

No. 273: Why NOT to use Teamviewer

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We are into the 27th year (!) of the Computer Corner, and I have not written many negative articles in all that time. Well, maybe a couple on Microsoft. But never before on Teamviewer. However, it is time.

For those of you who don't know, Teamviewer is software that permits you to take control of another computer, across the room or across the world, and across platforms (Microsoft control of a Linux machine, or the reverse, and the like). It works well. And there are several other software packages that work as well or better than Teamviewer, so they are not the only game in town.

Teamviewer claims that it is free for non-commercial use. But lately, they have made it very difficult to use if you are not one of their paying customers. I claim, therefore, that it is no longer free for non-commercial use; rather, they are placing impediments in the way of non-commercial use by non-paying customers, contrary to what they advertise.

What are they doing? Using criteria to judge your use that they admit they will not disclose. When you use their software it comes up with a note to the effect that you are using it for commercial purposes and it will shut off your remote connections within 5 minutes. This effectively makes the software useless for most users.

Now, let us look at my case to judge. I have three computers in my office: my main desktop, a laptop, and my wife's laptop. Two of those are dual-boot, using both Windows and Linux. Therefore, we could count those as 5 separate computers to be controlled remotely by Teamviewer. Two floors down in my basement are three more; one Windows/Linux dual-boot machine, one is a pure Linux machine and one is a pure Windows machine for Winlink. That is 4 more computers for a grand total of 9 computers at my address. Beyond that, I maintain 2 Linux computers off-site for my son-in-law and one more Windows machine for a friend. That totals up to an even dozen platforms, though it is only 9 physical computers.

That admittedly is a lot, but I use Teamviewer only to update software or to help a relative or friend when they get into trouble or to prevent having to run down to the basement to check into a Winlink net. No money is involved at any time. And I explained all this back in August 2019 when I filed a Declaration of Private Use with the company, outlining how I used it to provide help to family and friends and monitor and administer devices outside of a commercial environment. That worked for about a year, but now the time limited use notices that makes the software unusable have come back. Accordingly, I removed Teamviewer from all 9 computers yesterday, and now use one of the other remote software packages exclusively (for awhile, I was using two such packages, with Teamviewer as a backup). If you need this type of software, I recommend AnyDesk. It works well (actually somewhat better than Teamviewer) without the unreasonable (and I think untruthful) restrictions. Happy computing!