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As found on the web and other sources

You will be **GOOGLELATED!**

That's what I would call someone who is dedicated to everything **GOOGLE** does!

Bob

From "askbobrankin.com".

What is Google Up To?

Google has been on a buying spree lately, snapping up other companies left and right. But the acquisitions are not what you might expect; not smartphone makers, Web services, ad networks, or search-related software developers. No, Google is investing in artificial intelligence, robots, and smart gadgets for the home. Here's some speculation about how all those things might fit together...



Is Resistance Futile?

On January 26, 2014, Google announced plans to buy Deepmind, a quiet little British [startup](#) that combines machine learning and system neuroscience to produce a powerful general-purpose learning machine. The price was not disclosed but rumors put it in the mid hundred-millions range.

Shortly before buying Deepmind, Google stunned the world by paying \$3.2 billion in cash for home-automation [device](#) maker Nest Labs, whose best-known product is a thermostat.

And that's not all; Google also recently purchased another AI startup called DNNresearch, and a handful of small [robotics](#) researchers. What is The Goog after with all of these purchases?



Some think it's Amazon that Google's after. The search giant seems to be working hard and systematically on its shopping service for both consumers and retailers. The robotics firms might be bringing to Google new talent who will develop a robot that jumps out of a driverless Google car and races to drop a package on your doorstep. [Google's](#) fleet of self-driving cars has already driven 500,000 accident-free miles, so why not create a robotic alternative to FedEx, UPS or the postal service?

It sounds futuristic, but is it any more far-fetched than [Amazon's](#) idea of delivering packages via helicopter drones?

What about the thermostats, and the smart smoke alarms that Nest recently added to its product line? Speculation is that Google is trying to infiltrate every aspect of our lives with devices that are aware of us and what we are doing, and capable of sending their observations back to Google via the same Internet that makes them so smart and convenient for us. Why would Google want to out-spy the NSA?

Targeted advertising is still Google's biggest money maker, by far. The better its dossier on you, the more it has to sell to marketers. Did your Nest smoke alarm recently detect burning food? Time to send you ads for pizza delivery, cooking [school](#), or fire extinguishers. Or was it a major fire that required emergency responders? Time for ads about home improvement and remodeling, furniture, clothing, and lawyers who deal with insurance companies.

Will You Be Assimilated?

The AI [software](#) ties together all of the pieces of Google's grand plan. A new kind of search algorithm is needed to make subtle, human-like inferences from the many disparate sources of data that Google is collecting on millions of people. This [new software](#) is so complicated that human programmers cannot maintain it, let alone improve it. It has to be able to learn from experience and refine its own artificial judgment – like a human being.

This vision of a Google-branded HAL 9000 or Skynet scares some people. Others trust in Google's beneficence. After all, the company's motto is still "Don't Be Evil," right?

What do you think Google is up to with all of these acquisitions? Does its relentless pursuit of personal data worry you? Are you doing anything to keep Google at bay, or being happily assimilated by the Borg? Your thoughts and comments are welcome, as usual.

Read more: http://askbobrankin.com/what_is_google_up_to.html#ixzz2taqUz0of

Microsoft offers intervention tips for kicking the Windows XP habit

Friends don't let friends do Windows XP

By [Chris Merriman](#)

Mon Feb 10 2014, 11:26



AGING PC OPERATING SYSTEM Windows XP has reached the 60 day threshold from [Microsoft's](#) end of support date.

Software peddler Microsoft has marked the occasion with two blog posts. One explains what "End of Support" means and is somewhat like [an adult sitting down and explaining death to a four year old](#) who has discovered that Tiddles the Hamster isn't moving.

The second, aimed at the more technically literate explains [how you can help those less fortunate than you kick the Windows XP habit](#). The alternatives are fairly unappealing, as they make it clear that there are no free options here and that whatever you do, it will require paying money to Microsoft.

The first is upgrading. It recommends helping your technical Luddite family members by running the Windows Upgrade Assistant and helping them back up their files before helping them use their credit card to buy Windows 8.1.

