

Skype malware turns your computer into a Bitcoin mining zombie

Apps and Software By [Ryan Whitwam](#) Apr. 6, 2013 11:02 am



A new piece of malware is floating around, but that seems like par for the course these days. What makes this malicious bit of code notable is the goal its creators have in mind. The malware is being spread via Skype messages and is designed to turn your PC into a remote [Bitcoin](#) mining rig without your knowledge or consent.

Bitcoin is a decentralized all-digital currency that has become quite trendy as of late. The value of one Bitcoin has recently skyrocketed [to nearly \\$100](#), and then well over that point and back again. In the past, users could “mine” bitcoins by contributing CPU cycles to process Bitcoin transactions. As the number of Bitcoin users increased, it has — by design — started to take more effort to earn a single coin. This is because Bitcoin production is governed by an algorithm which ensures the supply is limited.

Effectively mining Bitcoins takes a lot of power at this point, which is why this piece of [malware](#) exists. By enslaving many computers, the authors can generate Bitcoins at essentially no cost. All it takes is a Skype message.

The target will receive a Skype message with an attention-grabbing phrase like, “this is my favorite picture of you.” Yes, this is an old trick, but it clearly still

works. The user then clicks the link, which is obscured by a bit.ly address, and instead of downloading a photo, they will get a file called skype-img-04_04-2013.exe. This is, of course, the malware installer.

After it is deployed on the system, the program begins slurping up all the CPU cycles to generate Bitcoins. It also reaches out to a command and control server in Germany to download more malware. This is definitely a nasty bug.

This vector was [detected by Kaspersky Labs](#) researchers several days ago. Since it is a novel infection, many antivirus programs are unable to detect it at this time. I'm sure that will be sorted out, but an AV program can only get you so far. Common sense is your first line of defense.

Tags: bitcoin Kaspersky Labs malware Security skype viruses