



Microsoft Sues Over Pirated Software

Microsoft announced recently that it is suing several retailers for selling pirated copies of its software. Five companies, two from California and three from Virginia were named. Microsoft said it had received complaints through its anti-piracy hotline, 1-888-RU-LEGIT. Consumers and businesses had called this number to check their authenticity when they were unable to register their software, and found that the software was fraudulent. Microsoft took charge at this point and sent cease and desist orders to the online retailers. When this did not work, Microsoft initiated the lawsuits.

Considering Microsoft's position in the software market, it certainly makes financial sense why they would want to be very diligent in their efforts to curb piracy. If they become lax in this

regard, they are losing money. There are also other problems for end users to consider aside from the possibility of piracy fines. Any support normally included with a new product, such as free install help, is non-existent, and the product code associated with that copy may be labeled as fraudulent, which could prevent important updates.



To update some of their software products, Microsoft already requires the download of a small program which verifies the product's authenticity. If one were to unknowingly have a fraudulent copy of a piece of soft-

ware, Microsoft's security measures now being implemented could prevent downloads of critical updates and security patches. This can cause serious vulnerability for any company since most of the critical updates released by Microsoft fix security issues and bugs that hackers can use to compromise a computer system.

To sum up, you get what you pay for. If an online deal for a Windows operating system or other Windows product looks too good to be true, there is a pretty good chance it is. In today's information age, a company can not afford to expose themselves to the risk inherent in pirated software. M&H is committed to using quality vendors and legally purchased software, and is always available for consultation on any software purchase that may be in question.

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Refer a new client to M&H Consulting and mention this offer to us, and you will receive \$25 for each PC the new client has. Call for details.

Laptops vs. Desktops

Clearly price is a very important factor when making business decisions, so the basic idea when choosing between buying a laptop or a desktop is whether or not the mobility gained from the laptop is worth the extra cost.

Laptops always cost more than a desktop computer of equal specifications (i.e. equal memory, processor speed, etc.). The difference in price between the two is generally somewhere between \$200 and \$1000. The price difference grows even larger if you ever want to upgrade or replace a broken part. If for example, the hard drive was to crash and a replacement drive was needed, the laptop drive would cost approximately \$50 more than the desktop drive.

On the other hand, there are advantages to choosing a laptop. One of the obvious advantages is mobility. By saving copies of important files on your laptop, you can work from just about anywhere. Working from home can be as simple as bringing the laptop home with you. To work from home with a

desktop computer however, requires that remote access be setup to allow one of various connections from a home computer to a business computer in the office.



A laptop also affords for more privacy. Since the computer can be taken with you, there is less chance of a

coworker being able to login to your computer. Lastly, a laptop can be a space saver. If your home or office work area is filled with clutter, changing from a desktop to a laptop is a good start in trying to get more organized.

Choosing between a laptop and a desktop is not the easiest decision in the world, but it is also not the most difficult. M&H Consulting can help your business decide what option is the best and whether or not the extra cost of a laptop is a good investment.



"I'm not sure about this new system. It comes with a free pencil sharpener."



Voice Over IP (VOIP) and Telephone Evolution

A couple of decades ago, two-way communication was only possible via an analog telephone and any data exchange, especially over long distance, was very expensive. Back then, having a real sophisticated phone system, with an auto-attendant and other features, found on PBX systems, was only affordable by fortune 500 companies. A few years ago we witnessed a huge change – powerful PCs became available to all and the Internet was born. As a result, today we are going through an evolutionary path with telephony technology – something called Voice over Internet Protocol, or VoIP for short. VoIP has been around for many years and just recently it has matured and is ready for businesses to take advantage of its exciting technology.

