

I Wuz Hacked

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One Sunday morning, I checked my email, like I do every morning. Nothing came through. I tried again, and it was the same. I called COX to see if any of their servers were having trouble or down. The line was busy. The line is never busy unless they are having trouble because they've always had fantastic customer service. I tried twice more during the day with the same results.

I finally got through to COX at about 6:30 that evening. They were not having any problems, and they couldn't help me because I have Gmail accounts and they would only intervene if they were COX accounts. I said to the technician, "What should I do?" He replied, "Call Google!" I said, "Who are you going to call at Google, they have no customer service!" He offered, "I have a number for Google support!"

He gave me the number and the first thing Monday morning I called 1-844-400-1570. I asked if they were "Google Support" and the gentleman said "Yes." His name was Daniel. We discussed the problem and he said I'd have to let him into my computer, so he could check. REMEMBER - COX gave me this number. I had to give permission and put in a code number to let him into my computer. He looked around for a while, "scanned" my computer for viruses and malware and told me I had probably been "hacked." I asked, "What do we do now?" Daniel said he'd fix it and said the charge would be \$299.99 including a one-year warranty on my computer. I figured it was worth it to get this problem fixed.

He continued to work on my computer, while I watched what he did, and we talked over the phone, throughout. He worked on my computer until 5:30 pm (from 9:30 am) and said he did what he could, the email was working with some "work-a-rounds," but it was the end of his shift and he'd call me back at 10 am the next morning.

He asked to be paid, and since my computer was adequately working and he'd been working on it for 8 hours, already, I gave him my credit card and paid the \$299.99.

The next morning, at 10 am, he called back and worked on it until almost noon. He's put ten hours into my computer, he had given me his name, and said he'd call back the following week to check if everything was alright. With Daniel's "work-a-round," my computer worked, fine.

On Tuesday, September 12th, he called back promptly at 10 am, said "hello" and asked how everything was working. I told him it was working fine, but by adding the "work-a-round" (a new email address getting the email from the old one), I was getting a lot of duplicate emails. He took another look, but this time he used a different software.

Since Gigabyte Gazette on 18 December 2017 we were still in communication over the phone, I asked “why?” and he replied, “My company has installed a new software in the past week.”

The guy had already worked on my computer for TWELVE HOURS and, remember, I CALLED HIM! He said, “Look, you’ve been hacked, so I’m going to refund your money because we didn’t do our job!”

He said, “Let me be sure.” Then my PC’s screen went BLACK! I asked, “Daniel, what’s going on?” He replied, “It’s the new software, don’t worry.” Coincidentally, my cell phone was right next to my computer. As the screen was black and I couldn’t see what he was doing, I received text messages on my cell phone, “PayPal Gift Card - \$100!” “PayPal Gift Card - \$50!” On and on. I asked Daniel, “What’s going on?”

He answered, “Nothing, I’m fixing your computer!” I answered, “Money is being taken from PayPal!” He replied “Don’t worry! It’s so we can give you your refund!”

I said, “Not from what I see! Goodbye!” and I pulled the plug! I immediately called PayPal, and stopped the \$450 in Gift Card charges! Then I called my Bank and put a freeze on all my credit cards. Remember, Equifax had been hacked the week before, so they were NO HELP!

Then I called Amazon, where I spend much of my money. They informed me they had “denied” a charge for a \$500 gift card (because I had never ordered something like that before, and they were trying to contact me to verify, but my computer and two phones were all in use – it’s called “profiling”.)

I called my friend, Chuck, at the Computer Club and he told me to bring my computer over (the Tuesday Repair SIG – Special Interest Group, had just started). I brought it over and when the guys started up my computer it required a password (which I had not made) to enter.

This is called RANSOMEWARE – They lock up or scramble your computer and make you pay a fee to release your computer from their control! Chuck, and the other guys, took out the hard drive, did something to it to remove the password, and then I got my external hard drive and we restored the computer to BEFORE this incident began.

In the meantime, Daniel called five times and told me to buy three \$100 iTunes gift cards, and when I put in the pin numbers from the back of each card, the “hack-ware” would be uninstalled! He had already taken \$299.99 in payment for his services, tried to buy \$450 in PayPal gift cards, tried to purchase a \$500 gift card from Amazon, and now he wanted \$300 more? Nope! So now, two weeks later, I’ve restored my main computer, the email is working fine, I’m currently restoring my second laptop because I also allowed Daniel to check those email settings. I’ve changed all my credit cards and my passwords and I’m exhausted. I haven’t lost any of the “charges” yet, because they

are all in “dispute,” and because PayPal, Amazon and my bank worked quickly, and I’m disputing the initial charge of \$299.99.

If that’s the price I must pay, “A lesson learned, is a lesson earned!” and maybe someone can benefit from this experience. REMEMBER – I called Daniel because my trusted Internet Provider GAVE ME THE PHONE NUMBER!

The only people SCSCC members should let into their computers are our Computer Club’s Repair SIG which meets every Tuesday from 1 to 4 pm in the Computer Club Classroom at the Pinnacle, and the only requirement is joining the Computer Club! They know what they are doing, and they live HERE!”

From Judy: This article leads into a great discussion with your group members on who they trust to work on their computers, and why. If a member doesn’t have a trusted person, they might think about introducing themselves to another member’s trusted person. I, personally, wouldn’t get in touch with a members’ friend or relative.