

An open letter on forwarded virus warnings and the Borg

Please read this before you act on the impulse to forward on one of those helpful email warnings about the latest virus threat.

Friends,

In the past few days – and at regular intervals over the past couple of years – I have been plagued by well-wishers telling me that I must look for a file called 'sulfnbk.exe'. I am cautioned that it contains a nasty virus and that if I should find it I should delete it immediately. I should then pass the message on to all of my contacts, because they probably have it too.

And you know what? I do have it, and so do all of my contacts. But that's no bad thing, because 'sulfnbk.exe' is a Windows file. It is actually part of your operating system. Fortunately, it's not a vital part and if you delete it you might not even notice its absence. But after a while, you might wonder why some of your longer filenames keep getting shortened.

So, 'sulfnbk.exe' is NOT a virus, but the letter which warns us about it IS a virus, or to coin a new phrase, a 'Borg'. If you ever saw a Star Trek episode which didn't have Kirk in it, you'll probably know that the Borg are this race of machine-based intelligences which find life forms and 'assimilate' them. These life forms then become part of the Borg collective intelligence and service their Borg masters. Such captured people are called 'drones'.

Well, this virus, or Borg, needs you to do your job as a drone, or it won't work. If you decide to delete the file, you've been a good drone. If you've passed the message on, then you've been an even better drone, helping the Borg find new human life forms to assimilate and bend to its will.

Of course, you did all of this in good faith. The warning came to you from a trusted friend or colleague, and – after all – they were right; you were actually 'infected' with the file. How will you avoid falling into the same trap again?

Here's how:

1. Before acting on any such warning in future, go to www.vmyths.com. This site will tell you if what you have just read is a hoax or if it is real.
2. Use a virus checker
3. Keep it up to date. Check for and download new virus definition files at least monthly. Your program can probably do this for you automatically
4. If you're doing 2 & 3, then ignore any warnings of this nature that you receive. What makes you think that your mate Bob knows more about a virus threat than Norton, McAfee, Grisoft and all the rest?

Ignore this advice, and resistance is futile; you will be assimilated.