

# 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.

## BT BROADBAND SPEED INCREASES FOUR-FOLD

British Telecom (BT) recently announced that with effect from March 31<sup>st</sup>, the available speed of broadband connections will quadruple to 4Mbps (4 million bits per second). This speed will be available to 78% of their user population it says.

Other luckier users will be able to access the Internet at 6Mbps, whilst those users who are very close to their serving exchange may get as high as 8Mbps, compared with a maximum of 2Mbps now.

This still pales when compared with some of BT's rivals, who are currently offering 24Mbps, although as BT points out, this speed is only available to clusters of business users, typically in city centres.

BT says that over 5,000 of its exchanges, serving 99.6% of the UK population are being upgraded to offer the new services.

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## BT PC SECURITY CHECKING SERVICE

BT now have a very useful and relatively inexpensive security checking service designed to determine how secure (or vulnerable to attack) your computer systems are. The service is available to anyone, not just BT's own customers, providing your system(s) are running Windows 98 or above.

Aimed specifically at small businesses, the service does not require the attendance of a technician, since the tests are carried out remotely by a security technician. BT will access your computer system(s) remotely and perform comprehensive tests to access important information to gauge how secure they are.

The tests will take approximately 30 minutes, following which the technician will discuss his findings with you and potential solutions to any problems discovered. An easy to understand yet detailed report of about ten pages that provides an assessment of the PC's security and stability in various categories will then be emailed to you.

The service costs £50 for the first computer, then £25 for each subsequent system.

You can find out more and make an appointment for a check here:

<http://www.btbroadbandoffice.com/internetapplications/pcsecuritycheck?advertiserID=shakti&bannerID=LHN&campaignID=pcsecuritycheck>

## WEB 2.0

Some of the largest Wi-Fi "hotspots" in the country are now located in the City of London and Canary Wharf. These ubiquitous Wi-Fi zones are beginning to provide a glimpse of what is being seen by many as the next stage in evolution of the Internet (some are calling it Web 2.0) and spawning a new generation of innovative Internet based companies.

Unlike the Internet "dotcom" debacle of the 1990s, these new innovative companies are unlikely to make the same mistakes as their predecessors.

Almost 90% of laptops produced now have integrated Wi-Fi connectivity, as do many other items of technology including Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), mobile phones and even digital cameras!

The new "Web 2.0" will work on the basic premise that users in future will be truly mobile - permanently connected to the Internet - in the office, at home, or travelling (by car, bus, train and even in the air).

At the moment, we still think of "connecting to the Internet" or "using the web", whereas in future, this distinction will disappear and we will have to think more about when we are connected and when we are not. Similarly, we currently talk about installing software on our computer - in future, with net-based applications, we will simply use network applications - a subtle, but important distinction.

From a business standpoint, the ability to be in almost constant contact with existing and potential customers will enable many new business and personal services. It will also further revolutionise the way companies do business both internally and externally and force even greater competitiveness.

In such a world, it will be possible for customers to move from one supplier to another almost instantly by a few clicks on a laptop, PDA or mobile phone to obtain a better deal.

Those businesses that do not realise the shift in emphasis of customers of the future, and fail to move from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century will inevitably fall by the wayside.

If you feel that you do not fully appreciate how evolving technologies might affect your business model and would like an independent assessment of how to improve competitiveness in the future, call Alan Finch on 01224 697457 for a preliminary discussion on how May Day Consulting and Facilitators UK can assist.

## WEB 2.0 NETWORK APPLICATIONS

Following on the previous article, the advent of true mobility of computing with integrated Wi-Fi is also bringing with it new ways of working for the mobile worker.

Previously we have been used to working with software that has been installed on our laptops or other computing devices. These applications require regularly updating and take up a lot of memory and disk space. A new breed of applications is now appearing which are Internet based. One small example of these new services can be found at:

<http://www.writely.com>

This is an Internet based word processing system that allows you to create, edit, print and store word processing documents online. You can also download them to your computer or upload them from your favourite word processing package, including MS Word.

The advantages are perhaps obvious – there are no expensive programs to install or licence – you just use your normal Internet browser. Your documents are stored on-line, which means you can get to them whenever or wherever you are. You can also collaborate with others, on creating large complex documents and then email them to recipients.

Google, one of the Internet's largest companies has recognised the growing trend for online applications, since it recently purchased Writely. The service is now being moved to Google's systems. Registration for the Writely service is therefore temporarily suspended pending the completion of this migration process. However, you can pre-register by leaving your email address, and take a tour of the facilities.

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## WINDOWS AND OFFICE UPDATE

You may already be using Microsoft's Windows Update feature to automatically download updates for the Windows operating system (now published monthly) from the Microsoft web site.

Microsoft Office suite also has an update feature that works in the same way. You can now integrate the two into one update process. If you go to the Windows Update website (<http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>) you can opt to install the latest Microsoft update software.

Once installed, you will then receive automatic updates (assuming that you have configured the feature for automatic updating), for both Windows **and** the MS Office suite of programs.

## NOW SKYPE FOR BUSINESS

Recognising that Skype is becoming widely used within the business community, the company has now reconfigured the software for the business user.

The new package, called Skype for Business is aimed at small businesses, typically with 1 to 10 people, and includes additional features within the program to allow improved management of groups of users and multiple prepaid accounts.

For the uninitiated, Skype is a program that can be downloaded for free, and once installed, enables you to make and receive telephone calls over the Internet for free. Your computer does need a sound card, speakers and microphone or other dedicated Skype compatible telephone handset.

A dedicated web site has also been included in the new business orientated package, designed to provide support specifically for businesses. Find out more at:

<http://www.skype.com/business>

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## OUTLOOK MAIL FOLLOW UP FEATURE

Time Management courses tell us that you should pick up a paper only once from your in-tray and action it immediately, rather than put it down and go back to it later. In practice, this rarely actually happens and in-trays tend to over-flow, given time.

MS Outlook provides a facility for those who do not deal with their incoming email items immediately – how many of us actually do?

The feature is called Follow Up and can be found under the ACTIONS menu. First, select the mail item concerned. Then access this menu and you will be presented with a number of options. The first ones include the ability to assign different coloured flags to a message that you have previously highlighted (these coloured flags appear against the message in the right-most column). This is so that you can visually determine the priority for each, for example.

Further down the menu you will see ADD REMINDER. Select this item and a dialogue box will be presented. In this box, you can again assign a coloured follow up flag of your choice, but also an action (a number of options are available like REPLY, FORWARD or just READ).

More importantly, you can apply a DUE BY date and time to the action. Click on OK, and at the appointed date and time, Outlook will bring up the reminder to carry out the action you have assigned to that mail item. You can then mark the item COMPLETE.

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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