

By ~~15/02/08~~ Botezatu, Hardware Editor

## **Best Buy Makes YouTube Stars Out of Its Computer Service Customers**

*The company is copying users' data when the computer is brought in for service*

Best Buy is the target of an ill-fated lawsuit filed by some of its customers claiming that its Geek Squad computer repair subsidiary is abusing users' data on the defective computers. Shortly put, each time a customer brings an out-of-order PC, the stored data is illegally copied and used in unauthorized ways. The lawsuit has been filed with the Hennepin County court and relies on the confession of an anonymous employee who alerted the press on the illegal practices of its colleagues. "If you have any interesting pictures of yourself or others on your computer, then they - will - be - found", wrote the anonymous tipster. Although the incident seems just a kids' play, not only that it violates the Best Buy service policy, but it may also lead to exposing sensitive data to unauthorized persons. For instance, a home-brewed video clip or photo could end up on video / photo sharing websites, causing substantial damage to the legitimate owner. Geek Squad claims that the issue is an isolated case and that it takes "reasonable precautions to protect against the loss, misuse and unauthorized access of your personal information." However, the employee's confession was followed by other members of the staff who admitted that they had copied pictures belonging to one of the customers on flash-drives and multiple CDs. "It was dumb, and I regret that lapse in judgment. I have placed Best Buy in a precarious position, both legally and 'reputationally'", said William Giffels, one of the employees. The Geek Squad executives won't admit liability but they triggered an internal investigation and increased the number of audits at the repair facilities. The Best Buy customers don't believe that such measures would put an end to the abuse and consider that the company needs to re-think its business. "No matter what investigative protocol Best Buy uses, someone is going to find a way around it", said Consumerist editor Ben Popken to the Star Tribune.