

Re: Sticky Computer Problem:

Source:

<http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/WinXP/microsoft.public.windowsxp.general/2007-05/msg03651.html>

- *From:* "Rock" <Rock@xxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Mon, 14 May 2007 00:04:07 -0700
-

"Robert" wrote

On May 13, 1:56 pm, "Rock" wrote:

"Robert" <magine...@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote

Ouch Robert, you're reply got all messed up some how. I've cleaned it up here as best I could. I've also put some replies inline with some suggestions, but you don't need to reply to them in line. I put my advice on how I would approach this at the end of this message.

>> Rock wrote:

>> Ok, I'll take a whack at asking some questions here, but it sure would help

>> if you put in shorter paragraphs and line breaks between thoughts. My

>> replies in line.

> Robert wrote

> Sorry about the long paragraphs.

Robert wrote:

I have a Dell Dimension 8200 computer, running with XP Home Edition

and am connected to the Internet via DSL. It usually is fairly smooth

running and fast enough for my needs. A few days ago when I was about

to turn it off there was an alert saying to turn it off to in order to

download updates.

>> Rock wrote:

>> Ok, here is where some info needs to be listed. What updates were

>> installed? Where these from windows update or Norton or what?

> Robert wrote

> I believe I was installing Windows updates.

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You need to find out what those updates were. I mentioned before, go to the windows update site, do a custom scan, then click on the update history in the left pane. That will give you a list of updates and when they were applied. Note the numbers of the updates that were applied the night this all started.

Robert wrote:

I had seen this before so I wasn't alarmed. However, the next day when I turned on my computer the desk top loaded as normal but Internet Explorer doesn't function at all and my other applications are slowed down considerably. I have over 25 gigs of free space on my hard drive so it's not a matter of storage and I haven't added anything new and there's only (1) game on it, Jedi Knight, Jedi Academy.
It acts as if there's a virus. I have Norton Antivirus, A-Squared, and Spybot.

>> Rock wrote

>> Personally I recommend against Norton Home security products; even when not
>> otherwise problematic they are resource hogs. There are better, and in some
>> cases free, alternatives. I don't know anything about A-Squared.

Robert wrote

I have run all three and only Spybot came back with anything saying my Microsoft security was disabled which I believe is normal since I'm running Norton. It won't let me do a System Restore either no matter what date I choose.

>> Rock wrote

>> What won't let you do a system restore? Do you mean system restore gives an
>> error when trying to restore or some message about not being able to
>> restore? Details are important. The failure in system restore might be due
>> to to the presence of Norton. System Restore is a valuable tool in just
>> such a case, and the fact that it can't be used possibly because of the
>> presence of this 3rd party program is a good reason not to use that program.
>> See the troubleshooting tips on MVP Bert Kinney's system restore page.
>>
>> <http://bertk.mvps.org/html/srfail.html>

> Robert wrote

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> When I try and do a System Restore, I select the date, and then I
> select the time and click next, and it goes through the process but
> each time it comes back saying that the computer cannot be restored to
> that date, pick another. I have tried numerous dates and times but it
> never works. It keeps doing the same thing.

> I tried to do a System Restore when I had Norton disabled but it came
> back with the same message that it couldn't restore to that date. I
> haven't done a System Restore from the Safe Mode however I suppose
> that's my next step.

Yes you should troubleshoot System Restore some more. Follow the troubleshooting steps on MVP Bert Kinney's System Restore page.

>> Rock wrote
>> Another option to system restore is to remove via Add/Remove programs
>> whatever updates were added when this issue first started. Unfortunately we
>> have no information on what that was.

You should try to remove the OS updates _and_ possibly the software updates you installed from the update site after this problem started before trying a system restore. Otherwise say you get system restore to work, it could leave the computer in an inconsistent state after the restore (which in this case means it wouldn't help). This is because system restore only monitors certain files for applications. So doing a restore might not remove all traces of the recent software update, and leave the system inconsistent. This is an example of how adding more changes to a system that has problems confounds the issue. Once a problem occurs fix it first before making any more changes.

Robert wrote
I finally tried disabling the Norton Antivirus and it finally let me
online but the computer is still 'not right'. It doesn't let me see
my email yet loads other pages as normal

>> Rock wrote
>> Email where? Yahoo, google, some other online email service, or do you use
>> an email client such as Outlook Express, Eudora, etc?

