

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.

OFCOM ACTS ON BROADBAND CONFUSION

OFCOM, the media and telecommunications regulator has now published a Code of Practice to be used by service providers that is designed to give the unwary customer a benchmark with which to evaluate the many misleading sales claims made by some service providers. This move has followed growing discontent over the marketing of the plethora of services now on offer, specifically over the speed of such services that often fall far short of what is claimed.

Unfortunately, the code is voluntary, but it is reported that providers representing about 90% of the installed broadband services in the UK have signed up to the code, so it perhaps should be taken seriously.

In conjunction with the publication of the code, OFCOM has itself begun a massive monitoring exercise involving a large number of customers and taking many millions of samples of achieved broadband speeds (which as most of us know can vary immensely almost minute by minute).

The code concentrates on the accuracy of information provided to a customer at the point the service is ordered and provides for recourse in the event that the promised performance of a particular service fails to materialise.

We all hope that the service providers who have signed up (and who have to implement its conditions within 6 months), implement the code not only to the letter, but also in accordance with the intent and spirit. Perhaps we will all then be a little more confident that we are going to get what we were promised and are paying for!

However, the pages of IT history are littered with good intentions, many of which are never fulfilled. In the end, even after OFCOM has carried out its testing and the ISP's have continued to provide misleading sales information, then OFCOM still has the option of implementing a statutory code – perhaps something it should be doing now.

A full copy of the new voluntary Code of Practice can be found here:

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/telecoms/loi/copbb/copbb/>

If you need assistance in trouble-shooting your internet access service – whether it be problems with your service provider, or inadequate or unsuitable services to support your business needs, then May Day Consulting can help. Call 01224 697457.

SOCIAL NETWORKING – A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY?

There are many views about the role of Social Networking (the kind of networking involving online web site forums, and instant messaging etc.). Some business managers are now beginning to realize that maybe there is a business opportunity in using this technology rather than dismissing it out of hand.

Gartner, a major IT industry researcher has recently stated that in their view businesses can leap ahead of their competitors by combining social networking and customer relationship management to help them develop innovative products.

The opportunity lies in capturing informal customer comments about products, said David Cearley, research fellow at Gartner.

"This includes opinions, comments, descriptions, labels, preferences, observations, likes and dislikes, and predictions as raw material for building valuable information resources," he said.

The key advantage of this technology is that it can make customer patterns visible to the business over time, said Andrew McAfee, associate professor at Harvard Business School, on his blog.

Starbucks', for example, is using a social networking application to refine its products. It encourages customers to submit ideas to the mystarbucksidea.com website - an online suggestion box. Customers can discuss and vote for the best ideas, which are passed on to key decision-makers. They can get the kudos of seeing their idea put into action.

"Establishing a participation platform - the mechanism by which user contributions are pulled together - can reveal patterns and relationships and provide a shared repository of information that can deliver business value," said Cearley.

Gartner firmly believes that within 2-3 years, the ideas and social networking technologies and social software, such as Facebook and Myspace, will become part of mainstream business software.

Those who were weaned on technology, particularly those under the age of 28 by 2018 will inevitably influence the adoption of social networking type technologies within mainstream businesses. It is also inevitable that the future generations of business managers and their customers will use such channels of communication to help their respective organizations to become more successful.

Business managers now need a greater appreciation of such networks and the technologies that are now developing. They should be trying out some of the technologies themselves to identify where they could potentially help their businesses to become more customer focused and responsive.

Businesses can develop their competency with social networking software by implementing pilot projects to capture employee knowledge over the company intranet, for example, an employee suggestion styled application aimed at networking comments.

It is important however to assess whether the organisation's culture is suitable for using such technologies. Management buy-in is also essential and the development of a collaborative culture is also needed, and may be difficult to achieve.

May Day Consulting works closely with Facilitators International LLP in helping to assess and resolve some of the issues discussed briefly above. Should you require more information, please call Alan Finch on 01224 697457 for a consultation.

MS EXCEL – ADDING COMMENTS AND TRACKING CHANGES

A number of the many features contained within most of the Microsoft Office suite of products are some that are designed to provide the ability to collaborate with others, either locally or remotely, on the creation and updating of information contained in components of the suite.

Here we are going to discuss two features contained within MS Excel that help with collaboration. The two features are COMMENTS and TRACKING CHANGES. These two features are contained within MS Word also, but here we use Excel to demonstrate them.

If a number of people are working on a complex spreadsheet, then it is useful to add comments to the spreadsheet that can be read by others in the workgroup or collaborative group.

A comment is a small piece of text that is assigned to a particular cell in the worksheet to explain to others some aspect about the figures contained within the cell. Comments can be added easily, and are hidden, but their presence is indicated by a small red triangle in the upper right hand corner of the cell. Comments can then be read simply by passing the mouse cursor over the cell concerned. Each comment is then revealed, marked with the name of the person accessing the spreadsheet at the time the comment is created.

To add a comment to a cell, simply highlight the cell concerned and select INSERT and the COMMENT option. A box containing the name of the contributor is displayed and the comment text can be inserted.

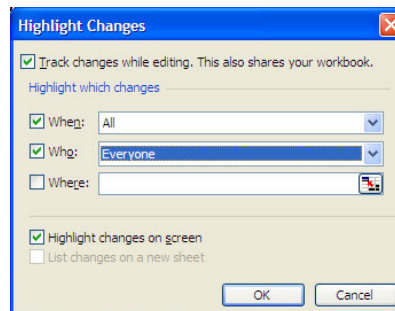
	A	B	C	D	E	F
1						
2	Analysis of current project costs and allocations					
3						
4	Project A		£73,860.00			
5						
6	Project B		£18,500.00			
7						
8	Project C		£110,400.00			
9						
10	Project D		£37,500.00			
11						
12	Total expenditure:		£240,260.00			
13						
14						
15	Partner contributions:					
16						
17	Partner A	57.50%	£138,149.50			

As soon as the cursor is moved, the comment box disappears. Comments can be read by anyone in the workgroup. Multiple comments can be assigned to a single cell.

A comment can be removed by selecting the cell concerned and right-clicking on it, to reveal a drop-down menu. One of the options on this menu is DELETE COMMENT. Selecting this removes the comment completely.

The second useful feature when collaborating on a spreadsheet is the TRACK CHANGES feature. This is useful for a team leader to track which changes have been made to the sheet and by whom.

To function, the feature has to be switched on by selecting TOOLS, TRACK CHANGES and then HIGHLIGHT CHANGES. The following dialogue box then appears and you can select to switch tracking on and to highlight changes by when they were created, by whom and where.



Once switched on, moving the cursor over a cell displays a text box similar to the comment box, but it contains the name of the contributor making a change to the cell, date and time of the change, and a summary of what the change was.

Tracking can be switched off, by un-checking the track changes box in the above dialogue.

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.

May Day Consulting Ltd

....stress free IT

9 Benbecula Road
ABERDEEN AB16 1FT
Tel: (01224) 697457

E-mail: info@maydayconsulting.co.uk
Internet: <http://www.maydayconsulting.co.uk>