

Ransomware for Dummies: Anyone Can Do It

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Among today's fastest-growing cybercrime epidemics is "ransomware," malicious software that encrypts your computer files, photos, music and documents and then demands payment in Bitcoin to recover access to the files. A big reason for the steep increase in ransomware attacks in recent years comes from the proliferation of point-and-click tools sold in the cybercrime underground that make it stupid simple for anyone to begin extorting others for money.

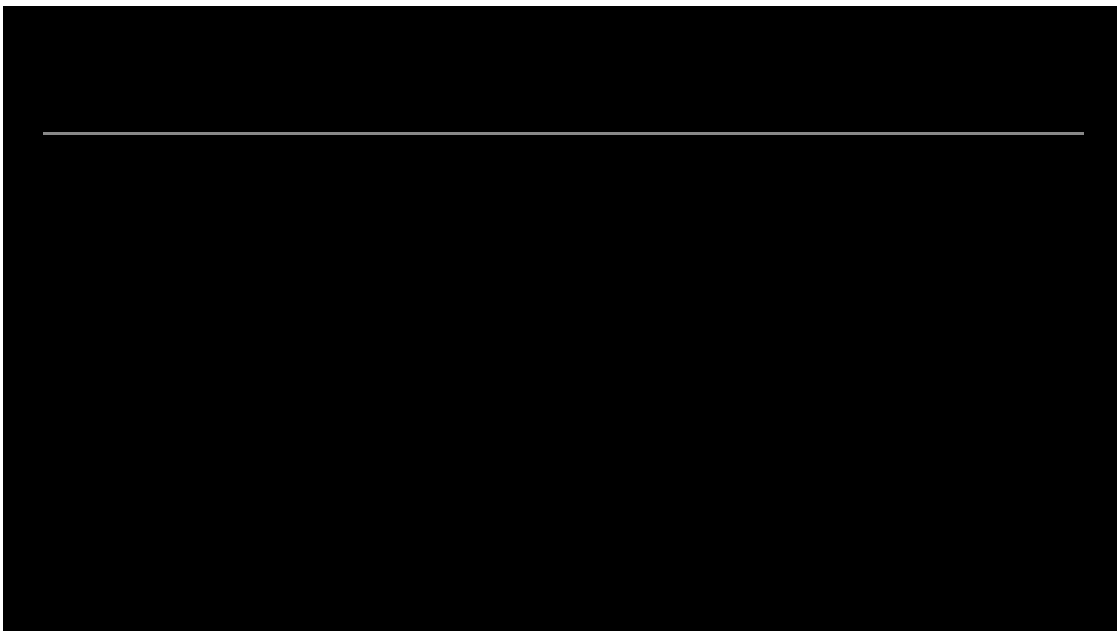
Recently, I came across an extremely slick and professionally produced video advertisement promoting the features and usability of "Philadelphia," a ransomware-as-a-service crimeware package that is sold for roughly \$400 to would-be cybercriminals who dream of carving out their own ransomware empires.

This stunning advertisement does a thorough job of showcasing Philadelphia's many features, including the ability to generate PDF reports and charts of victims "to track your malware campaigns" as well as the ability to plot victims around the world using Google Maps.

"Everything just works," claim the proprietors of Philadelphia. "Get your lifetime copy. One payment. Free updates. No monthly fees."

One interesting feature of this ransomware package is the ability to grant what the program's architects call "mercy." This refers to the desperate and heartbreaking pleas that ransomware purveyors often hear from impecunious victims whose infections have jeopardized some priceless and irreplaceable data — such as photos of long lost loved ones.

I'll revisit the authors of this ransomware package in a future post. For now, just check out their ad. It's fairly chilling.



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