

Re: Zone Alarm (free addition) and Netscape dialup accelerator.

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- *From:* "Jason Edwards" <none@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sat, 2 Sep 2006 15:57:25 +0100
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"ArtDent" <par@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
[news:ta5Kg.1614\\$%4.845@xx](mailto:news:ta5Kg.1614$%4.845@xx)

Jason, don't you hear your own contradictions?

There are many ways to be confident that it's clean and most of them can be done by non-technical home users. Home users can easily recognise many kinds of unusual activity such as unexpected popups or some other sudden change in behaviour. Unexpected network traffic can also be detected by being familiar with what the lights on a network switch mean. A sudden unexpected increase in light flashing, particularly when the computer is not in use, will need to be investigated.

Non-technical indeed. Anybody would obviously know something was 'wrong' if there were multiple pop-ups, but lights on a network switch? Come on! If people did notice them, they would probably say "Oh, how pretty".

It's true that most people will fail to take note of this as a problem. Many will have a look when they suspect something unusual may be happening. They shouldn't have to do this, it's just that Windows PCs in their present form make it a good idea.

It's also not too difficult to use a site like <http://www.hijackthis.de/> and to call for assistance from someone else if anything suspicious is found.

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This you say you want from people that you say can't google? More contradiction.

No because this is a procedure which can be learned and written down. It does not require new research or technical knowledge of how it works. And with a little effort Microsoft could have done something similar. Why didn't they do that? It is true that many people will have difficulty with such a procedure even if written down clearly.

Call for assistance? Not everyone has you for a relative / friend, but even if they do have their very own IT expert, you just want to get something (help) for nothing then.

You don't need your own IT expert, you just need to be able to call one when required. You don't need a doctor in your home all the time, you just call one when required. Home Windows PCs in their present form are very ill by default and cannot be cured by adding personal firewall software. This should not be the case and it is not the user's fault.

If they are more knowledgeable than most then it's only because they are aware of why it's a very bad idea to allow everyone to use an administrator account and to download and install anything they like whenever they like.

Which is a little different from the people I thought we were talking about, you snipped my Joe six pack and Freddy the lawyer out so nice.

So why aren't Microsoft and PC vendors explaining these things to new users? Why do most users have no clue that user accounts even exist? Why do most users have no clue about the consequences of downloading untrusted unknown software and running it in an administrator account? This does not require technical knowledge. You don't have to know how a car works to know that driving it over a cliff might have serious consequences. You don't have to know how snake venom works to know that you might want to steer clear of poisonous snakes. If you do want to work with poisonous snakes then you're going to have to contain them in such a way that they cannot hurt anyone but can still live as poisonous snakes.

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The user shouldn't matter, but in the case of a home Windows PC at present it is advisable to have some knowledge of why it's a good idea to delete unexpected email from people you don't know and why it's a bad idea to accept or click on anything you're offered without thinking about what the motive of the site offering it might be.

Total Contradiction.
BUT? Yes. No. What is it?

I don't see a contradiction. No technical knowledge is required for the above. You simply need to know that some things may lead to problems. What I see is an explanation of why the average home Windows user is going to quickly get into difficulty. This should not be the case but it will continue to be the case until Microsoft do something about it.

These things are Microsoft's problem not the user's problem.

Excuse me? I thought we were talking about the user.
This is the bias I was talking about earlier, you don't seem to like Windows.

Why should I like a product which expects a non-technical user to be able to set it up and use it safely on an untrusted network with no help or education whatsoever? and I don't mean technical education.

Why should I like a product which was never designed for use on an untrusted network but is sold as though even the cat can set it up and use it safely at home.

Why should I like a product that my home users have to have because all their friends have it because all their friends have it but which is so badly designed it's not fit for use by non-technical home users without help from someone with technical knowledge. It's not like they get help or advice out of the box. All they get for instructions is how to connect the parts together and turn it on.

If you want to supply something like this then it has to be secure without requiring the user to know how to keep it secure. This is Microsoft's problem not the user's problem. Expecting this problem to be solved by adding personal

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firewall software which asks incomprehensible technical questions is just plain ridiculous.

That is totally understandable.

Ah so I am getting somewhere then.
I was beginning to think this was a waste of time.

However, we are trying to go beyond that now, ok?

Ok.

We are supposed to be discussing the user here and what they should or should not do, not whine about things we don't like.

Users can be educated in what they should or should not do without needing to have a clue how the computer works or how networking works. At present they need more education in this than they should need.

It's a bit like selling people a car which requires detailed knowledge of how the steering system works or how the engine works in order to be able to keep it safely on the road.

Your theory appears to be that this problem can be solved by installing personal firewall software which asks the driver questions like "The left wheel is requesting a 30 degree move to the left, do you want to allow this?" or imagine night driving on the highway. "Incoming lights from another car have been detected. Do you want to let us be seen or use the cloaking device so that no photons are returned? Oh and I've helpfully looked up the license plate and have a name and address for you, I'm sure you'll find this list of 2000 people very useful, after all it makes it look like I'm doing something useful, don't forget to renew your subscription to me."

You can't expect users to have any technical knowledge at all.

A line I can agree with (even if I do wish for that 'test' I was talking about, way back when), if only you hadn't said earlier that they should know at least some rudimentary 'rules' (don't open unknown email, don't download everything, etc.)

Tests are not as necessary as education, and I don't mean technical education.

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Rules about opening unknown email should not be necessary and they were not necessary until Microsoft decided that it would be an excellent idea to allow users to send executable files to each other by email and have the code execute as soon as the user (with an administrator account) reads the message.

How many users do you know who need this?

I never send executable code by email at all.

Your theory seems to be that a personal firewall should be installed so that when a user with an administrator account who doesn't know about the dangers of accepting any download from anywhere executes untrusted code, the personal firewall will make the user aware that this code is attempting network communication. I say LOL LOL LOL LOL.

Most people won't do it if the computer explains the possible consequences of installing untrusted unknown software.

That is what a personal firewall does!

Sorry no. In any case the explanation should really be given before the user starts to use the computer. I've yet to see a personal firewall attempt to explain anything in a way that a new user with no technical knowledge can understand. Show me a personal firewall which can be understood with no knowledge of TCP/IP.

Personal firewall vendors don't, in my opinion, want their users to have too much real knowledge. A user with real knowledge will fix windows without needing personal firewall software. A user without real knowledge will get into a mess when they install personal firewall software which they can't possibly understand.

You just want it built into the operating system.

Anything built into the operating system should not bother the user with stupid popup technical questions. You seem to have conveniently ignored the point that asking the user technical questions like "do you want kfrhsy32.exe to use internet explorer to send data to the internet" is ridiculous.

Would you be impressed if your brain were constantly asking you questions like "The gall bladder is attempting to send bile to the intestine. Do you want to allow this?"

You expect your body to deal with this without bothering you and without requiring you to know how the gall bladder works or even why you have one, no?

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Well, IT AIN'T, so we add it ourselves.

I was right when I said you would not be able to believe that the two PCs I described have never had any malware problem without personal firewall software and also without anti-virus software. And they have none-technical users. I don't spend my time constantly removing viruses or spyware, I simply set things up so that when combined with a little non-technical user knowledge the computers run for years with no malware trouble. Adding personal firewall software to these PCs would be ridiculous but I do see many people crippling their home PCs by doing this.

If you wish to install personal firewall software then go ahead, I'm not going to tell you what you should do with your own computer. I will however give advice if requested and that advice won't include software which expects users to answer technical questions.

Jason

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I really like children, but don't think I could eat a whole one.

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