

A Particularly Stupid Idea from a Cyber-Security Company

May 31, 2019 - Who says crime doesn't pay? If a so-called art project sponsored by cyber-security firm deepinstinct is any indication, it pays pretty well. That project placed six of the world's worst computer viruses & Trojans on a single laptop computer which was then auctioned off as a piece of contemporary art for more than \$1 million. Not only does that raise a number of troubling questions, in our opinion it also demonstrates an almost unfathomable lack judgement on the part of the sponsor. Just who was the Einstein who decided that this was a brilliant marketing idea?

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var s = document.createElement('SCRIPT'), s1 = document.getElementsByTagName('SCRIPT')[0];  
s.type = 'text/javascript';  
s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';  
s1.parentNode.insertBefore(s, s1);  
})();
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Fighting the spread of malware has become big business. Just about everyone runs some sort of anti-virus software on their computers. And an entire industry has been built around cyber-security, for good reason. Malware attacks are common and you want to be able to protect yourself or your company.

Most computer owners who have been victimized by malicious software find themselves in uncomfortable positions. They either have to pay the people behind the malware or pay someone to repair their computer. Either way, they are out of pocket for the costs associated with such attacks. In the process, they can lose access to all of the data stored on an infected device.

At the same time, that data is often transmitted to the people behind the attack. This means that even after the successful resolution to such an attack, the subjects of that attack can still be victimized. If the stolen data contained any personal information, it can easily be used commit identity theft or other forms of fraud.

As reported by DigitalTrends, the computer involved in this story sold for \$1.35 million at auction and it contained some of the worst computer malware ever the released via the internet. According to their report, the six programs contained on the computer have already cause close to \$100 billion in damages. But that didn't stop this sale.

As a safety precaution, the computer is now "air gapped," meaning that its networking abilities have been removed or disabled. That may sound great but it isn't much of a precaution. Laptop computers are no different than any other computer in the sense that their hard drives can easily be removed. All it takes is five minutes and the ability to use a screw driver. No other skills are required. In fact, starting a car with a dead battery is more complicated.

Making matters worse, because the bidding was private there has been no announcement about who actually won the

auction. Why would anyone want to purchase a computer like this unless they actually wanted access to the software on it?

Selling this computer was imbecilic. In all the years that we've been covering computer viruses and the threats they pose, I don't think we've ever witnessed a company do something more irresponsible than this. And that's saying something because we've seen a lot of stupid things over the years. If this sale proves anything, it's that you can't fix stupid!

It's just an opinion but from this point forward, anyone impacted by any of the viruses distributed in this sale should hold deepinstinct responsible for any losses they experience. And legislators nationwide should look at ways to prevent this type of sale in the future. At the very least, they need to make companies engaged in this kind of behavior financially responsible for any damages they cause, at the very least. They should also assign criminal responsibility in the event damage is done to utilities or publicly owned systems.

byJim Malmberg

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