

NORTON ANTIVIRUS 2

Last week we were discussing Norton AntiVirus 2005 and its incredible girth. This is a program of gargantuan proportions; it is like sending your PC for a trail hike with a 120 pound backpack. 12 services and 40 Mb RAM seems to be an excessive requirement for a program that is supposed to be ubiquitous and yet low profile. Imagine that the 12 services are all programs like Winamp or Windows Media Player (both 14 Mb RAM), programs that are working continuously, asking for access to the CPU continuously? These processes aren't like Solitaire (4 Mb RAM), which just sits there waiting for you to move a card, these are programs that are constantly at work in the background.

Now, to be fair, this system expense is all supposed to be for the purpose of protecting you from the entire armada of threats on the internet: worms, Trojans, dialers, adware, malware, plus the now almost forgotten virus. Does it work, or more properly, is it worth it?

In my experience, NO. We have a machine on the workbench right now that we have pulled a ton of adware off of, along with two trojan-infected files, all while NAV 2005 lumbers along, performing no useful function. This poor client shelled out 80 bucks for an essentially useless program that slows down his PC and won't protect him from paying me another 50 bucks to clean his system up. I will end up recommending that it be uninstalled and throwing NAV 2002 on instead, simply because it is more appropriate for his PC, a P3-600 from 1999.

If you have a half-ton truck, it is not hard to understand why it is a bad idea to fill the bed with cement, it would leave the wheel wells dragging on the tires. The same holds true for PCs, newer programs are intended for newer PCs. This client's particular PC also has Windows XP on it, marginally acceptable in his case because he has 384 Mb RAM. Unfortunately, no amount of RAM will change the fact that his PC simply isn't fast enough to run this particular hippo. Personally, I would extend that to all PCs, NAV 2005 is simply written so badly that I wouldn't run it on anything.

Now, I may get some email from you saying that Symantec says that this product runs on a P2-300 with 128Mb RAM, it's true they do say that. Your half-ton truck full of cement will move, too, but it won't go over 20km/hour. Why would you want to subject your PC to this load, particularly when it won't stop the crud you and your kids inadvertently end up putting on it?

There are reasonable alternatives. One of these alternatives is to run no anti-virus software at all, a solution I am particularly attracted to, but have been unable to work up the nerve for. On the pro side, no cpu cycles are being used, endlessly scanning files and memory for viral activity, and none of my precious system memory is being hogged. On the con side, there is the ever-present risk of infection. What to do....

If you have question or comments, I can always be reached via email sean@intrex.ca or join our forums at <http://intrex.ca> for more in-depth conversations.