

UnderstandIT

From **MAY DAY CONSULTING LIMITED** in association with **Facilitators International LLP**

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 new year, and a new decade from all at **May Day Consulting** and **Facilitators International LLP** who are jointly involved in creating and publishing *Understand IT*. This is our 15th full year of publication, and we sincerely hope that 2010 will prove to be successful and financially rewarding for us all, and last but not least, see the end of this recession!

BROADBAND TAX

The Government's plans to impose a tax on telephone lines have been published in a Treasury consultation paper, which has thrown up some surprising anomalies.

The tax is intended to fund the upgrade/expansion of the internet broadband infrastructure in the UK and was mooted in the "Digital Britain" report published last year. It will be £6 per year on each telephone line. However, the implementation detail that is now emerging shows that many residential homes will end up paying more than multi-national corporations!

The treasury consultation white paper published this month can be downloaded here:

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/consult_landlineduty.pdf

It indicates that the planned tax on individual lines does not take into account that most large corporations have multiple lines in most cases delivered via a single fibre optic link that will attract only one 50p per month charge.

On the other hand, a residential customer or small business with multiple conventional copper telephone lines will be paying 50p per month for each line. This means that potentially, a private home or small business with 2 or more lines will pay more than large corporations with a single fibre connection to the network.

It is further revealed that inactive lines terminating in a home or business premises will also be taxed. In other words, if the telecommunications supplier has provided 30 lines to a particular premise, but only 10 are actually in use, then that customer will be taxed on all 30 lines!

These proposals are clearly inequitable and it is anticipated that changes will have to be made to these proposals before they are implemented. The deadline for responses to the consultation paper is February 12, 2010, and can be submitted in writing or via email. Details are given in the white paper.

ANOTHER VULNERABILITY IN INTERNET EXPLORER (IE) – MS UNDER PRESSURE

When national governments feel that they must issue public statements to their populations requesting that they stop using a particular product because of security flaws, then the supplier of that product would appear to be in deep water.

This is what has happened during the past week, when yet another, potentially serious flaw was found in IE. Both the German and French governments issued warnings to its citizens to be aware of these problems and to switch to another browser. Two major companies, Google and Adobe were both affected by this vulnerability. Compounding the concern, details of how to exploit this vulnerability have been posted openly on the Internet for anyone to mimic.

In response, Microsoft suggested that the situation could be resolved easily by changing the IE browser security setting to high. However, at this setting, functionality would be seriously limited on many sites, and others would be blocked completely.

In view of this unprecedented criticism, Microsoft has issued an urgent update (see MS knowledgebase article MS10-002, 21/01/2010) to Internet Explorer that will seal this "hole" in the software that could potentially allow miscreants to run malicious code on a victim's PC. Normally, MS issues updates on a particular date each month, but in this case, they have been forced to produce and issue a patch immediately.

Microsoft has stressed that the problems experienced thus far are only with IE version 6, and are suggesting very strongly that all users upgrade immediately to Version 8, which is considerably more secure. Experts have responded by saying that all versions of IE are potentially affected, and further that NO browser is 100% water-tight.

The continuing discovery of these "vulnerabilities" which appear to occur with increasing regularity, does make one wonder if it is not time to move elsewhere. Mozilla Firefox appears to have been the major beneficiary of these security flaws in IE. It is estimated that Firefox now has approximately 40% of the browser market, close on the heels of Microsoft who now have a reduced market share of 45%.

Other popular contenders in the market are Opera and Google's own Chrome browser.

If you require help in this area, then please call Alan Finch on 01224 697457, as soon as possible.

MONTENEGRO DOMAIN NAME: .ME

As Internet top-level domain names go – the most familiar are probably .com, .co.uk, .net. However, in recent times, a number of small countries have been given their own, interesting top level domain name.

For example the small pacific island of Tuvalu was given .tv – this has been a boon to the media/broadcasting industry who have used this domain for registering their broadcast organisation.

Tonga – with its .to name has led to many registering domains like go.to or how.to. The latest in this line has been Montenegro, whose domain .me has proved to be very popular (and lucrative) for some who want to register their web site using the .me domain.

One enterprising individual is reported to have registered the URL www.willshemarry.me. It was initially for his own personal web site designed to publicise his wish for his fiancée to accept his marriage proposal. She apparently did, and the site was used to distribute information to guests about the wedding arrangements.

Now he has received offers to sell the domain name and will be holding out for the best offer. Some auctions have quoted prices of US\$10-15,000!

OFFICE 2010 AND OFFICE WEB APPS

Microsoft is in the process of final testing of the new Microsoft Office Suite – Office 2010.

The new Office 2010 suite will include:

Word	Excel	Powerpoint
Outlook	Access	Publisher
OneNote	Sharepoint	Communicator

A beta version has been under technical review since November 2009, with a full retail release in June 2010.

There will be one major change with this launch - at the same time as the launch of the commercial Office 2010, Microsoft also plans to launch its online web based version of Office 2010.

The Office Web Apps is a similar set of applications, but these are available online and can be accessed via any web browser. The online applications initially include only Word, Excel and Powerpoint. It is also believed at the time of writing that the functionality of the online applications is restricted when compared with the full PC-installed versions.

What is not clear at this point are the requirements for using Office Web Apps.

It was originally understood that these applications would be made available free of charge, and would be included as part of the Windows Live environment (which also includes Messenger and Live Mail – an upgrade to Hotmail). However, the Microsoft Office Web Apps website now suggests that to use them, you must first install the (free) Office 2010 beta client software on your PC! This is to enable the online versions to be seamlessly integrated with the PC client applications and may only be a requirement during the current beta/technical testing phase. Whether this means that ultimately, you will have to purchase the Office 2010 suite when the retail release is finally made available, we will investigate.

The growing trend towards offering online applications was covered in the April 2009 *Understand IT*. It is not only Microsoft that is moving in this direction. Google has Google Docs, which also offers the ability to create, edit and share documents online.

The major advantages of these online applications (apart from them being free – perhaps?) is that it was anticipated that you would not need to install multi-megabytes of software on your hard disk – neither will you have to update or upgrade them, since the software resides remotely on the producers' servers.

An even bigger advantage for many, particularly mobile users, is the ability to create documents online that can be shared with colleagues and others, and these documents can be accessed from anywhere in the world. Microsoft claims that their online Excel application can be shared simultaneously online with multiple users contributing to the document in real-time.

A word of caution however - Security issues are bound to be involved. With remote/mobile users accessing perhaps confidential documents that reside not within the company's (hopefully secure) environment, but on a third party server, and Microsoft's record with vulnerability of its applications, then this may be a consideration if tight security is a serious concern.

You can find out more about Microsoft's Office 2010 here:

<http://www.microsoft.com/office/2010/en/default.aspx>

And about Office Web Apps here:

<http://www.microsoft.com/Office/2010/en/office-web-apps/overview.aspx>

Finally, the Google Docs applications can be investigated by going here:

<http://www.google.com/google-d-s/intl/en/tour1.html>

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..

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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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