

NEW JERSEY

CPA

Magazine of the New Jersey Society of Certified Public Accountants

March • April 2008

# Family Matters

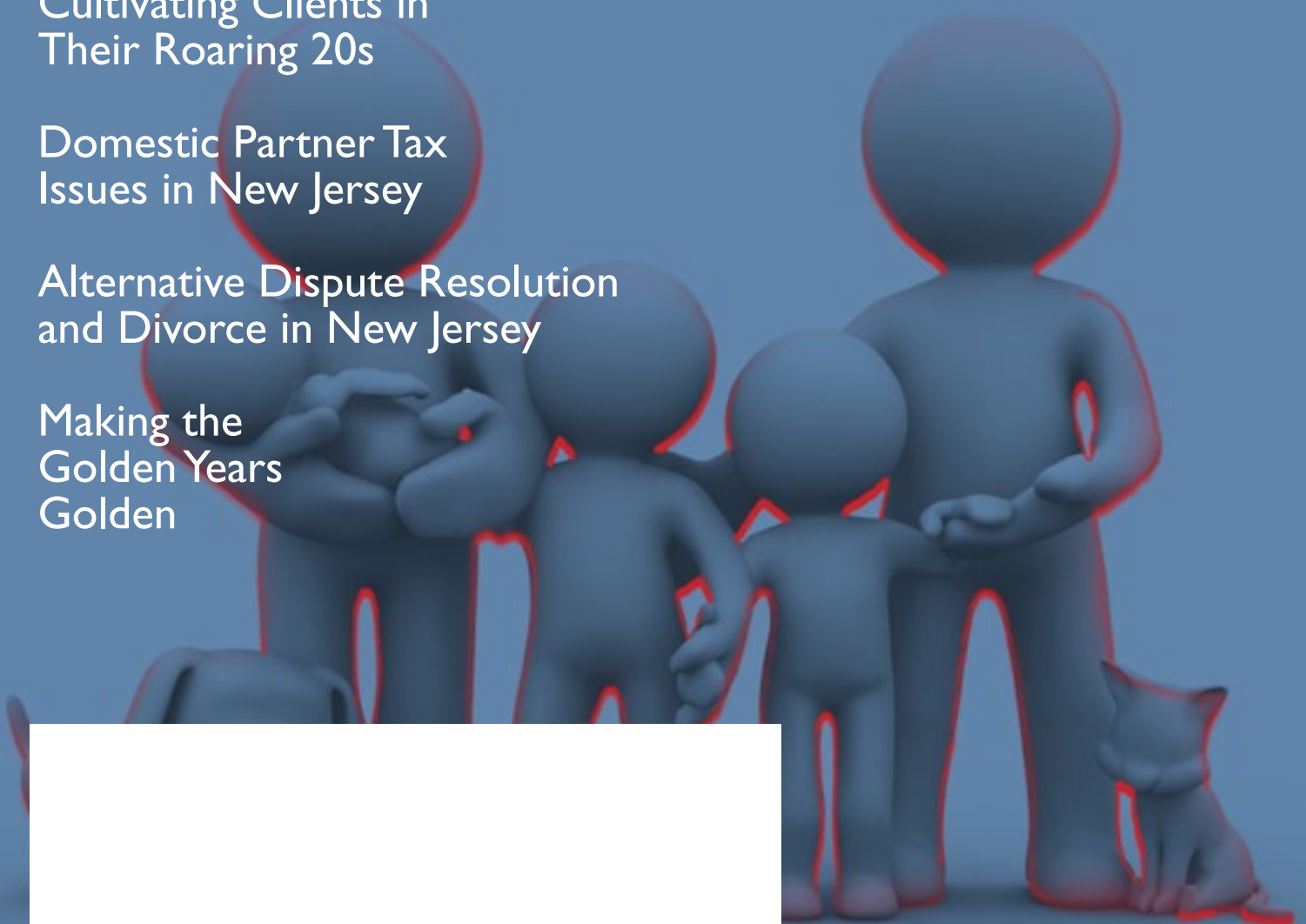
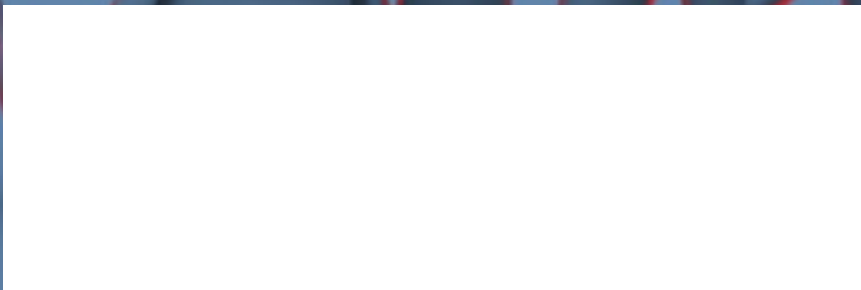
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Golden



# Is Your Computer Playing It Safe?

BY NEIL A. ROSENBERG, QUALITY TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

## Antivirus Software

Software that scans your computer for known viruses based on signature (files that need to be kept current by automatic updates) or by behavior is pretty standard by now. Most antivirus products perform their core function well, though some are faster than others to release signature updates and catch/clean viruses. What differentiates today's products are the advanced features that keep your systems safe from attack.

