

Ransomware — The New Cyber Threat

Hacking on a corporate level is becoming an everyday occurrence.

All of us worry about our identity being compromised at the places we shop and at our doctor's office and those of other medical providers. Shopping online at places like eBay is a worry. And on it goes.



Then there's our personal and business computers. Hackers working their way through our firewalls or getting to us through infected emails and websites are also a concern. We have anti-virus protections and spyware stuff to discourage and destroy the infections but they continue to be a constant battle.

Are you ready for the latest — and maybe greatest — of the infections that can hit your computer and your personal life? It's ransomware and is a highly profitable business model for hackers.

Here's how it works. The hacker — or hackers — gain control of your computer with CryptoLocker or a similar program. Once the program is set the hacker gains control of your all files, photos, applications, data, etc. You cannot access anything. You're given a message telling you to deposit a set amount of money in a PayPal account or something similar or all of your stuff will be destroyed and you'll lose it forever.

The hackers ask for \$500 or \$1,000. You pay or lose.

Most pay.

A group of IT professionals were surveyed by the security trainers KnowBe4. Almost half knew of someone who'd experience such an attack. In January KnowBe4 said 66% of IT professionals were worried about increasing attacks.

Today that figure is 88%.

The bottom-line is that traditional ways to keep these people out are not working. Email attachments — say 47% of the IT pros — is your weakest link and the best way for the ransomware people to get to you.

KnowBe4 CEO Stu Sjouwerman said most of the attacks are coming from the Russian mob. "Our study shows the overwhelming majority of IT pros think the criminals behind ransomware should be prosecuted and sent to jail for a long time. We agree, but U.S.

law enforcement has no jurisdiction in eastern Europe, where these criminals are largely free to commit their crimes.”