

I Sold a Chrome Extension but it was a bad decision

Summary: I sold one of my Chrome extensions to an unknown developer for a 4-figure deal. Not bad for a piece of code that has taken an hour to write but some existing users of the add-on aren't very pleased. Here's why. By Amit Agarwal.

When Google decided to pull the plug on Google Reader, I quickly made the switch to Feedly (<http://www.labnol.org/internet/feedly-tips/28078/>) since it was (and still is) the best alternative (<http://www.labnol.org/internet/google-reader-alternative/27918/>) to Google's RSS Reader. The one important piece that Feedly did not offer was a Chrome extension (<http://digitalinspiration.com/google-chrome>) that would let users subscribe to RSS feeds on any web page with a click.

Since the extension was something that I needed for my own workflow, I wrote one (writing a Chrome extension (<http://www.labnol.org/software/create-chrome-apps-extensions/27958/>) is easy) and also published it to Google Chrome store (<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/add-to-feedly/ejkjleifeeaccajkekdcckflfpnoen?hl=en>). The last time I checked my Chrome developer dashboard, the extension had gained 30000+ users on Chrome.

Google Chrome Extensions – The New Business Model


One morning I got an email from someone (I tried Googling her name (<http://www.labnol.org/internet/find-person-by-email-address/13913/>) but it returned no results) asking me if I would be interested in selling the Feedly Chrome extension. It was a 4-figure offer for something that had taken an hour to create and I agreed to the deal. I had no clue about the buyer and was also curious to know why would anyone pay this kind of money for such a simple Chrome extension.


The extension was sold, they sent the money via PayPal and I transferred the ownership of the extension to a particular Google Account. It was a smooth transition.


A month later, the new owners of the Feedly extension pushed an update to the Chrome store. No, the update didn't bring any new features to the table nor contained any bug fixes. Instead, they incorporated advertising into the extension.

These aren't regular banner ads that you see on web pages, these are invisible ads that work the background and replace links on every website that you visit into affiliate links. In simple English, if the extension is activated in Chrome, it will inject adware into all web pages.

User Reviews English ⌵ Helpful Recent

 Andrew Crookston 4 days ago ★★★★★
Didn't realize I had this installed until IT INJECTED ADS ON RANDOM WEBSITES!
Spam. Avoid using this plugin!!!!
Was this review helpful? Yes No [Mark as spam](#)

 Alan Tonge 5 days ago ★★★★★
Suddenly ads popping up. For a button, this unacceptable.
Was this review helpful? Yes No [Mark as spam](#)

 Ana Tapia 4 days ago ★★★★★
Used it for months with no problem then it started to inject ads onto web pages. I found an option for the ads and turned it off but it still kept showing ads. It's terrible, uninstalling.
Was this review helpful? Yes No [Mark as spam](#)

The user ratings of the Chrome extension are headed south.

Adware Laden Chrome Extentions

No surprises, the ratings of the extension have recently plummeted at the Chrome store but the business model of the buyer is simple – they buy popular add-ons, inject affiliate links and the bulk of users would never notice this since the Chrome browser automatically updates add-ons in the background. And there are no changelogs either.

The extension does offer an option to opt-out of advertising (you are opted-in by default) or you can disable them on your own by blocking the superfish.com and www.superfish.com domains in your hosts file (<http://www.labnol.org/software/browsers/block-websites-from-kids-home-computer/1602/>) but quietly sneaking ads doesn't sound like the most ethical way to monetize a product.

It was probably a bad idea to sell the Chrome add-on and am sorry if you were an existing user. Meanwhile, you can switch to the Feedly bookmarklet (<http://www.labnol.org/software/rss-extensions-bookmarklets/27929/>) for the adware-free experience.

Written by Amit Agarwal (<http://www.labnol.org/about/>), personal technology columnist and founder of Digital Inspiration. You can follow him (<http://www.labnol.org/follow/>) on the social web or sign up for the email newsletter (<http://www.labnol.org/newsletter/>) for your daily dose of how-to guides (<http://www.labnol.org/tag/guide/>) and video tutorials (<http://www.youtube.com/user/labnol>).

1. How to View the Source Code of a Chrome Extension (<http://www.labnol.org/software/view-source-of-chrome-extension/21284/>)
2. How to Install Extensions from outside the Chrome Web Store (<http://www.labnol.org/internet/install-chrome-extensions/25817/>)
3. Feedly Bookmarklet for Subscribing to RSS Feeds (<http://www.labnol.org/software/rss-extensions-bookmarklets/27929/>)
4. Open Websites in Google Chrome from Firefox (<http://www.labnol.org/internet/open-firefox-websites-in-google-chrome/4422/>)
5. Write a Chrome App for your Website in 5 Minutes (<http://www.labnol.org/software/create-chrome-apps-extensions/27958/>)
6. Launch Chrome Apps Without Opening a New Tab (<http://www.labnol.org/software/launch-chrome-apps/18391/>)
7. Google Chrome Ads Appear in Indian Newspapers (<http://www.labnol.org/india/google-chrome-ads-in-indian-newspapers/17830/>)
8. How to Add Websites as Apps in Google Chrome (<http://www.labnol.org/software/websites-as-chrome-apps/20520/>)
9. What's the Business Model of Tech Companies? (<http://www.labnol.org/internet/business-model-of-tech-companies/26041/>)
10. Confirm Before Closing Multiple Tabs in Chrome (<http://www.labnol.org/software/confirm-chrome-close-all-tabs/18489/>)

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