Microsoft just force restarted my Windows PC again to install more unwanted apps

I stepped away from my computer for dinner, halfway through writing a story for *The Verge*. When I got back, I couldn't believe my eyes.

Windows 10 had restarted my computer without permission yet again — to install yet another forced OS update onto my solid state drive.

The craziest part: When my machine finished rebooting, it now contained *the exact thing I'd been writing about* before I was rudely interrupted. Microsoft had installed unsolicited, unwanted web app versions of Word, PowerPoint, Excel and Outlook onto my computer.

Seriously, the story you're reading right now started off as a news post about this happening to ***other*** *people.*
Screenshot: Sean Hollister/The Verge

OK, it's not as bad as when my entire computer screen got taken over by an unwanted copy of Microsoft Edge. That was truly egregious.

No, this time Microsoft is merely sneaking unwanted web apps onto my PC — and using my Windows 10 Start Menu as free advertising space. Did I mention that icons for Microsoft Office apps have magically appeared in my Start Menu, even though I've never once installed Office on this computer?

My new Start Menu contains shortcuts to Microsoft apps I've never installed
Screenshot: Sean Hollister/The Verge
These aren't full free copies of Office, by the way. They're just shortcuts to the web version you could already access in any web browser of your choice, which double as advertisements to pay for a more fully featured copy.

Because they're web apps, it's not like they take up any space on my computer, and I don't really mind them in my Start Menu. They're among the least offensive bloatware I've seen, and I never really look at the Start Menu anyhow — my taskbar and search bar have long been enough for me.

These web apps are barely an annoyance, but think about the bigger picture
Nonetheless, they're the latest proof that Microsoft doesn't respect your ownership of your own PC, the latest example of Microsoft installing anything it likes in a Windows update up to and including bloatware, and the latest example of Microsoft caring more about the bottom line than whether a few people might lose their work when Windows suddenly shuts down their PC. Luckily, I didn't lose any work today, but a friend of mine recently did:

Microsoft seems to think our computers are free advertising space, a place where it can selfishly promote its other products — even though they were told roundly in the '90s that even bundling a web browser was not OK. Now, they're bundling a browser you can't uninstall, and a set of PWA web apps that launch in that same browser. (Yes, they fire up Edge even if you've set a different browser as default.)

As I've argued previously, decisions like this undermine the one *good* argument Microsoft actually has for mandatory updates — that they provide important security patches that keep computers (yours and others) safe. That's a harder argument when the most visible difference after a new update is an attempt to make more money!

Like *ZDNet* veteran Microsoft reporter Mary Jo Foley notes, this isn’t just an experiment happening to some Windows Insiders. I’m not signed up with the Windows Insider program on this PC. The company hasn’t deigned to respond to Foley’s requests for comment yet, but let’s see if that changes next week.

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