

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 CODE OF PRACTICE ON PIRACY

Although many of the provisions in the Digital Economy Bill failed to make it into the final Act, it did empower the Secretary of State to disconnect users from the Internet for ignoring warnings about downloading copyright material. However, the Secretary of State has indicated that these powers will not be used at the moment.

Another provision in the Act, was the calling for the establishment of a Code of Practice (CoP) for ISPs when dealing with the issue of alleged piracy. Ofcom, the industry watchdog, has been tasked with developing and implementing the CoP, and a draft of the code has been published for discussion.

Controversially, the code will require ISPs to log the names of users and number of times they infringe the code. Copyright holders will have the right to request details from the list, so that they can identify serial offenders and decide when to take legal action.

The code does contain some safeguards against false accusations of infringement. Three warning letters will have to be sent to the identified users, and the letters must contain "...easy to understand information on the nature of the allegations made against the subscriber and on what actions a subscriber can take, both to challenge the allegation and to protect their network from being hijacked for the purposes of infringement."

The code is expected to come into force in early 2011, and will only apply to larger ISPs (defined as those with over 400,000 user accounts). This will initially include BT, Talk Talk, Virgin Media, Sky, Orange, O2 and the Post Office.

The Open Rights Group (ORG) has joined forces with the Communications Consumer Panel Consumer Focus, Which, and Citizens Advice, to draw up a set of principles they believe should govern the CoP. They have stated clearly that sound evidence must be produced before any action is taken and that users must have the right to defend themselves.

The fear of false accusations arises from recent activity by a self-styled legal practice that has been harassing innocent users by threats of legal action unless specified compensatory payments are made. The actions of this organisation which have been based on ill-defined information, has been likened to blackmail. In many cases, the so-called offenders have been found to be completely innocent, but the process of defending themselves has been difficult, time consuming and expensive. This situation should not continue.

FACEBOOK PRIVACY CONTROVERSY

Since Facebook is being used more and more by businesses both large and small to provide a means of communication, it is appropriate to add a few words about the furore that has erupted in recent weeks regarding the complexity of the controls available in Facebook to protect information about you or your business.

Facebook has now been forced to make significant changes, due to rising public pressure, which has included a much publicised campaign, including threats by many thousands of current users to delete their accounts simultaneously on May 31st.

In response to this pressure, Facebook has made some significant changes to the privacy controls, and these changes are being rolled out as this copy of *Understand IT* goes to press.

The BBC has produced a simplified set of screen shots on their web site that help to explain the changes. This can be found here:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/10168539.stm>

The changes being implemented may still not satisfy the most vociferous of critics, but time will tell.

MOZILLA THUNDERBIRD EMAIL CLIENT

Those of you who use a PC-based email client program to access and download mail from their web mail server may be using Microsoft Outlook, Eudora, or any one of a number of other client programs.

If you are a user of the Mozilla Firefox Internet browser, you may be aware of the Thunderbird email client from the same Mozilla stable. If not, then we suggest it might be useful to take a look at this FREE program that in our view competes credibly in most respects with MS Outlook.

Thunderbird is "open source" software, which means that the source code has been published for others to develop, modify and enhance the basic program and its features (within a relatively controlled environment).

The basic program is primarily a full-function email client that can retrieve mail from any number of email services and either place them in individual inboxes, or consolidate them into one single inbox, depending on your needs. Accounts can be individually secured by password, plus a high-level system password for access to the program itself.

Mail can be automatically or manually filed in folders that can be created at will, sorted, filtered and have tags or categories attached for easier retrieval and handling of spam or junk mail etc.

The integrated address book is a fully functioning database that can contain most of the information you would probably need to maintain about any particular contact. One very useful feature in the address book (that is not available in Outlook) is the ability to click a single button to display a map (using Google Maps) of the location of your contact.

Basically, Thunderbird has most of the features of MS Outlook's mail component (with minor exceptions).

Where the product gains (apart from being free) is that since it is open source, many developers have written a large number of "Add-ins" that extend the functionality of the product, enabling you to customize the program to an extremely high degree to your specific needs.

Significantly there are add-ins that include calendars, event management, tasks etc. (an Add-in is called "Lightning"), as well as themes to change the appearance of the basic product, plus many other niche features that you may not need but are there if you do. Each Add-in can be selected, downloaded and integrated into the base program very easily.

Thunderbird (the latest version is 3.0.4) can be downloaded from here:

<http://www.mozillamessaging.com/en-GB/thunderbird/>

MOBILE DEVICE ENCRYPTION

In many past editions of *Understand IT*, we have raised the issue of security of company information and highlighted the risks associated with the use of mobile devices – for example, laptop computers, PDAs, mobile phones and of course the ubiquitous thumb drive (or pen drive or flash drive – there are numerous descriptions being used for these devices).

The accidental loss or malicious theft of many of these devices can potentially expose companies (and government organisations) to commercial or financial loss, compromise of the security of individuals and serious damage to reputations.

The ability to control the use of such devices is not an easy one, since their use is at the same time extremely beneficial to any organisation. However, security of the information held on them is essential, for obvious reasons. Encryption is the single, most effective way or ensuring that any information held on any device is kept secure.

There are many software solutions to providing encryption, and the selection of the most appropriate tool for any organisation would need a requirements study prior to any implementation.

However, we have recently become aware of one particular product that has been produced by a not-for-profit organisation – Truecrypt Open Source Foundation, based in Henderson, Nevada. The product this organisation has produced is (like Mozilla Thunderbird and Firefox) "open source" and therefore the result of joint development and enhancement by professional enthusiasts, without any commercial considerations – just a devotion to develop a quality product that will provide users with a professional solution at little or no cost.

This particular product (the latest version is 6.3a) is designed to provide strong encryption to information stored on any storage device - at this time it is only available for Windows (XP, Vista or Windows 7), Mac OS X and Linux operating systems. It provides the following features (as paraphrased from their web site):

- Creates a virtual encrypted disk within a file and mounts it as a real disk.
- Encrypts an entire partition or storage device such as USB flash drive or hard drive.
- Encrypts a partition or drive where Windows is installed
- Encryption is automatic, real-time (on-the-fly) and transparent.
- Allows data to be read and written as fast as if the drive was not encrypted.
- Provides plausible deniability, in case an adversary forces you to reveal the password.

One of its interesting features, which is described in some detail in their online documentation, is the concept of plausible deniability. In other words, the software allows the creation of a file or folder within a file or folder. The top level file or folder can be secured with a password and can contain quasi-confidential information that a criminal might try to extract from you using some threat. The password to this folder can then be released to satisfy their demand. However, a further volume, folder or file can be maintained within the first level folder that the criminal will not be aware of or even be visible without the necessary second-level password.

You can find out more about this product here:

<http://www.truecrypt.org/>

If you require advice regarding the evaluation, or implementation of any encryption technologies, then please contact Alan Finch on 01224 697457.

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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