The second is to buy a [new computer](#) and offers a sales pitch about why it will be very splendid of you to ask 88 year old Auntie Nora to splash out for a new machine.

As might have been expected, the response to the post has been extremely hostile, with one user venting, "I wish I could get my mother BACK on [Windows] XP from Windows 7. She knows how to use it already. From that perspective, Windows 8 is a joke. Absolutely nothing works the way she would expect it to."

Another said, "For the next 100 years, this will be a text book case (in any business school) on how [a] dominant company abuse[d] their customers excessively."

Another, who appeared to be using the thesaurus feature in [Microsoft Office](#), said, "We are determined to migrate away from Micro\$oft. You are just extremely [o]bnoxious and egregiously nefarious!"

What is particularly concerning is Microsoft's implication that Windows XP is some kind of affliction. It said, "We hope that this end of support page for Windows XP on Windows.com and all the resources there is helpful to you and can be something you can use to help your friends and family get off Windows XP."

If that is the case, then it seems that Microsoft wants to implore everyone still using this dreadful PC operating system to please understand that it's not really your fault and Microsoft only wants to help you, but you're hurting Microsoft and you're hurting the people around Microsoft and you really need to address that.

Downloading? Watch Out For These Danger Signs

FROM: [askbobrankin.com](#)

A while ago, I wrote about the problem of foistware, software that sneaks in during a download, without your knowledge or explicit consent. I fingered CNET for their Six-Part Horror Story that downloaders must endure. Today we'll look at two other popular download sites, to see if they are guilty of the same shenangigans...

Is It Still Safe to Download?

There are plenty of rogue sites on the Web, offering downloads that are either fake or malicious. But when we go looking for software downloads, we should be able to trust the big names like

CNET, ZDNet, Adobe, Oracle and [Tucows](#) that have been around forever, right? Sadly, the answer is not always.

In my previous article [DOWNLOAD ALERT: Foistware Warning](#), I wrote about the pervasive problem of foistware, and named names. If you've ever downloaded Adobe Reader or Java, you've experienced the problem of unwanted [toolbars](#), sneaky downloads, and changes to your browser settings.

The problem is especially bad at CNET's Download.com site, and they deserve to be shunned and scorned for it.

In today's article, I'm looking at two other popular download sites, ZDNet and Tucows. Both have been around since the early days of the Internet, but at least one of them should be added to your "Do Not Visit" list. Let's take a look at both, and see how it goes while trying to download CCleaner, a popular Windows [utility program](#).



ZDNet Downloads

After visiting the [ZDNET Downloads](#) page, I clicked on the CCleaner link, which was prominently listed on the home page as a Most Popular download title. A new screen appeared, with a red Download button. Clicking that link gave me a popup, asking me to login with my ZDNet account, or create a new account.

The "Join now" link led to a fairly intrusive form asking for email, name, street address, city, state, zip, phone, job category, and employer. At the bottom, it said that by submitting this form, "You also allow us to share your registration information with companies that provide content, products, or services featured in the TechRepublic Resource Library so that they may contact you about their products and services. You will also receive a complimentary subscription to the ZDNet's Tech Today and ZDNet Announce newsletters."

Because that sounded so horrible, I entered totally bogus info, and got thru to the next page where the download began automatically. (Sorry, ZDNET. If you see the one from "Nunna Yerbizz" that was me. You might want to make that an optional step, or simply ask for an email address. Who wants to give up all that personal info, and have it shared with marketers, just for a free download?)

Thankfully, from here on, the download process and the CCleaner install was simple and clean, no foistware. I wasn't asked to accept any sneaky downloads, or agree to any terms, conditions or privacy policies. Overall, I give the ZDNet download process a thumbs up, with reservations about that signup form.

Tucows Downloads

As in the previous example, my goal was to download CCleaner by visiting [TUCOWS Downloads](#). The page loaded with an enormous 970x280 pixel "Top Download" banner at the top of the page, encouraging me to follow three easy steps "to identify what's causing your PC to slow down."