## Spyware

Spyware is installed surreptitiously on a computer and takes partial control over the user's interaction with the computer, without the user's informed consent. As such, anti-spyware is a must when purchasing antivirus technology. Many organizations used to resort to separate antivirus/anti-spyware products, either free software products that were manually managed on each PC, or commercial products at additional cost. Antivirus/anti-spyware is now available in one package and adds centralized management — critical for larger companies.

## Personal Firewalls

Personal firewalls protect your systems when they are connected to the Internet, but also protect systems from each other when you are on your internal network. Personal firewalls, too, are often now built into many antivirus packages. This allows this functionality to be controlled from the antivirus management console. Many companies, especially smaller ones, find control from the same console easier to manage. Furthermore, many companies are still running Windows 2000, yet Microsoft only added personal firewall software to Windows XP.

## Network Admission Control

Network admission control is the newest area of antivirus products. NAC,



as Symantec and Cisco call it, essentially scans PCs for security before they can connect to a network. If a PC has the appropriate patches, antivirus software, signatures and personal firewall, it can then connect to the internal network. If not, the machine is quarantined and cannot connect until these components are updated and the machine is in compliance with your security policies. This prevents a computer from going off the network and becoming infected and then coming back onto the network and infecting other PCs. Microsoft is building this technology into future versions of Windows, for free, while Symantec and other antivirus vendors are incorporating it into their antivirus products. Hardware vendors, like Cisco, are also including NAC into their products.

## Anti-bot

Anti-bot (web robot) protection is another new consideration. Bot networks are large collections of computers that are taken over by malicious software — similar to spyware — but then work together as a massive network to attack security vulnerabilities. Many security vendors

are still coming to grips with how to deal with this new and powerful threat. Symantec and others have already introduced anti-bot products and technology.

## Phishing

Phishing directs web browsers to malicious websites to add spyware for, say, identity theft and is a major problem. Microsoft, Symantec and others are addressing this threat.

## Market Leaders

The antivirus leaders have traditionally been Symantec, McAfee and Trend Micro, with Computer Associates having some market share based on its offering free antivirus signature updates to its customers. There are also a number of good products from other vendors that are all jockeying for market position. In 2007, Microsoft finally entered this market with its ForeFront Client Security offering, which will no doubt grow considerably in the next few years, particularly among small businesses that want “one throat to choke” and to keep their networks simple.



THE NEW JERSEY SOCIETY OF CPAs


# PODCASTS

## Consumer Versus Business

It's worth noting that consumer products are quite different from business products. Consumer products, such as Symantec's Norton 360, provide core antivirus functionality and some of the above capabilities, but also provide anti-phishing and other identity theft protections.

Consumer products also often allow one license to cover three or more computers on a home network. Business products, on the other hand, are more geared toward centralized management features and address the increased complexity of corporate networks.

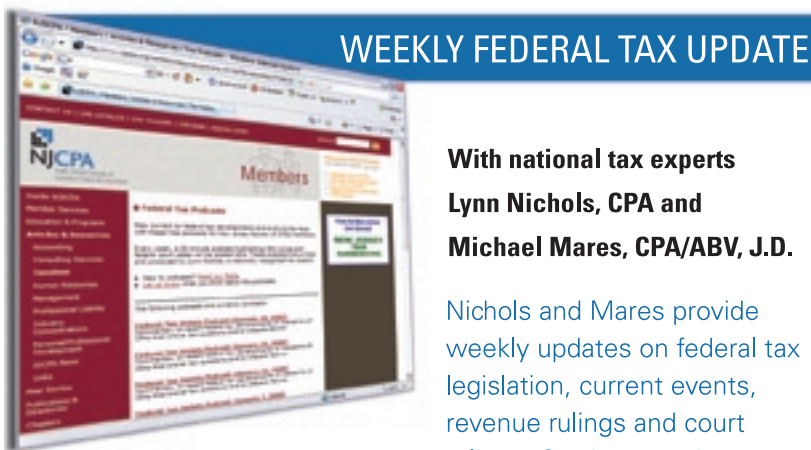
## Making a Choice

When considering multiple products, list each one's different options and then assign a relative score to each. You may want to weigh some things as more important than others. Next, create a grid with the criteria, products and scores. This will help you to be objective in weighing the different products you are considering. 

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## Member Benefit

The Technology Resource Group is developing presentations for NJSCPA chapters on computer security, networks and more. Email [rherman@solstrat.com](mailto:rherman@solstrat.com) or visit [www.njscpa.org/committees](http://www.njscpa.org/committees).



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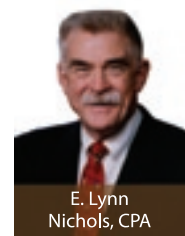
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