

# SFO Technology News

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## Spyware as an Annoyance and Risk

Michael Fox  
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Annoying pop-ups? You would be challenged to find an Internet user that has not found pop-ups to be an annoyance. Over the last year pop-ups have gone from annoying little ads that are displayed when you visit a website to sophisticated programs secretly installed on your computer. This software, typically called spyware, can track your internet usage, install additional pieces of software and display pop-up advertising.

The consequences of being infected with Spyware go beyond just having pop-up ads displayed. Often this software causes computers to become slow and unresponsive or causes unrelated applications to crash (such as your email client, accounting package, etc.). The risks go further than a crashed application! As spyware becomes more sophisticated over the next year there is the possibility that viruses and other damaging pieces

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## What is this? SFO Technology Professionals

*a Division of Simma Flottesmesch & Orenstein, Ltd.*

As hopefully most of you know, Jeff and I have begun operating under a new name to better reflect our services and relationship to Simma Flottesmesch & Orenstein.

As part of an effort to improve our services we are publishing the first ever SFO Technology News – ***a collection of useful information that we feel is relevant to small businesses.*** Inside, and even on the front cover, we hope you find this technology information useful. If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of the stories here, please contact Jeff or Michael.

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The Foshay before Windows 98 :)

of software could be transmitted in this way. If you think your computer is infected with Spyware, we suggest using either AdAware or Spybot: Search and Destroy to remove the malicious software. Both programs are free and updated regularly. ◀

AdAware can be downloaded from <http://www.lavasoft.de>  
Spybot: Search and Destroy can be downloaded from <http://spybot.safer-networking.de>

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## The Windows 98 Retirement Spoof

1/13/04

This month Windows 98 was supposed to enter Microsoft's non-supported phase, meaning that the company is not obligated to release patches for newly uncovered vulnerabilities. As most companies have at least one or two copies of Windows 98 running on their company network, Microsoft's decision created a potential risk for its customers should a new vulnerability be discovered. Machines that run Windows 98, particularly those connected to the Internet, could become the back door for hackers, viruses and other malicious code that could seriously harm a company's network.

But not to worry! Because of these concerns in "emerging markets" Microsoft extended support of Windows 98 hotfixes and patches through 2006. Although this minimal support will be available through 2006, we are advising our clients to seriously consider budgeting and planning for an upgrade to a newer version of Windows in the next 3 to 9 months. We are also advising our clients to be sure that their anti-virus software is not more than 2 years old, that it is updating correctly and that their systems have the latest Microsoft security patches installed. ◀

For more information go to:  
<http://www.computerworld.com/softwaretopics/os/windows/story/0,10801,89010,00.html>

## Windows XP and the Wonderful World of Remote Desktop

1/13/04

Small Businesses are often looking for a simple and reliable method to access their network from home or on the road. This can be for something simple like checking email and accessing files or something as complex as full access to a desktop computer from a remote network.

Applications like PC Anywhere have been providing this functionality for years, while newer services such as GoToMyPC.com allow a simple offering for users that are in need of just an easy way to access a computer without printing, file sharing, or other more advanced features.

Unknown to many users is Remote Desktop, a feature in Windows XP that enables simple and complete remote access to a computer. Remote Desktop is the equivalent of the remote access application that large corporations use scaled down to operate on one PC. If you currently use PCAnywhere or GoToMyPC.com for remote access you may find Remote Desktop to be an easier and better performing remote-access product. In our experience, users are very happy with the fast remote access to applications, the ability to hear computer sounds and the ability to print to printers at the location they are accessing their PC from.

If you have more questions about Remote Access, please contact Jeff or Michael. They would be happy to give you a demonstration or help explain how Remote Desktop can fit in to your network.

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## End of the Year Checklist – Keep Your Network In Good Shape

1/13/04

Thinking about these issues and double checking your key systems can save you time, money and insure that your information is safe and secure.

### 1. Confirmation of Complete Backups

Check your backup to make sure all of the jobs are running successfully. Tapes also need to be rotated and the most recent weekly or daily tapes taken offsite. If tapes are more than two years old they should be replaced with a new set.

### 2. Updates for Operating Systems and Applications

Do you have the most recent service packs and patches installed? Are you aware that your need to check for windows updates at a minimum every 3 months and preferably every month?



### 3. Emergency Repair Disk

If you installed software or changed settings on your server this past year then you need to update your emergency repair disk using the rdisk command.

### 4. Change Passwords

It is a good idea to change passwords on a regular basis. If you have not done so, the new year is a good time to evaluate old users, remove unnecessary users and groups and change passwords.

### 5. Internet Setup

Do you know when your domain name expires? Is the WHOIS information associated with your domain up to date? Do you need to update your website for 2004?

### 6. Anti-virus software

If your anti-virus software is more than 2 years old then it is time to update to a newer version. You also need to check and make sure all of your anti-virus installations are updating on a weekly basis and performing a complete system scan at least every month.

### 7. Server Battery Backup

Make sure that the battery is still good and that the system can successfully survive a power cycle without any problem. If you don't know what this is then maybe you need one!

### 8. Pop Up/Spyware

If your computer frequently has popups or has applications that you did not install, it would be a good idea to run Ad Aware. This software does a good job of eliminating rogue programs and decreasing or even eliminating the number of popups that your computer displays.

### 9. Check Application Support

If you use software that is more than 3 or 4 years old it is a good idea to check with the manufacturer regarding support. Often operating systems and software packages will no longer be supported as updates to the product are released. If you wait too long to upgrade the expense and effort involved in converting data can be prohibitive. ◀