

## Identity Abuse

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Recently the threat of identity theft has been often reported in the media. Identity abuse, given less attention, deserves a closer look. An identity thief steals someone's identity and assumes that identity, usually for material gain. On the other hand, an identity abuser does not necessarily assume the identity, but nonetheless causes harm to the owner of the identity.

Online we are identified primarily by e-mail address and homepage. We assign a significant personal value to these identities. Our friends and contacts have our e-mail address in their address books and our homepage bookmarked in their favourites. Anyone who has changed e-mail addresses knows the pain of notifying all your contacts and then still missing e-mails because people send them to the old address. If you've changed home page URLs you know the pain of waiting for the search engines to index your new location. If other sites have linked to your pages, you know the pain of getting them to link to your new site.

It's one thing to choose to change your online identity and quite another to have that change imposed on you. Rogers Communications, a high speed cable internet service provider in Canada, is a repeat identity abuser. Since launching their internet offering, Rogers has abused its users' identities 4 times. Most recently, it has joined up with Yahoo, requiring all users with websites to change their URLs. To add injury to injury, any new web sites have annoying geocities pop-up ads on them. Given Rogers' failed partnership with @Home you have to wonder how long Rogers' cosiness with Yahoo will last. Will Rogers users be left once again wandering in the Internet Identity Wilderness?

One method to protect yourself from identity abuse is to take full control of your online identity. Doing so requires some work, but the long-term benefits may be worth it. Here are the steps to taking control of your online identity:

1. Register your own domain.
2. Set up your own web site and email; OR,
3. Use a forwarding service to redirect to your existing e-mail and web site.
4. Assume your new identity and let everyone know.

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### **Short note about the author**

Albert Scherbinsky has been leading successful software development teams and projects for over 6 years and has over 12 years experience in the high tech industry. He is Editor of <http://SoftwarePress.com>

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