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Spyware and Adware...Who's telling on you?

According to many spy-hunting software programs, over 90% of Internet users PC's have been infected with Spyware or Adware of some form. Furthermore, in statistics gathered and collected by leading Internet Provider, Spybots, Adware and Spyware have become the greatest threats to individual privacy and security on the PC. Akin to viruses, Spyware and Adware is software that enters your system without you knowing, and allows companies to monitor your Internet activity. They act like a Trojan horse tracking the Internet users' online habits and sending information to the parent company, who uses this information to barrage users with pop-up advertisements, change the browser's home page, or install unwanted search bars or programs. Spyware and Adware, however, are not viruses. Some programs known as keystroke loggers, can record the usernames and passwords from even the most secure websites, those with URL (web address) beginning with https instead of http, such as online banking. Many of us fail to realize that this software can be extremely dangerous to our PC. If Spyware or Adware gets downloaded into a computer, it can produce very some destructive results by invading the users' privacy, or slowing down the system, network and an Internet connection.

The large U.S Internet service provider Earthlink said it found an average of nearly 28 Spyware items on each PC it scanned. Be it an individual or a business, the activity conducted on a PC can be very crucial. Having this activity recorded and sent to a third party can be unsafe and damaging. Business users face the risk of having their Internet activities, data, files and any other forms of information, tapped by competitors. While companies strive to maintain their business confidentially, these parasites undermine their efforts and leak their data through the Web. When I asked Ryan Penn, President of ituitive.com about the effects of the Spyware and Adware on businesses, he said, "most business are completely unaware that there are unwanted programs on their computers,

that are not only taking up space, bandwidth and computer resources but are also sending information about each user to an unwanted and unknown company for marketing purposes". Thus, individuals and companies infected with Spyware, not only face risk of identity theft, but also lose revenues due to loss, theft, and invasion of their data.

Mr. Penn states, "while most Spyware is Adware-related and is relatively benign there are more serious system monitors and Trojan horses to be uncovered". This is how real a threat identity theft or system corruption is for computer user. Since the Internet has become so integrated into our lives, it has become necessary to stop these parasites from invading our privacy and degrading our efficiency. Putting up firewalls and installing Spyware/Adware removers may be stopgap measures to prevent hackers from attacking your private information, however they are not enough to destroy and abolish them from existence. In order for you to adequately protect your PC from these attackers, you need to be aware of the activities you conduct on your PC. Be cautious of the free downloads and unknown attachments that you may come across. Be aware and be alarmed, so you can be protected from these parasites invading your privacy.