What is VoIP and how does it work? Imagine phones (that look like regular phones

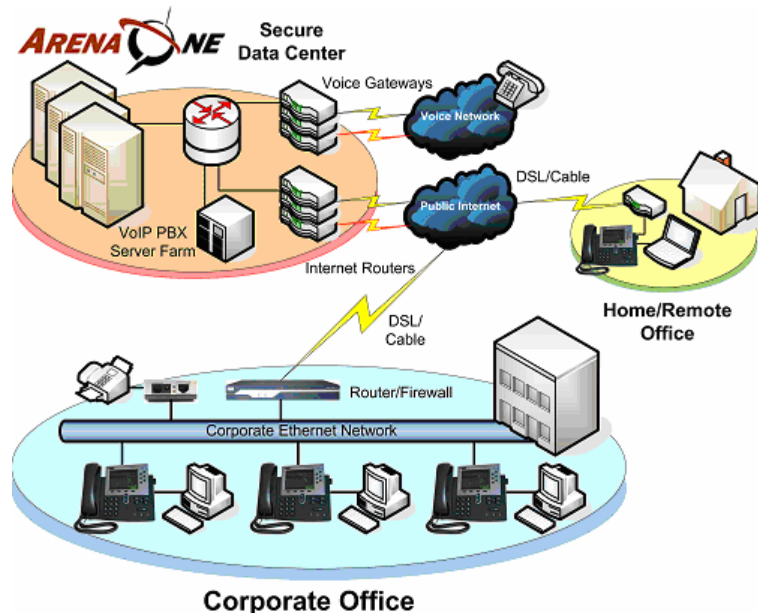
as we-know-it-today) connecting to the Internet via an Ethernet jack (like a PC would) instead of the phone plug on the wall. These are called IP-based phones. These phones do not use phone lines and instead they get connected to the Internet. One would pick up the receiver and make a phone call as it is done today and VoIP converts the human voice into IP packets (data similar to email data) and pushes it out through the Internet to the phone switch where it is terminated onto the PSTN network and transferred the rest of the way to the other end. In a nut shell, VoIP digitalizes voice into data packets, sends them and re-converts them back into voice at the destination.

What are the benefits of VoIP and why should you consider it? Nowadays, to compete effectively in the eWorld, a decent businesses

infrastructure must offer two essential components: a High-speed Internet connection and a sophisticated phone system.

Up until now, to build a solid infrastructure, small businesses had to spend lots of money for having multiple phone lines, an 800 line, fax line, and credit card machine, to name a few. These days the only essential component to worry about is having a reliable high-speed Internet connection. Connectivity can be addressed with either cable or DSL service (typically \$250 or less per month for businesses) through providers such as Comcast, RCN, Verizon, or Adelphia.

The good news is that with the arrival of VoIP, there is no need to pay in excess for multiple phone lines or a phone system (PBX) or any local/long distance calls, phone maintenance, etc. At



30% to 50% less cost of a typical phone system, VoIP provides a more superior, more sophisticated, more functional, more scalable system than any analog phone system could offer. It offers an enterprise-level system that was affordable only by fortune 500 companies up until now. Now small businesses can compete like big corporations at a fraction of the cost!

Small businesses are beginning to realize that IP-based phone systems streamline their communication needs and their call flow in ways that was not possible a year ago. As a result they can improve the customer experience and combined with wireless IP communications, employees can become completely mobile. The beauty of it is that IP enables the phone to be anywhere – this is a perfect solution for companies with remote/satellite offices who wish to have one

uniform phone system for all employees regardless of their location.

There is a whole list of benefits unlocked by VoIP beyond the obvious. One of the most important advantages of using VoIP is reliable continuity. Imagine having a system that can stay operational through a hurricane or a blackout and a whole list of typical annoying building or maintenance failures by the central phone system. In a typical VoIP system the main elements of the network are offsite, and they are protected from these sorts of issues. Another benefit is, unlike a traditional phone system, where the environment is a common point of failure, in a VoIP environment it is easy to add redundancy so clients can connect to the outside world by using multiple paths. This safe guards phone connectivity and prevents lost calls.

IP telephony lowers the costs of communication systems tremendously while increasing productivity in more ways than one. Consider a world where all communication including eMail, voice messages, conference calls, and wireless devices can be integrated through a single system where employees, no matter the location, can be contacted. For companies with multiple locations, VoIP system can eliminate the need for several receptionists, and that is just one of the many benefits.

The advantages of VoIP are endless. It eliminates the need for having an expensive PBX system; it saves time and resources associated with the maintenance and support of such systems; and it removes the hassle of dealing with phone companies. It does all this while offering a superior phone system at typically 30% to 50% of the costs.