



# Falcon I.T. Services

Comprehensive Solutions for Small Businesses

## Dangers of File and Music Sharing Software

Grokster, Limewire, and Kazaa, like many Peer to Peer file sharing programs, are used by millions of people world wide. They allow users to share program files, videos and music. While file sharing can be a great way to exchange data across the Internet, it's also a dangerous tool used by hackers and computer rogues alike.

Peer to Peer file sharing may be a minor (even a major) security risk for your home computer, but installed in a corporate LAN, it can be a very costly liability. Company personnel, unaware of the security risks involved, may attempt to install file sharing software on their PC's and download music, video or program files.

In order to prevent costly virus infections, possible data loss or data theft, peer to peer file sharing should not be permitted in the workplace. There are 3 types of risks posed by peer to peer file sharing in a corporate environment

### 1. Virus or Spyware Infection/Data Loss/Data Theft

Peer to peer opens a data 'tunnel' between two or more PC's across the Internet. This tunnel can be used as an exploit by a hacker. Worms such as W32.Fizzer, can spread across peer to peer networks, leaving behind keystroke loggers and setting up IRC conduits for further hacker attacks. Files downloaded from file sharing networks can contains viruses, worms or spyware.

### 2. Resource Consumption

Peer to peer networks consume costly network bandwidth when downloading or uploading programs. In addition, computers that have been compromised are often used as distribution points. Attackers upload files that they wish to distribute to a compromised system to take advantage of higher corporate bandwidth (T1+) . This can further degrade your network performance. In addition, illicit material can be uploaded to your PC and you may become the distribution point of this illicit material.

### 3. Copyright Infringement

In the past, companies have been held accountable for allowing employees to download copyrighted materials using company provided computers. If your employees are downloading music or copyrighted materials using your company's Internet connection, your company may be held liable.



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### How To Prevent File Sharing At The Workplace

There are several approaches that can be used in preventing peer to peer file sharing at the office:

- ✎ **Employees should be made aware of the dangers of file sharing software.**
- ✎ **Company policy should include guidelines that prohibit the installation of files sharing on company computers.**
- ✎ **Install an IP Filter or Content Filter that can monitor and block out Peer to Peer Web sites and download sites.**
- ✎ **Implement restricted accounts on Windows based PC that prohibit the installation and execution of program files.**



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