I ignored the enticing green "Click to Start" button, and scrolled down the page where I could enter CCleaner into a search box. Next screen showed a link for CCleaner, which I clicked. Could it be a simple one-click download, I wondered?

Alas, no. Another huge "Top Download" banner urged me to first download and run Uniblue's SpeedUpMyPC2014. But there was a green "Download Now" button flanked by the words "CCleaner 4.03" and "[Download size](#) 4.19MB". Even though it looked a lot like one of those scammy ads with the misleading Download buttons, I clicked.

After this rocky start, here's where the real ugliness began...

After downloading and launching what I thought was the CCleaner installer, an intermediate screen appeared, telling me that by clicking "Accept" I was agreeing to FOUR separate documents, which were linked for my reading pleasure. I tried to view the Tucows "Terms and Conditions" and "Privacy Policy" but both of those links led to a "Not Found" error page. I was also told that I was agreeing to the "DownloadAdmin License Agreement and Privacy Policy."

I clicked to read those and it turns out DownloadAdmin adds another layer of indirection and slime to the download process. "DownloadAdmin™ is a Software Match Service. We offer our software match services to you in exchange for your agreement to view promotions, advertisements, or participate in other Offers. We may show you one or more partner [software offers](#)... We may also offer to: (i) change your browser's homepage; (ii) change your default search provider; and (iii) install icons on your computer's desktop, including third-party offers." Aaaaaaaaaaacccccckkkk!

I pressed Accept anyway (just to take one for the team) but with the full knowledge that if System Restore didn't bail me out, I still had a fresh backup that I could resort to. Yet another screen popped up, telling me to "Click Accept now to continue your installation." Oh, but it also

informed me that I had somehow "elected to download Search Protect by Conduit, a free [desktop application](#) that is designed to prevent attempts by other software you download from the Internet to change your preferred Browser settings." Oh, the irony! One program wants to change my browser settings, and the other wants to protect me from changes. My options now were Decline and Accept.

This time I declined, to see what would happen. Guess what? Another screen, nearly identical to the previous one. Once again, it said "Click Accept now to continue your installation". But in the small print: TWO pre-checked offers. One for TidyNetwork (exciting offers related to your interests and keywords on your web page) and Severe Weather Alert (Desktop Notifications when storms are heading your way). Oh, and there were even more third (or fourth?) party Terms and Conditions that I was tacitly agreeing to by hitting Accept. I didn't bother to read those.

Pressing Decline brought me to Round Three, and an offer to download something called Albrechto, which sounded to me like a fancy Italian shampoo. It promised to "add useful features and content to enrich website navigation, such as related [search results](#), exclusive web offers, and advertisements." It also wanted to change my browser settings and "collect and share user info." Once again, Aaaaaaaaaaacccccckkkk! And Decline.

Round Four, more of the same. I am given the chance to download PalTalk Live Video Chat, with 5000 Video Chat Rooms and the chance to Meet New People Every Day! And of course, more legalese, Terms and Policies to accept. I hit Decline for the fourth time, and finally... "Your software is downloading, please be patient." This time the download was the real thing, and installed CCleaner without any unwanted parasites.

But what an ordeal. I stayed in the house, consumed by the thought that a shadowy guy in a trenchcoat and dark glasses might try to sell me a fake Rolex. Fortunately that didn't happen, but I still wondered if any malicious or unwanted software had snuck in, despite all my Declines. I'm very, very disappointed in TUCOWS, which once was a great resource.

UPDATE: Several readers correctly pointed out that I should have mentioned a few places to go for safe downloads. I've always had good experience at [FileHippo.com](#). And I've previously written about [Ninite](#), which provides safe downloads, and also automates the installation process.

Have you had experience with a download site that offered unwanted foistware? Post your comment or question below...

Read more:

http://askbobrankin.com/downloading_watch_out_for_these_danger_signs.html#ixzz2s16XkpfZ

Quote of the month:

No man's life, liberty, or property is safe while the legislature is in session.

-- Mark Twain (1866)

Better add to that “congress”.