

Microsoft acts to protect consumers with continuing clampdown on rogue traders

Shoppers urged to stay one step ahead of software pirates by knowing how to spot clever fakes

Reading, UK – August 17 2009 – Microsoft today announced settlements with 11 computer shops caught selling illegal software to unsuspecting customers across the UK over the last four months. The software supplier is encouraging consumers to be vigilant when it comes to buying computer programs, advising that it often pays them to make a few simple checks before handing over their hard-earned cash.

Spacebar Computers – Litherland, Liverpool

Litherland-based Spacebar Computers faced court action and admitted to selling illegal software and hard disk loading¹. Microsoft is committed to educating computer shops as well as consumers, and encouragingly, Spacebar Computers has now agreed to work closely with the software company to ensure it stops selling illegal programs.

Ray Cass from Spacebar Computers said, “We recognise that we weren’t installing Microsoft software correctly, and that’s something we take seriously. We’ll be working with Microsoft over the next few weeks to make sure what we do falls within their software rules from now on. It’s good to see Microsoft working with small computer traders like us to ensure we’re up to speed on the right way to use and sell their software. Getting it right is important to us and to our customers – the lifeblood of a business like ours.”

Microsoft has taken legal action against more than 100 high street computer shops over the last 18 months, and with the UK piracy rate currently standing at 27%², it is clear this is not a limited problem that occurs only rarely. Microsoft’s goal in taking this legal action is to protect unsuspecting consumers and honest local businesses, both of whom are innocent victims of this kind of illegal trading. Shoppers can be left significantly out of pocket, and genuine businesses are exposed to damaging losses by rogue traders cutting corners.

In a further 10 separate cases, the following computer shops each faced court action and admitted to selling unlawful software.

Computer Clinic, Bolton

Eazy PC, Redcar

Matrix Computers, Stockton-on-Tees

PC Support, Worcester

Platinum Computers, Hartlepool

Computer Port, Walsall

Goldcast Computers, Stockton-on-Tees

PC Assist, Oldham

Personal Touch Computers Ltd, Portsmouth

The Little Computer Shop, Griffithstown, Pontypool

“Microsoft will always make concerted efforts to catch rogue traders and to combat piracy at all levels, but consumers have a role to play too,” said Graham Arthur, anti-piracy attorney at Microsoft UK. “If pirates realise they are being fought on both fronts, we believe they are less likely to try to rip customers off in the first place. Savvy consumers, who know how to tell the difference between the genuine article and illegal or fake software, can protect themselves and their friends and family from being duped by unscrupulous retailers.”

Arthur continued, “The majority of legal action that we take is driven by complaints or leads from people who want to help us stop pirates profiting at their customers’ expense. We receive 45

emails every week to our UK piracy alias³ and in total take action against 10 rogue traders every month. Consumers need to be on their guard online too, as Microsoft takes down over 250 internet auctions each week.”

He added, “In the UK, it’s estimated that nearly one in three computer programs installed on PCs are unlicensed, and what many people don’t realise is that the machine they bought from their local computer shop could have come with counterfeit software that may be infected or harmful. Using illegal software puts users at risk of losing personal information such as bank details, holiday and wedding photos, and music collections that they have carefully stored on their PCs.”

Given the very real risks associated with illegal software, Microsoft is keen to highlight resources that help consumers spot when someone is trying to sell them fake or illegal software, such as the company’s *How to Tell* site⁴. This features a “rogues gallery” of counterfeit Microsoft software with detailed photos showing what shoppers should look out for to avoid a costly mistake.

“Ultimately it’s about people using their nouse when they buy, and perhaps doing a little homework before they walk into a computer shop or start searching online,” concludes Arthur. “If a price looks too good to be true, it probably is. With popular new products like Windows 7 going on sale, the temptation for pirates to cash in will be very strong. We want to see our customers getting what they paid for: genuine, fully-supported, reliable software that comes without unwanted malware or other nasties.”

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A list of illegal traders that Microsoft has taken legal action against in the UK can be found [here](#).

Microsoft UK does offer free replacement software to consumers duped by sophisticated, high quality counterfeit products; further details [here](#). However, this does not apply to the kind of illegal software that the resellers in this release have admitted to selling.

1 Hard disk loading normally happens when builders of computer systems sell PCs with unlicensed software pre-installed. These dealers use one copy of a software program but install it illegally on many machines.

2 Figure from [the 6th Annual BSA and IDC Global Software Piracy Study](#).

3 Consumers can report piracy to Microsoft by emailing ukpiracy@microsoft.com.

4 For Microsoft’s *How to Tell* site click [here](#).

About Microsoft

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