

Buyer Beware: Costs of “Bargain” Software Can Add Up Quickly

(NAPSA)—When it comes to an investment as critical as technology, don't be blindsided by the cheapest offer. Slashed prices associated with counterfeit software have lured in millions of consumers and businesses around the world.

Here's the catch: All too often, what appears to be a bargain can quickly become very costly.

Any savings realized by acquiring software that has been manufactured illegally are quickly eclipsed. Who pays? For starters, you will.

If you're using software that isn't genuine—even if you're not aware of it—you are at much greater risk for malicious code such as worms, viruses or spyware. You have no warranty protection, upgrade options, or access to the technical support that comes with genuine software.

Even more frightening is a growing problem in which individuals who sell counterfeit software use it as bait in identity-theft schemes.

Using pirated software can also put your company at risk for copyright infringement litigation, which is expensive and can damage your reputation.

But that's only the beginning. The community in which you live and work suffers losses of wages and salaries, as well as tax revenues that fund schools, healthcare, emergency services, roads and parks, which are often the backbone of a good community. And the companies that develop technology across the U.S. play a huge role in the nation's economy. When their investments are diverted from developing new technologies that employ people, everyone loses.

So the next time you think you're saving money on software, consider this: Worldwide, fraud in the information technology industry has a staggering economic



Pirated software may seem inexpensive, but experts say it could end up costing you in the long run.

impact—so much so that research from IDC on the economic impact of piracy indicates that lowering the global PC software piracy rate by 10 points in four years would result in an increase of more than \$60 billion in tax receipts.

Based on cost estimates from the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), those funds could provide more than 30 million computers for schools, healthcare for 32 million people, 7 million college degrees, four years of Internet access for more than 20 million people, and primary education for approximately 4 million children. Those are goods and services vital to all communities—including yours.

What can you do to help protect yourself and your business? A good starting point is to learn whether your software is indeed genuine. If you use Microsoft technology, you can determine if the software you're using is legitimate by visiting <http://www.microsoft.com/genuine>.

If you see a software deal that looks “too good to be true,” it probably is. Dealing with only well-known, reputable resellers that buy from Authorized Distributors will help ensure that you're protecting yourself and your business.