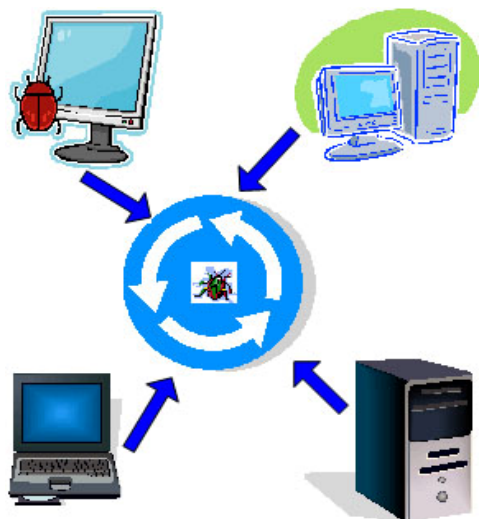


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What are Peer-to-Peer file sharing programs?

Peer-to-Peer software programs allow computer users to share multiple types of files over the internet, by using specially designed software packages. Common examples of shared files are music, movies, and software. The majority of the material available on peer-to-peer networks is protected under copyright law, making the distribution of the material illegal.

These programs are called peer-to-peer networks because the computers are directly connected to each other to allow the users to directly download files made available on the users' hard drives. There is not a central internet location running the network. The manufacturers provide the software as a free download. They cover their expenses by including advertisements that run while the user operates the program.

There are numerous legal and security risks while using these networks, which is why the use of peer-to-peer file sharing is prohibited on your work computer. This newsletter will discuss some of the risks involved.

What are the risks?

- If not configured correctly, these peer-to-peer applications could make your entire hard drive and it's contents available to other users on the network.
- If another user's computer is infected with a virus, it could spread rampantly through the peer-to-peer network, by the user sharing infected files.
- Your computer's internet address could be exposed to malicious users, giving hackers a means of launching attacks against you.
- The peer-to-peer applications contain advertisement software to expose you to pop-up ads. They may also spy on your computer usage and install other malicious software, without your knowledge.
- Peer-to-peer applications create a significant amount of traffic. They could severely slow your internet connection or make it temporarily unusable, if the program is left unattended.
- The Recording Industry (RIAA) and Motion Picture Association have been prosecuting users of these networks for the past several years under copyright law violations. You could end up in jail or paying substantial fines!



DTI recommends avoiding these peer-to-peer networks altogether.
Instead, consider safe and legitimate pay services such as iTunes or Rhapsody.

Questions or comments?

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