> Robert wrote
> I am able to see and view my hotmail account but only when Norton is
> disabled. What I find odd is that it was working fine just a few days
> ago and I have no idea what happened, other than that last message.

Ok I see.

Robert wrote
and if I try and do anything the application hangs up.

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>> Rock wrote
>> What do you mean do anything? Do what? What application, do you mean
>> Internet Explorer?

> Robert wrote
> By application I mean to open anything such as a file etc, or like
> when I see I have emails waiting I click on that and it just hangs
> there, but that s when Norton is running. Seems to be ok without it,
> and I can at least get online, although jury rigged, yet I can still
> tell the computer still isn t right. It isn t as fast or responsive
> and I ve tried playing Jedi Academy and its slow

Again understood now. All these problems have something to do with being online.

Robert wrote
It's as though my system is in a locked loop and cannot
access the
Internet as I normally did.
It shows that I have an Internet connection but whenever I
enable
Norton I get an alert which says that IExplorer is attempting
to logon
to the Internet (recommended): and
shows proxy settings detected and just hangs there,.....
whenever I
click ok the alert it comes right back.

As I stated at the beginning, my system was running fine
before all
this started to happen.
I'm not saying I don't believe those of you regarding your
comments
and Norton products but I'm just pointing out there wasn't a
conflict
with them on my system before this. The system was fast and
easy to
use and hardly any wait time at all.

>> Rock wrote
>> And I'm not saying Norton is the cause of all the problems, but it probably
>> is the cause of the system restore problem, and even when it runs ok, it is
>> a resource hog. Though you say the system had been running fast with it, it
>> would be even faster without it.

> Robert wrote
> Probably so, I did try running System Restore with Norton disabled

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> though and it still failed.

Ok, there's more troubleshooting to do for System Restore.

Robert wrote
I tried turning off my Automatic
Windows update and I got an error message from Norton.
Does anyone
know of a way around it, or just let it stay that way?

>> Rock wrote
>> Why do you want to turn off Automatic updates? No I don't have a clue about
>> Norton. Symantec tech support is the best resource for that.

> Robert wrote
> I attempted to turn off my Auto-Updates because I thought they may
> have been a source of the problem by downloading bad data.

I understand now. Good idea; keep automatic updates off until you exhaust all avenues to resolve this mess.
Don't make any more changes by adding more elements.

Robert wrote
Going on the principle that my computer software 'seized up'
in mid
download, even though the computer gave the message to
turn it off to
download updates and 'something' obviously happened. I
remembered that
I had bookmarked the site and was able to gain access in that
way.

>> Rock wrote
>> Bookmarked what site? The windows update site? You can get there manually
>> from Internet Explorer | Tools | Windows Update.

> Robert wrote
> The above refers to having the Microsoft Updates site in my Favorites
> because I wasn't able to get to it via Explorer/Tools/Windows Update.

Hmm, has this always been a problem, or just now after this situation developed? I assume it came with the recent problem.

Robert wrote
Once in, I checked my computer and it showed no updates
available, I
then ran all available software updates,

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>> Rock wrote
>> What does "all available software updates" mean? Ran them from where?

> Robert wrote
> I means it listed about (9) separate updates and I downloaded them
> from the Microsoft Updates page with a pop-up screen showing the
> progress and all but one was successful. I was going to go back and
> try again and download the other (8) updates mentioned below when I
> saw the Explorer 7 update.

Just as with the windows updates that started this issue, you need to find out what those specific software updates were to see if they can be undone before trying a system restore. Follow the same tact. Check in the update history for what these were.

Robert wrote
then checked again and found
quite a few updates to download. I then went back to look for
XP
updates to download because I remembered seeing (8) of
them

>> Rock wrote
>> This is very confusing here. Where did you check again? Where did you find
>> quite a few updates?

> Robert wrote
> Microsoft Updates

>> Rock wrote
>> And then you went back to look for XP updates?

> Robert wrote
> Yes

>> Rock wrote
>> I thought you just did that?

> Robert wrote
> I download software updates, they had multiple updates I wanted
> to download; e.g. (9) software, (8) XP and (1)Hardware.

Ok, got it now.

Robert wrote
but when I saw Internet Explorer 7 download I clicked it
instead thinking
it would bring 'back up to speed'. It validated me and it

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seemed to
download everything fine, however near the end I thought I
saw an
error message about not being able to download something
and another
message flashed by with numbers, and not gaining access. It
just
happened so fast. Then the computer did a self re-start and
came back
up with a prompt for restart but it's as slow as ever.

