

# UnderstandIT

From **MAY DAY CONSULTING LIMITED** in association with **FACILITATORS UK**

A publication designed to inform and enable businesses to understand the implications, costs and advantages of using Information and Communications Technology. Distributed through Chambers of Commerce.

## A NEW YEAR – A NEW START

Welcome to the first edition of *Understand IT* for 2004. This edition marks the beginning of a new era for *Understand IT*, which has been published continually since 1997.

For the past two years, *Understand IT* has been circulated primarily in electronic format:

- A copy in Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format posted on the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce web site (from where it could be downloaded);
- A copy posted on the Facilitators UK web site;
- Copies in either Microsoft Word or PDF format e-mailed directly to subscribers.

However, from feedback received and analysis of market research, we have concluded that the penetration of *Understand IT* has not been at the same level as when it was distributed in paper copy only.

It has therefore been decided that in future, we will publish *Understand IT* in both electronic **and** printed copy formats to meet the needs of all of our readers. The publication will also soon have its own web site – go to:

<http://www.understand-it.co.uk>

Here you will find the latest edition, together with copies of the publication dating back to 1997.

A further change is that a senior member of the Facilitators UK partnership has taken over the creation and publication responsibilities of *Understand IT*. May Day Consulting Ltd is an ICT consultancy, based in Aberdeen and has considerable experience in providing a wide range of ICT consultancy services for its clients.

As you can see from the slightly amended banner, *Understand IT* is now published by May Day Consulting, but in close association with the Facilitators UK partnership.

Both May Day Consulting and Facilitators UK believe that the new arrangements will lead to increased circulation and offer an improved service in delivering ICT help, advice and tips in a straight-forward way, eliminating or adequately explaining any ICT related jargon along the way.

**Happy New Year – and to our Chinese readers –  
Gong Xi Fa Cai – the coming year is the year of the  
Monkey.**

## SUPPORT REPRIEVE FOR WINDOWS '98

Microsoft has recently announced a reprieve for the ageing Windows '98 operating system software. It had previously announced that support for the operating system would be withdrawn from January 16.

However, many users, particularly in some east European countries, are still using '98 extensively and Microsoft is bowing to user pressure. It is also believed that they (Microsoft) are concerned that if they switch off support completely at this time, then this might encourage more users to move to the "open source" Linux operating system that is virtually free.

The support for '98 is being extended until June 2006, although support will be chargeable. They will also continue to issue software "patches" to resolve any security related issues that may arise.

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## COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY AND HOME ENTERTAINMENT

A battle, or perhaps a war of attrition, is quietly taking place within the computing and entertainment industries. The outcome of this activity is likely to be a revolution in the home and business environments.

Firstly, the computing industry, principally in the shape of Microsoft, has made no secret of its vision of the computer (controlled by a Microsoft operating system, of course) becoming the centre of the evolving home entertainment systems of the future. Microsoft is developing software that will allow a PC to play virtually any music or video and display it on a conventional TV. True, much of this can already be done, but Microsoft sees the closer integration of their computing platform and home entertainment – improved or "seamless" connectivity - as the next big step in technology.

Similarly, the consumer electronics giants like Toshiba, Sony and others are beginning to build conventional computer technology into their entertainment and other systems. For example, Toshiba recently developed a disk drive that is 1.8cm in diameter (about the size of a £1 coin) that can store 40Gb (gigabytes) of information. It is this drive that is found in the Apple iPod.

Such computer hard drives are now being installed in other hand-held "media" players, digital video recorders, digital camcorders and mobile phones.

## WIRELESS BROADBAND

The new regulatory authority Ofcom has recently announced the award of licences to ISPs (Internet Service Providers) for the provision of high-speed broadband Internet access using UHF radio frequencies.

This technology will enable both residential users, but more importantly, businesses located in remote or rural areas of the UK, to have access to the Internet at speeds of 1Mbps (One million bits per second). This is typically much faster than ADSL broadband service currently being used by increasing numbers of residential and business users.

A nominal licence fee is being proposed by Ofcom, although the service providers will need to recover the cost of hardware, which will consist of radio transmitter and receiver equipment.

The service is expected to become available in early April 2004, with ISP services being rolled out over the coming 12 months.

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## MICROSOFT WORD – USING FORMS

Microsoft Word has a useful facility for creating forms that can be used for distribution and completion either conventionally in hard copy, or electronically (by e-mail for example) or for publishing on a web site.

You create a form just as you would create any other document in Word, using tables and any formatting that you wish. However, with a form, you can insert form “fields”. These are used to control what and where information is entered into the form – typically for electronic completion. There are three types of “field” that you can include in a form:

Text field – this can be formatted in terms of its length and style etc.

Drop-down list – this is used to ensure that the recipient only enters one of a set number of responses, that you provide

Check box – this is a simple box that is used for a yes/no type of response.

Once you have created your form using all the usual features of word, you insert the appropriate fields. You can then customize or format each field by double-clicking on it. You can even get the field to display default entries if you wish, and even execute a macro on entering or exiting each field (but this is a little too advanced for this brief overview!). The form can then be protected from modification using the protection button. It can then be printed or circulated electronically.

There is a FORMS toolbar that provides all the facilities for creating your form and inserting and formatting each of the fields. To display the toolbar, go to VIEW, TOOLBARS and check the FORM toolbar to display it.

One other related feature of this toolbar is that it has a button for inserting a table, where you enter the number of rows and columns into a dialogue box. What is innovative is the additional button for actually drawing a table using the cursor (which changes to a pencil) when the facility is being used. This is useful for adding ad hoc tables and/or additional cells to a form to assist with fine-tuning the layout.

For assistance using Word or any of its features, contact Alan Finch of May Day Consulting on 01224 697457.

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## Ofcom – THE NEW REGULATOR

On December 29, 2003, a new regulatory body – Ofcom assumed responsibility of five “legacy” organisations, viz:

- Oftel – Office of Telecommunications;
- Broadcasting Standards Commission;
- ITC – Independent Television Commission;
- Radio Authority;
- Radiocommunications Agency.

The new authority will have wide-ranging responsibility covering all areas of telecommunications (terrestrial, radio and satellite), Television and Broadcasting standards, and their remit (as taken from their web site) is as follows:

- Balance the promotion of choice and competition with the duty to foster plurality, informed citizenship, protect viewers, listeners and customers and promote cultural diversity;
- Serve the interests of the citizen-consumer as the communications industry enters the digital age;
- Support the need for innovators, creators and investors to flourish within markets driven by full and fair competition between all providers;
- Encourage the evolution of electronic media and communications networks to the greater benefit of all who live in the United Kingdom.

For more information, visit the Ofcom web site at:

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk>

We wish to acknowledge with thanks that some of the material contained within this publication has been sourced from Computer Weekly.

May Day Consulting Limited and your Chamber of Commerce have endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this publication, but do not accept liability for any inaccuracy or omission contained within it.

Information on other Business and IT services can be found on our web site at: <http://www.maydayconsulting.co.uk> or by calling Alan Finch on 07968 262079.

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