

Educating staff best way to fight software piracy

Software piracy is the illegal distribution or copying of computer software.

This activity costs the software industry billions of dollars each year, and the rapid growth of the Internet has further increased these losses, since it is now much easier to distribute illegal copies of software.

Web sites are being shut down by enforcement agencies due to the sharing of illegal software.

Why do people who would not dream of stealing from a store do this? The most common justification is that they think large organizations will never feel the loss.

These people fail to recognize that the loss of sales does not just affect an organization's bottom line, it also affects the developers and the programmers. Jobs are not created when ille-

gal copies of software are made. Jobs are lost.

The software industry has used various mechanisms to fight piracy, such as requiring users to authenticate themselves by providing a serial number at installation. These methods, however, are quickly circumvented and have never been viewed favourably by users.

The software industry is fighting back. Organizations such as the Software Publisher's

Organizations need to be much more proactive in addressing the risks associated with violating copyrights.

Satnam Purewal

IN MY OPINION



Association (www.spa.org) and the Business Software Alliance (www.bsa.org) have developed strong advertising campaigns to encourage people to monitor each other and report violators.

Recent advertisements have targeted unhappy employees, inviting them to "nail their bosses" by anonymously reporting software copyright violations to a 1-800 number.

Other groups of software developers, such as Computer Alliance Against

Software Theft have worked with enforcement agencies to prosecute offenders throughout North America.

In many cases, smaller organizations are the ones prosecuted.

In my opinion, organizations need to be much more proactive in addressing the risks associated with violating software copyright.

Any organization that does not take steps to address software piracy is taking unnecessary risks.

Strict policies supported by an awareness campaign are the best bet. Begin by ensuring all employees sign an agreement not to install unlicensed software on corporate computers.

As part of an ongoing campaign, employees should be reminded of the requirement to comply with software copyright laws and the organization's soft-

ware usage policy.

On an annual basis, conduct self-audits. Check resource records to ensure compliance with software licenses. Any software for which a licence does not exist should be removed immediately.

Ensure employees are familiar with the software that can be installed on multiple machines.

Many believe that software on a colleague's machine is owned by the organization and can be copied to other machines, but this is not always true.

Purchasing software is similar to leasing or renting a vehicle: only the drivers registered at the time of the agreement are entitled to drive the car.

Additional drivers can be added to an agreement at an additional cost, and the software industry provides a similar arrangement through network and site licenses.

Keep in mind that software copyright is not just copying disks or applications. Software copyright laws also protect software and images found on the Internet.

It is not acceptable to copy images from web sites, nor is it acceptable to paste copyright images onto a web site without proper authorization from the owners.

At the moment, there are few technical solutions for protecting a developer's rights. Senior management must develop policies and awareness campaigns to ensure unlicensed software is not stored on corporate computers.

Educated employees are the best countermeasure to software piracy.

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