

AIT Discovers New Click Fraud Schemes: Search Engines Victims Too?

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Press release from: [Advanced Internet Technologies, Inc.](#)

April 17th 2007 - Two-time INC 500 Web Host (AIT) AIT.com home to over 210,000 websites believes it has uncovered the latest form of Click Fraud within the online advertising medium – right inside its own datacenter. AIT CEO, Clarence Briggs, a former U.S. Army Infantry Officer, explained recently, “We have seen all kinds of techniques for committing Click Fraud, from its infancy of manual clicking to the more IT savvy software programs that automate the process of clicking on online ads over and over again with no purpose other than to receive a percentage from each click made or generated. More recently, we have seen Click BOTS which have become so wide spread and diverse that whole companies have sprouted up to help combat this growing problem.” AIT is the company that charged the search engine giant Google with click fraud and was the lead plaintiff in a class action lawsuit against the search engine in late 2005. At the time, AIT was also working with the FBI as well as the Senate Judiciary Committee and started the Click Fraud portal www.igeryon.com, which was to serve as a mechanism for informing the public and online line advertisers as to the dangers and schemes associated with click fraud.

Briggs has labeled the most recent Click Fraud as the “Bang Box” scheme. “It is ingenious because it is so obvious that it is missed,” said Briggs. He describes a situation where a search engine affiliate hosts its web servers in a data center with an ISP. The affiliate then gets fed advertiser ads from the search engines, syndicates and other IAB members to its web site. Then the affiliates hire a third party to rent a web server inside the ISP’s data center in order to “Bang” or click on their affiliate site driving impressions or clicking on the ads themselves using an internal IP address without generating suspicious external traffic. They are paid for the clicks by the search engines who in this case, probably don’t know what is happening. In fact AIT filed a lawsuit which is a matter of public record in Cumberland County North Carolina alleging that the local Fayetteville Observer, www.fayettevillenc.com / fayobserver.com or Fayetteville Publishing Company (FPC) of committing online Click Fraud against its local and national advertisers using the Bang Box technique. AIT is the technology company which provided co-location for the Observer’s web servers in the AIT data center. When AIT grew suspicious that it was being over-billed for advertising, AIT was able to monitor web traffic to and from the Observer’s web site asserted Michael Roberts, the CIO of AIT. According to Roberts, “AIT determined that up to 50% or more of the online impressions and ad clicks for which the Observer charges AIT and other advertisers were artificially manufactured or inflated due to an internal web server doing nothing but clicking on the Fayetteville Observer’s website. Roberts claimed AIT was able to gauge traffic to and from the newspaper’s website which far below the statistics the Observer used to attract advertisers in its online policies and agreements. Charles Broadwell, the Publisher of FPC, could not be reached for comment.

“The FPC rate card and other representations made by the Observer claimed they got 17,000 visitors a day to their website”, said Briggs, “This is simply not true. We recorded and documented a few genuine visits a day but the majority of visits were manufactured by the Bang Box. It is a matter of public record - we wanted to open and examine the Observer’s web servers in front of everyone and the court to get at the truth and prove the fraud but they did not want to do so.” Briggs says that AIT has compiled a list of both national and local advertisers who could be victims of the FPC click fraud. He indicates that they will contact the possible victims to let them know that they have hard evidence of the wrongdoing committed against them. Briggs also says he will contact the search engine syndicates and send them the evidence he has regarding FPC. “It just may be possible that this sort of thing is widespread and that the search engines don’t know about it.” Briggs will be the keynote speaker at ISPCON this year www.ispcon.com/conference/keynotes.php. ISPCON is the capstone event for the Internet industry and Briggs says he intends to use the FPC experience to expose the anatomy of click fraud from the search engines and syndicates down to local publishers. “Ironically, Google and other search engines might be the victim in this instance,” said Briggs.

Recently, AIT certified its network as “clean” of crimeware and malware with Panda Software’s Malware Radar. Panda Software www.pandasoftware.com discovered the malicious “Clickbot.A” and is a pioneer in the industry combating malware, Trojans and viruses. “Many ISPs inadvertently allow malware to be used by their networks to commit illegal or unethical acts”, says Ryan Sherstobitoff, Product Technology Officer for Panda in the U.S. “Malware Radar is a product we developed to assist ISPs to combat the problems and prevent their network resources from being abused.” AIT and Panda have

partnered and are working with the FBI to identify and stop Malware. We intend to use all the data and evidence surrounding this Bang Box scam to educate the public about click fraud. ISPs and Data Centers also need to be aware of this type of activity. We actually have film footage in real time that we can release showing the generation of false traffic and how the scam works which is essential to fighting it.” For more details visit www.igeryon.com.

A Staff Report

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