Maybe that update wasn't installed. You can confirm that through windows update history.

>> Rock wrote
>> It's not a good idea to apply more updates when the system is running well.
>> This just adds more unknowns to the mix making troubleshooting that much
>> harder. Fix the underlying problems first.

> Robert wrote
> That's the point, the system isn't running well. I'm trying to restore
> it to the way it was.
> It doesn't even give me the desktop anymore but always prompts me
> now.

Not sure what you mean here. I am guessing though, that you had the system set up to auto login to the desktop. But now it stops at the welcome screen where you have to click on your user icon? If that's the case it means one of the installed updates added one of the versions of .Net Framework. This installation adds an account called Asp.net which causes this change in the auto login.

Robert wrote
Then after being online for a few minutes it gave me a
message that my
updates
were almost finished, so I figured that's why it was so slow.
Again it
shut itself down and then prompted me to start-up again.
However it's
still sluggish and I still have the problem of Norton not
allowing me
to go to sites otherwise I get a alert message,

>> Rock wrote
>> This is unclear, Norton not allow you to go to sites? What does that mean?
>> What alert message? All this is moot though, because there are so many
>> intertwined issues here.

> Robert wrote
> Every time I attempt to go online and Norton is on I get the following

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> message:

- > Norton Personal Firewall
- > Security Alert
- > Low Risk
- > IEXPLORE.EXE is attempting to connect to a DNS server.
- > Program: IEXPLORE.EXE
- > C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\
- > Date/Time:
- > Remote Address:

- > What do you want to do?
- > Always allow connections from this program on all ports(recommended)
- > and whenever I click ok it comes right back and I never connect to the
- > site.

I don't know what this Norton message means. I don't use any Norton home security product, and won't let them near my systems.

Robert wrote
so I have to disabled Norton. Should I re-run the Explorer
download?

- >> Rock wrote
- >> No, fix the system first.

Robert wrote
Also, is it possible
to hook up one computer to another? Don't you have to have
separate
DSL lines etc coming into the room to power and connect to
the
Internet? Where does the cable usually connect into? Any
suggestions
or advice would be appreciated.

- >> Rock wrote
- >> Yes it is, but where did this question come from? What are you trying to
- >> accomplish?

- > Robert wrote
- > I ask this question because I m wanting to try and save my data by
- > transferring it from one computer to another.

- >> Rock wrote
- >> First thing I would do is investigate what updates were installed in the
- >> first place. Go to the windows update site, do a custom scan and look in

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>> the left pane for update history. See what updates, if any, were installed
>> that night. Then go to Add/Remove programs and remove those updates.

>> Of course it might have been something other than an update from windows
>> update, such as a Norton update. You haven't specified what it was.

> Robert wrote
> I don't think it was a Norton update although I can't be certain
> because the information just flashed by.

Check the windows update history to be sure. Note: I never let my system update without first checking what it is and deciding if I want that update. You can reconfigure automatic updates to alert you to new updates but not download or install them until you give approval. I recommend after this is all repaired that you set it up that way. That way you can see what automatic updates is offering. You don't necessarily want every update.

>> Rock wrote
>> I would also troubleshoot what was wrong with system restore to get it
>> running using MVP Bert Kinney's page. Then do a system restore to before
>> all this mess started.

> Robert wrote
> This sounds like the best way although some of his advice I'm a little
> iffy on.

See the end of this post for some suggestions.

>> Rock wrote
>> Uninstall the Norton products. Afterwards visit the Symantec site to get
>> their removal tool to remove more of the vestiges, unfortunately it is hard
>> to get rid of Norton security products.

>> Then for anti-virus install Avast (free and my choice), AVG (free), or NOD32
>> or Kaspersky, neither are those free. For firewall install one of these:
>> Sunbelt Software's Kerio Personal firewall (free and paid), or Comodo
>> Personal firewall (free).

>> Lastly, I don't know what kind of system you have set up for backup and
>> recovery, but I recommend you look into getting a drive imaging program and
>> an external hard drive. I currently use Acronis True Image Home, version
>> 10. I use this to daily image the system to an external hard drive. Images
>> can be full, incremental or differential (saving on time and space for
>> subsequent images). Images can be made on a drive or partition basis.
>> Restores can be done on a file, partition or drive basis. It also does file
>> backup and drive cloning.

