

ProAgent

MAGAZINE

For and About Bay Area
Real Estate Professionals

As green as it gets
A PAPERLESS
PUBLICATION

Can Craigslist Boost Your Sales

Websites – worthy or a waste of money

Does High Tech Mean High Risks

Your Blue Print for Success in 2010

Positive Things You Can Do in a Negative Market

Andy Read
Michelle Vasey
Top Pros



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JANUARY 2010 | EAST BAY

By Darrell Gray

It Takes More Than Antivirus Software To Avoid This Pandemic

You've got a good virus scanning program, so you don't need to worry about viruses, right? Wrong. Absolutely wrong. And, if you don't have virus scanning software, you might as well call an IT professional now, so they're on standby when your computer stops working right as you're trying to close that big deal.



Darrell Gray

Virus writers have become more creative and more determined. You can now get viruses just by visiting a website, even a reputable like the New York Times. At the same time, viruses have become more virulent, doing nasty things like tracking keystrokes as you log into your online bank account, so that someone in Broke-istan can nab your password and latter your money.

What can you do? Below are six tricks to keep your computer safe.

1) Make sure that all your computer programs, especially Windows, are always up-to-date. It's easiest to do this via automatic updates. In most programs, there's a setting you can click that will automatically download security fixes and other updates. In Windows, go to your control panel, look for the "security center," and then click on "automatic updates." In other programs, check under the "help" or "options" menus.

2) Don't download free music or movies from websites. If the music or movie is free, there's a huge chance that it comes with a free virus too. The 99¢ you pay for music on iTunes, or the \$2.99 you pay for a movie on Amazon are small change compared to what it will cost to get that "free" virus removed from your

computer. Only download from highly reputable sites, and be very leery of things that are free that really shouldn't be.

3) Change your e-mail settings so you don't preview messages and you don't display images. Images are one of a virus writers "tools for infecting your computer. In Outlook go to the "view" menu and then click "reading pane" to turn off the preview feature. Then you can simply delete suspicious emails.

4) Don't click on links in e-mails. This advice is as old as the Internet, but it's often hard to resist clicking on that link to a funny video or an intriguing website. Instead, go to Google and search for the topic of the link. Then click through to the true site (if it exists.)

5) Be wary of vice sites. Before you visit a website, check if it passes the Mom Test: Would you want your mom to know you've been there? If not, don't go. Porn, gambling, and edgy international sites are the most common places to catch really nasty infections.

6) React quickly if your computer starts behaving oddly. Early detection is key in computer infections. Don't spend time thinking, "maybe it will just go away." It won't. Instead, it will become a critical issue at the worst possible moment.

You can use these six tricks yourself. Or, if you're pressed for time, it's relatively inexpensive to hire an IT professional for 1-2 hours a month to keep you virus free.

Darrell Gray is the President of Networkistics, an IT firm that specializes in providing technology solutions and services to growing businesses. He has over 20 years experience in information technology, hardware, and software engineering. You can reach Darrell for computer and technology advice at Darrell@Networkistics.com or 925-249-9980. www.Networkistics.com