



Secrets stolen? No, just the intellectual property

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World Intellectual Property Day (April 26 of each year) came and went; pundits and politicians all made their statements, countries and their counsels all presented their positions, international organizations implored their members to protect intellectual property and the creativity and innovation represented. All focused on the eventuality of having intellectual property universally protected. They set themselves a most honorable goal, indeed, perhaps a seemingly lofty goal.



With such a serious message, it was humorous to note that a recent book I co-authored has been illegally uploaded and available on numerous peer-to-peer (P2P) networks for interested parties to illegally download. One should be flattered? How often does the title of a book -- "*Secrets Stolen, Fortunes Lost*" -- become a reality?

As the author, I was forced to smile at the irony of the situation and found myself literally laughing aloud when I shared my discovery and observation with my co-author. Here is a book created to lead businesses leaders, security professionals and all who are interested in the "how-to" of preserving their intellectual property – and it's already on the P2P networks. These networks exist so individuals can illegally download the creative thoughts and art of others, without having to provide any compensation. Or to put it in the "me" context, to steal the creativity and thoughts expressed by me and my co-author. So as the smile fades and the reality sets in, my mood changes accordingly – "*arghh!*"

Moving beyond the irony, let's take a minute and shine the spotlight on the mechanisms. There exists a secondary underground market that distributes (and peddles) myriad books and other artistic works daily. Perhaps those with the ability to protect authors'/publishers' rights can use this information to intercede.

A search of the title, "*Secrets Stolen, Fortunes Lost,*" accompanied by the keyword "torrent" resulted in no less than 110 separate pointers on Google – it's nice to be popular! These entry points call themselves libraries of the future, free e-books distributors, etc. In this case, the illicit mechanism had the book available on the Torrent Network, first loaded on the eve of World Intellectual Property Day, all 3.37 megabytes in PDF format (including tables, graphics, etc., thank you very much). And the file, of course, comes complete with a confirmation hash value to assure completeness.

Let's take a moment to discuss just what this means. These entry points all operate on a parasitic business model, while they don't actually host the book on the entry-point server, they require a user to register themselves with the website; and only then will they be provided a link to the actual files available in the Torrent Network.

Which leads us to the question: Where and how is this business monetized? The answer is that there are two streams of revenue available for harvesting -- one legal and one not.

The "legal" revenue stream is via advertising. The registration at the site required to get to the download location is designed to give the site owner a confirmed auditable site member/user/reader to present to advertisers. Registered users, therefore, translate into potential revenue streams from direct site advertisers. Additionally, utilization of those contextual ads from Google, Yahoo, MSN and others, provide a cash stream generated by every click-through from their website -- thus creating a second, albeit small, "Ka-Ching" in the virtual cash register.

The "illegal" revenue stream is generated via the same registration data – the registered user has provided a confirmed email address, which has value in the secondary market of malware miscreants. Additional crimeware extras are also provided to the unsuspecting user – free and at no extra charge. Each piece of crimeware is designed to separate the personal identifying data from the user. In addition, as you close the browser windows, you suffer involuntary redirects to the absolute low-end of the internet population, the smut sites.

Sometimes life is amusing when you detach yourself from reality, but it sobers up quite rapidly when you understand what is really going on. Now let's figure out how to get the toothpaste back in the tube.