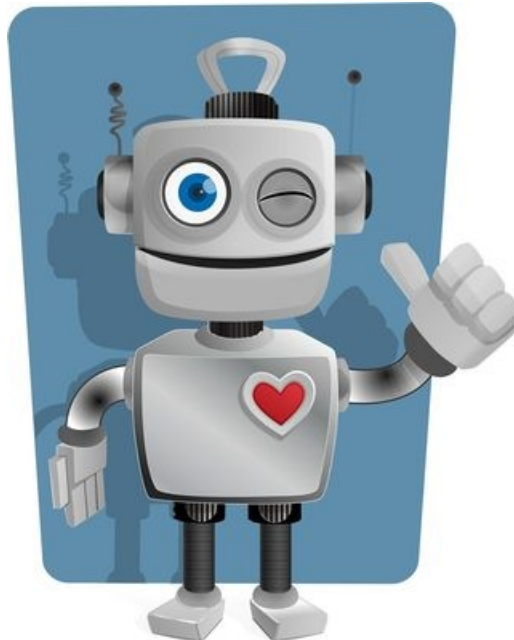




Stop, Don't Talk to Robots



Last month, I covered keeping your computer from getting taken over from hackers by not clicking on things you shouldn't. More risks are still showing up as robocalls. The calls below are from the last few weeks, and the old 'viruses in your computer' phone call is also still happening.

Amazon is Not Calling You

There are a lot of robocalls right now that claim to be from Amazon. Reminder: Amazon doesn't call you unless you click their website button asking for an immediate ring. There are no security notices from Amazon by voice phone, ever.

Most-Common Robocall pattern: The recording says there is a fraudulent charge of \$140 from Dayton, Ohio, but there is no IP address available, so press 1 to speak to a representative right away. Well, you should recognize 'IP address' as meaning 'location' so that entire statement is a mess; with no IP address, there's no way to blame Dayton, Ohio.

After pressing 1, the operator tries to convince their target that there's a hack, that they need to remote into your computer, and then have you type your password into Amazon so that they can show you the hack. What they're actually doing is ordering gift cards, and trying to stay connected to your computer long enough to collect the gift card numbers, which can be used anywhere. If they also collect your credit card number or your Amazon password, they'll also use that to place electronic delivery orders, for anything that can be delivered by email. That's gift cards, downloadable software, game codes.

Also NOT Amazon robocall: The robo recording says "This is a confirmation call for your recent order of an iPhone, total \$1279, for more information press 1 or to cancel the order press 2." Or "... your Prime account has been disabled, press 1 to change this," These are also fake, and the operator wants your Amazon login password to confirm that it's the correct account. Amazon will never do that.

I know we're in an era where everyone sends you links for video conferences. And the software for those conferences come from companies that frequently also have remote control software. **But don't let anyone log into your computer if you don't know who they are and what continent they're on.**

Your QuickBooks is not Corrupt

Again, and I can't say this enough: Any online search for 'phone number' and a major tech company name will result in third-party hacker results. Ask who they are, and they'll say "We are the tech support for (company name) You are always better off just visiting the company site directly and then browsing to the 'support' page.

So a recent fix here was after a call for help to one of these phone numbers. The user had been told that QuickBooks was massively corrupt, and the fix would cost \$1400. At that point, I was called, and I removed the remote control software while they were fighting me for control of the mouse. Then I ran the QuickBooks file through the official QuickBooks File Doctor program to check for errors; there weren't any. Restarting QuickBooks would have fixed the original issue.

False Authority Syndrome

False Authority Syndrome is basic applied psychology that's used in most of these hacks and hoaxes. There's a false authority--this time it's allegedly Amazon or Intuit/QuickBooks, that says there's a problem. There's a money loss or a broken program that makes it urgent, and we have the fix right now, don't stop, it's going to get a lot worse if you don't click this, allow that, or give us your password.

The false authority is either a company or person you're heard of that is claiming knowledge outside their actual area of expertise or that they can't possibly have. But it's all fake.

At this point, I'm telling you that it's safe to hang up on every call claiming to be from Amazon, QuickBooks, Microsoft, or any company claiming to be Visa and Mastercard. which are a pair of competitors that never, ever, combine their phone services. For that matter, you are not a customer of Visa or MasterCard; you only do business with the bank that issued your card.

And as for medical phone calls and emails, the scammers are geared up and scamming hoaxes about Covid. The Federal Trade Commission is the real authority on preventing scam losses, and they have tips and cautions about more than just Covid-19 scams. In particular, look at the Resources part of the page, for the 'Keep Calm' guide and the Video links. It's here:

<https://www.ftc.gov/coronavirus>

Is Your Remote Desk too Small?



If you're working from home during these interesting times, and the desktop is small, fuzzy, or more difficult to read than it would be in-person, it's probably the video resolution setting. For best results, set your desktop resolution the same on both computers. Here's how:

Video resolution is set in Windows 10 by right-clicking the desktop (any open wallpaper area), and from the pop-up menu, choosing Display Settings. Scroll down below the multi-monitor options, to the 'Scale and layout' section. Look at the 'Display resolution'. On most newer monitors, the most common setting will be 1920 x 1080. Do these steps on both your local desktop and the computer desktop that you've remoted into. Set them to the same numbers, and choose the setting marked (Recommended) if at all possible.

If the same numbers aren't available, connect a dummy plug in the office instead of a monitor; they generally provide a large set of resolutions, and can be set to match what's available on the home system. That's just a small plug that looks like the end of a cable, and it fits where a cable would fit on the office computer, and tricks the computer into thinking it has a high-resolution monitor plugged in.



These cheap gadgets can also give you two monitors to remote into instead of one. Right, with dummy plugs, you can remote into a computer that's running in a closet with no cables but power and network, and still have multiple virtual screens available for your work, up to the limit of how many physical monitors are usable by both of the computers in use.

Check the back of the office system before buying dummy plugs; you will have to match the available ports. If in doubt, send me a picture and I'll send the links to buy matching plugs, or mail the right set to you.



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