

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.

WELCOME TO A BRAND NEW YEAR

Welcome to a brand new year and the latest edition of *Understand IT*.

We have now been publishing *Understand IT* for 10 full years, and we regularly receive extremely positive feedback. We will continue to provide impartial, jargon-free information and advice on every aspect of ICT and its effective application in a business environment.

If you have any specific areas that you would like us to explore further, or have any comments, positive (or negative) then please drop an email to info@maydayconsulting.co.uk and we will do our best to respond.

Incidentally, you can see online all articles published in every edition of *Understand IT* since 1998 (earlier years are being added to the database soon), by visiting our web site, devoted entirely to *Understand IT* at:

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

2006 – THE YEAR OF BROADBAND?

We have covered the subject of Broadband Internet services before, but we believe that during 2006, Broadband in its various flavours will become even more pervasive than ever. We anticipate that costs will continue to drop in real terms, whilst the speed and reliability will continue to increase significantly.

Towards the end of 2005, the top speeds available from a variety of suppliers ranged from 4 to 10Mbps (millions of bits per second), which makes the original 256/512Kbps offering, when broadband first appeared, pale into insignificance.

During 2006, trials of ADSL2+ by BT will continue, promising speeds of up to 24Mbps. However, due to the “unbundling” of the local telephone cabling infrastructure, one supplier, UK Online, is already able to offer the new technology.

The “unbundling” philosophy now allows competing network providers to access to BT exchanges so that they can install their own equipment without waiting for BT to upgrade theirs.

However, users will experience the same problems with ADSL2+ as with the original ADSL service – that is, the distance from the serving exchange and the quality of the line.

It is estimated that only 5% of the population will be within the necessary parameters to achieve the maximum rated speed of the new services. The “digital divide” therefore still exists for this and simple economic reasons. Cutting edge service providers are likely to concentrate on urban population areas where the market is strong. Those in rural areas will, once again, have to wait.

On a more positive note, Broadband will continue to become more available in rural areas, and affordable to most businesses and private individuals. In addition, the services and applications to make use of the increased bandwidth will continue to flourish.

If you need advice or help in implementing broadband, please call Alan Finch on 01224 697457.

BRITISH GALILEO SATELLITE NAVIGATION SYSTEM

The UK is now heavily involved in developing a global satellite positioning system (GPS). Until now, the US has dominated this area of technology, but that has now changed with the UK providing the satellite technology to a European equivalent GPS. The project (being funded jointly by the European Space Agency and the EU), will deploy a network of satellites around the globe, providing pin-point positioning accuracy (10 times more accurate than the US system) anywhere on the planet.

The first British designed satellite in the Galileo deployment program was successfully launched in early January and transmission testing is in progress.

The objectives of the project are not just to provide the global coverage, but more about the enabling infrastructure. In other words, it is not navigation for navigation’s sake, but to provide the platform upon which many new and innovative services will be based.

For example, these could include mobile Internet access to any point on the planet, a “guardian angel” service for locating and keeping track of children, delivery of multimedia services to tourists equipped with GPS-capable mobile phones or PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants). The possibilities are endless and the UK is poised to be a leader in developing the applications that can use the new service provided by Galileo.

For any entrepreneurs out there – we suggest you start brainstorming to determine what opportunities you can see for potential new services.

ENHANCED WI-FI STANDARDS AGREED

A new standard specification for the next generation of wireless devices has recently been agreed by a disparate group of interested parties.

This now paves the way for the development of devices that are capable of communicating at 600Mbps (11 times faster than the current fastest devices). For those who are technically minded, the new standard will be known as IEEE specification 802.11n.

SKYPE INTRODUCES NEW FACILITIES

The voice-over-IP company, Skype has recently released the latest version of its PC software – version 2.0. This release includes the ability to hold video conversations if your computer is fitted with a webcam. The new version can be downloaded from:

<http://www.skype.com>

Another innovation that they are currently beta testing is SKYPE-IN. This facility is a cost-option that enables you to set up a “virtual” telephone number in any one of a number of countries. You may then publicise this number, and any telephone user anywhere in the world can call it and the call will be routed directly to the Skype feature on your PC, wherever you may be. The advantages of this are:

- You can have a telephone presence in any one of the countries currently supported
- Your correspondents in that country can call you at the cost of a local call (with the international portion of the call being free, as it is routed via your existing internet connection)

Skype is offering this service for a modest €30 subscription per year (about £20), and you can pick a number from a list of available numbers in each country. Currently, they are offering numbers in the following countries:

UK	Denmark
United States	Finland
France	Poland
Germany	Estonia
Sweden	Hong Kong

One obvious potential downside to this service is that you will need to have your computer up and running and be online to receive calls. However, if you have broadband, then this should not be a problem. To help with this, Skype are also providing (for free) a Voice Mail facility (which they will probably charge for when the beta testing is completed).

WI-FI MEETS MOBILE TELEPHONY AND VOICE OVER IP (VOIP)

The convergence of different new technologies over the coming year will bring a range of innovative possibilities.

Take WiFi (short range radio networking), a new range of mobile telephones, and VOIP.

A number of manufacturers have now begun developing new mobile phones that can communicate not only via the conventional cellular radio networks, but also with WiFi radio hotspots.

Couple this with integrated Skype (see previous articles in *Understand IT* on Skype) software, and the mobile devices will be able to

- surf the Internet at much faster speeds
- make regular cellular phone calls
- communicate with other Skype users for free over the Internet using VOIP, and even with regular telephone users by using the Skype-Out facility (where a small cost is involved).

Watch this space for more news on integration of technologies.

MS OUTLOOK AND RULES

For those of you who continue to suffer from Spam mail (is there anyone who isn't?), Microsoft Outlook has two features that can help:

- Junk Mail facility
- Rules

The first facility enables you to mark specific email addresses as “blocked” such that any email received from that sender is automatically placed in your Junk Mail box for later deletion.

The Rules feature however is more comprehensive, and enables you to specify what actions you wish to take on any item of mail that arrives in your inbox. You can therefore have mail from specific senders or on specific subjects either deleted or placed in separate folders within your Outlook mailbox.

You can find the Rules feature under TOOLS and RULES & ALERTS. Simply click on NEW RULE on the RULES tab in the dialogue box and the wizard will take you through the various options for deciding the criteria and actions to undertake when a particular piece of e-mail arrives. This can include trapping mail items containing specific (often unmentionable) words and deleting those messages immediately.

We wish to acknowledge with thanks that some of the material contained within this publication has been sourced from Computer Weekly, PC Pro, BBC and other reputable sources..

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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