>> You can purchase a preassembled external drive or put one together for less
>> cost by placing a bare drive in an external drive enclosure (\$20 range). A
>> 320GB setup will cost less than \$100.

>> Then if something damages the system restore from a recent image and in
>> about an hour you are back to a running state.

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- > Robert wrote
- > Thanks for the good advice, I have been thinking of creating a system
- > back up for awhile.

You're welcome.

Suggestions:

A. Backup the important data now if you don't have a full and complete backup. I don't think you should bother with trying to network two computers at this point. You have enough going on. Copy the important data to CD or DVD, flash drive, or an external drive and move it to the other computer. Backup it up in at least two different ways so there is redundancy.

If things get worse, say the system won't boot so you can't otherwise backup the data, here are some options to do it.

1. Take the drive out of the computer and install it as a slave drive in another Windows XP or 2000 computer. It should read the drive ok, so you can copy the data.

2. Take the drive and put it in an external drive enclosure. Attach this through USB to your other computer. It should read the drive ok, so you can copy the data.

3. Create a bootable Bart's PE disk, boot from that, then copy the data to external USB drive or flash drive. This takes some skill and effort.

4. Download a bootable Linux distro called Knoppix. Create a bootable CD from that, boot from it, and copy the data to USB drive or flash drive, or if the computer has two CD drives, one of which is a burner, then use the k3b burning program on the Knoppix CD to burn the data to CD.

4. Take it to a competent computer tech to backup the data.

B. Research what updates were installed the night this all started, and research what additional software updates you installed after the problem started.

C. Remove as many of the updates that were installed the night of the problem as possible through Add/Remove programs. For now don't remove any of those software updates that were installed later. Test to see what happens.

D. If that doesn't fix it, remove as many of the software updates you did through windows update. Test again.

E. Whether that works or not, now troubleshoot system restore following the tips on Bert Kinney's system restore page. If you can get system restore working, then restore to a point right before this problem occurred.

F. If the system is working now, great! But either way, at this point uninstall Norton. Do so through Add/Remove programs. After it is removed, activate the windows firewall, then go online to the Symantec site (or you can do this before hand) and download the removal utility for the Norton software you have. I am assuming it's some version of NIS. Run that to remove more traces of NIS.

G. If things are running ok, grab a copy of Avast Anti-virus from Alwil software. It's free for home use. You

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could get this at an earlier time as well. Now install it.

H. Set up some sort of system backup, as I suggested, using Acronis True Image Home version 10 to image the now working system to an external hard drive.

I. Go to the windows update site, do a custom scan, and see what updates are offered. Start with the high priority security updates. Install them one at a time. Test the system in between. Image at that point.

J. Post back here with what optional updates are offered for advice on what to install.

K. Reactivate automatic updates but set to tell you about them but don't download or install. Image the system.

L. If after step F the system still isn't running, your options might be limited. I am assuming the OS was preinstalled by Dell, rather than installed by you at some later time using an XP installation CD.

If it happens that you did the install using an XP installation CD, you could try a repair install. See this link: <http://www.michaelstevensstech.com/XPrepairinstall.htm>

However if the OS was preinstalled by Dell, then you don't have an installation CD, but rather a recovery CD or hidden partition on the hard drive with an image of the drive as received from the factory. In that case the option of a repair install is not available. If Dell offers a non destructive recovery do that. Otherwise you might be faced with a destructive restore. This means the system is restored to the condition it was in as received from Dell. You'll then have to reinstall all apps from original media.

Make sure before you take this step that you have all the original media and know all the product keys for products that need them. There is software you can run on a running system to retrieve this product key information if you don't have it. Look at Belarc Advisor for this. It's a free download.

After the OS is reinstalled, if things are running ok, image the system. Reinstall all apps testing in between, then image the system. Do not install Norton. Uninstall whatever security suite came with the Dell installation. Activate the windows firewall (you can decide whether you want to use a 3rd party firewall and if so which one, later. Install an AV program like Avast. Bring back your data from the backups. Image the system.

Other option to consider: Contact Symantec tech support and see what they have to say. Their response may be helpful or they might just suggest to uninstall/reinstall.

Others may jump in here with suggestions for you.

Good luck Robert, and post back with your progress.

Rock [MS-MVP User/Shell]

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