately, there are alternatives. Schools can research student versions of commercial software or ask for a school discount. Just because school rates aren't advertised, it doesn't mean that they aren't available. Freeware or open source software (also described in another one of our articles) is another alternative to pirating commercial-ware, as well as shareware. And using older

versions of programs could additionally reduce the costs associated with commercial versions.

Up until recently, public opinion held little faith in freeware or open source software - often regarding it as low-quality knock-off's of better known commercial products. But if you take a good look at what's being offered at no cost, you may be in for a big surprise. The quality of today's freeware and open source software created a strong rift among the commercial community and it's literally driving the competition bananas! So much so, that even some well known software development corporations have joined the cause and built a few freeware open source products of their own!

If you can remember that there are hoards of alternatives to costly commercial software (and you make the effort to get it), you'll discover that you can keep up with the rest of the computer industry at a significantly cheaper cost than if you attempted to pay your way down the software aisle. Software piracy just isn't the answer.

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1 Source: <http://>

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2 Source: [http:// www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/04/25/europe/EU-FIN-EU-Piracy.php](http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/04/25/europe/EU-FIN-EU-Piracy.php)