

Ransomware: What Is It and What Can You Do About It?



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It can happen so quickly. One minute your files are there and accessible and the next minute – POOF! Not so much.

“This operating system has been locked for security reasons.”

Anyone who has been the victim of a Ransomware attack is familiar with the above message.

Other versions of the message will claim you have browsed “illicit material and must pay a fine” before your computer system, or even your entire network, will be unlocked.

WHAT IS RANSOMWARE?

Ransomware is quickly distributed through different kinds of malware and is usually disguised as legitimate email attachments from friends and colleagues, or as “useful” software you download.



Early versions of Ransomware date back to the 1980s and used symmetric cryptography to encrypt the files on your hard drive. Today's versions of Ransomware use asymmetric cryptography and encrypts everything it comes into contact with. That includes personal photos, archives, documents, and even entire databases – essentially anything that may be of value to the user.

Once your computer and files are encrypted and inaccessible to you, a ransom is requested, hence the moniker “Ransomware.” The amount requested to be paid in exchange for the decryption key can range anywhere from \$400 to \$10,000. Ransom amounts largely depend on how much the attackers believe they can successfully extort from you or your company.

PAYING MAY BE IN VAIN

Much like real-world extortionists, it should come as no surprise that digital extortionists aren't exactly the trustworthy type. You have no way of knowing whether or not you will receive a legitimate decryption key after paying the ransom demand. Even if you are provided a key that decrypts the files, there is no guarantee you will regain access to all of them again or know if proprietary data or personal data from employees was stolen.

The best course of action is to do everything possible to prevent infection in the first place.

PREVENTING INFECTIONS BY RANSOMWARE

Protecting your company from the latest and most sophisticated Ransomware threats isn't as simple as installing some antivirus or antimalware software. Those "off the rack" solutions won't do much for you in terms of protecting you from the latest nasty's out there. Working with a trusted and reliable Network Security Solutions provider is the only surefire way to prevent Ransomware from ever becoming an issue for your company.

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