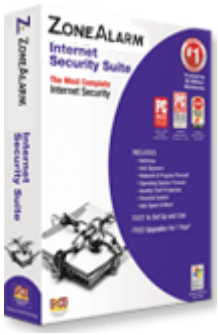
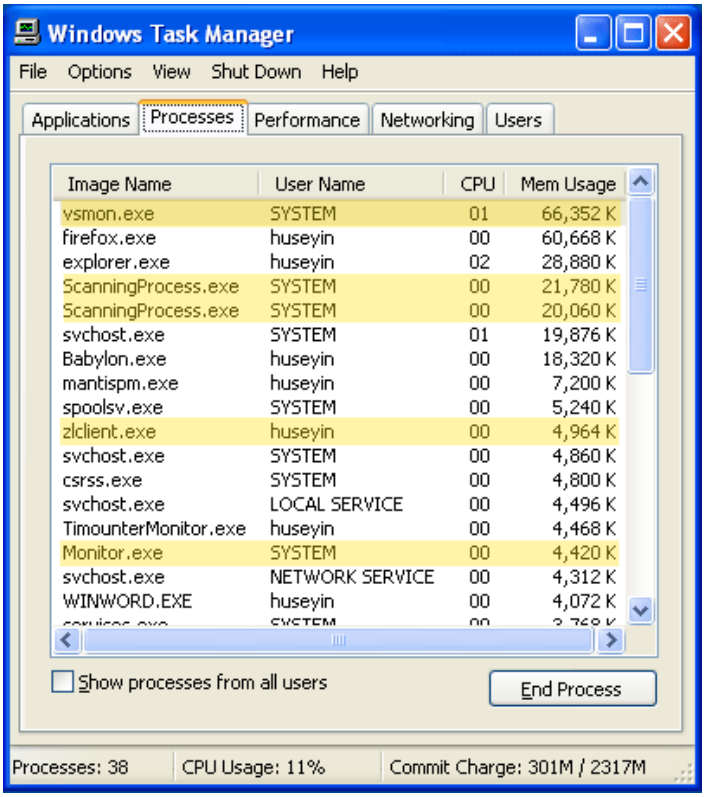
By Huseyin M Ozyilmaz

What is the best anti-virus software? What is the best firewall application? I think these are the most common questions among computer users who concern about both their computer security and privacy. I have been asking these two questions for a considerably long time. I met firewall concept when I had heavily involved to IRC chat rooms almost a decade ago. Kicking out and banning people from chat rooms, capturing their IP addresses and sending them 'nukes' were becoming usual activities especially in Turkish chat rooms. Conceal Firewall was the first firewall and F-Prot was the first anti-virus application I had used. Since then I have tried almost every application in the market to find the ultimate best solution that will solve all today's problems of privacy and digital security.



I have recently tried ZoneAlarm Internet Security Suite version 7.0.302. Last time the reason I uninstalled ZoneAlarm was because of their unsuccessful anti-virus engine. When I had learned ZoneAlarm had started using Kaspersky's antivirus engine, I was quite curious about the result. I do believe that ZoneAlarm's firewall was and is still one of the best firewall applications in the market today. On the other hand, Kaspersky made a promising entry to the market and surprised its all competitors. The Moscow-headquartered Company gradually has built their reputation and won many awards. Therefore, I thought that the combination of both would result in a big success. However, I was disappointed unfortunately.

First of all, the memory usage was appalling. The application creates five visible processes: vsmon.exe, two scanningProcess.exe, zlclient.exe and Monitor.exe. I was shocked when I realised the sum of memory usages of these all processes were 117 MB. I think this is the point where the main difference between ZoneAlarm and its alternatives diminishes. We all know that the security is a crucial issue and requires some effort and sacrifices. However, the amount of ZoneAlarm's memory usage is a big burden to today's ordinary computers and makes this application really unattractive. You can argue that good solution comes with a price. However, I do believe that we can find better applications on the market to replace this software.



Second, virus scan takes ages. If you have Netbeans or Eclipse installed on your system you have a big problem. Because the scan requires a considerable amount of system resources; especially CPU usage, you might not be able to use your computer. Scanning of 15 GB must not take two and an half hour.

You can further argue that performance is not the big issue and it can be substituted by reliability, ease of use, customer support etc. Then perhaps ZoneAlarm might be a good solution to you. For me, I am going to go back to use NOD32 and Comodo Firewall combination for my security solution. These two applications are both free and very promising. However, combination of these two is not a total security solution. Systems must be supported with a decent Spyware application in addition to these two.