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Socket Tech Talk: Make A New Computer Run Like New

Millions of Americans were projected to buy a new computer in 2008, many during the holiday season. However, as many people power up their new computers, they may find themselves frustrated or disappointed with unwanted software programs that can even harm the performance of their new system.

New computers often come with pre-installed demoware, or trial versions of software applications, many of which start running as soon as the computer is turned on. These third-party programs help subsidize costs for the manufacturer, lowering prices for the consumer. Some of these programs can be helpful and may even introduce computer users to new software. However, many demoware programs are rarely or never used and unnecessarily harm the system's performance by consuming memory and slowing the machine down.

"It's important to check a new computer for signs of demoware and delete the programs you don't need," said Dustin Smith, a technical support representative for Socket, a Missouri-based

telephone and Internet provider. "Removing unnecessary software from the computer will free up more memory and help your new system run more efficiently."

Smith says new computer owners can spot demoware by looking for icons on the computer's desktop. The software is usually a trial version and typically expires in 30 to 90 days, at which time it becomes limited or disabled on the computer. Information is then provided on how to purchase the full commercial version. Common demoware applications include Microsoft Office, McAfee Antivirus and Norton Internet Security.

Some new computers also include advertisements for software or services. These icons link users to a Web site where they can order a product or sign up for a service. Unwanted advertisements can also appear in the form of toolbars that work in conjunction with Web browsers like Internet Explorer. While these toolbars can provide helpful search suggestions and other

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conveniences, many computer users find the clutter to be an uninvited irritation.

According to Smith, the easiest way to clean a new computer is to use a free program called PC Decrapifier (www.pdecrapifier.com). While the name may not be very sophisticated, many experts recommend this program for its easy removal of demoware and adware. Users can select which programs should be kept and which should be removed. After this cleansing process is complete, it is simple to delete PC Decrapifier from the computer.

For some systems, reinstalling the operating system can also be effective in removing demoware components. This can be done with recovery discs provided by the manufacturer or created by the user. However, Smith cautions that this procedure can cause problems if not done properly. Computer owners should take the machine to a local computer expert if they are uncomfortable performing the reinstall.

Smith says computer users can also manually uninstall demoware applications by opening the Control Panel and selecting Programs and Features (in Windows Vista) or Add/Remove Programs (in Windows XP). Most programs will include a link to uninstall the application and its files. Again, computer users should exercise caution. If a program is unfamiliar, it should be researched before deletion to avoid potential system problems.

“Demoware and advertisements on new computers serve important purposes,” Smith said. “However, by removing the software you don’t need, your new computer will run much more smoothly.”

Do you have a technology-related question you’d like to see featured in Socket Tech Talk? Let us know by visiting www.socket.net/techtalkfeedback or by calling 1-800-762-5383.

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