

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.

MOBILE COMPUTING

This month, we have decided to provide you with some useful information about mobile computing.

As with many items of technology, components are continuously being scaled down in physical size. The early laptop computers were not exactly portable - more "luggable". Notebook computers are now becoming smaller and thinner, some weighting only 1 or 2Kg.

In the drive for reduced size, hand-held computers have also become quite popular, if not always user-friendly. They are now little larger than the largest mobile phone, and include a considerable array of connectivity features including USB connector, Infra-red (IR), Bluetooth and Wi-Fi radio. These can be used to connect to a desktop or Notebook computer for synchronisation of information, for example, using MS Activesync software designed for this purpose.

Microsoft introduced a version of Windows in 2003 called Windows for Mobile (originally called Pocket PC). This has now been updated to Windows for Mobile Version 5. The operating system is a much reduced version of the popular operating system, and offers some of the features of the full operating system. There are also "pocket" versions of the Microsoft Office suite - Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Access and Outlook.

The problem with such small hand-held devices is that the very size often makes them unfriendly to use. The features in the operating system are often limited and do not mirror way the full versions function, which can be frustrating for those who are expecting them to be exactly the same.

In addition, the ability to type information is a major problem for some. Many devices have integrated keyboards that either take up part of the physical size, of slide-out from within the device. However, naturally, the keys are extremely small and sometimes difficult to use. Those that do not have keyboards employ touch-sensitive screens and use a "pen" or stylus to type on a "virtual" keyboard. This method of input is also difficult for some to use effectively.

Much of this is about to change, with the introduction of a new range of handheld computers, which, whilst compromising a little on physical size, provide all the functionality of a full-size notebook, but in a slim, hand-held form. The Ultra Mobile Personal Computer (UMPC) consists of a slim 9" X 5" X 1" case with 7" touch-sensitive screen and is light-weight (1.7lbs).

It will typically have a large hard disk (around 40Gb) and run a full version of the Tablet Windows XP operating system. Connectivity will be integrated, including all those listed above. The functionality will include all the features of a notebook plus media-player (for video and mp3 music) and phone (it may Skype VOIP software for making Internet phone calls).

Standard input is via the touch-sensitive screen and virtual keyboard, but it is possible to connect an external keyboard, but this compromises the "mobility" of the device.

A number of manufacturers are already offering or planning to offer UMPCs - in the UK the principle company at the moment is Samsung (Model Q1), launched in the US this month, but others will follow soon. Prices will be typically around £700-800.

For more information on UMPCs, visit the following sites:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/umpc/default.mspx>

<http://umpc.com/default.aspx>

http://product.samsung.com/micro_manuals/Q1/samsung_Q1.html

VIRUS PROTECTION FOR YOUR HANDHELD

For those who own and use a hand-held PC, particularly one running Windows Mobile, security is a particular issue that needs to be addressed. The very nature of a mobile device like a hand-held computer is its vulnerability to virus or other external attack.

Symantec produce a version of Norton Anti-virus software for use with handheld computers. Symantec Antivirus for Handhelds costs US\$39.95 and can be purchased and downloaded from the web site address below.

The product includes an annual update service for the virus definition database and provides real-time protection for your handheld from viruses and malicious code. It automatically scans your handheld after insertion of a storage card or following synchronisation with a desktop PC.

Visit the following site for more information:

http://www.symantec.com/home_homeoffice/products/overview.jsp?pcid=vp&pvid=savhh

MICROSOFT ALL IN ONE SECURITY PACKAGE LAUNCHED

In a previous edition of Understand IT, we discussed the plans by Microsoft to launch its own security software product.

It has now been formally named *OneCare* and includes anti-virus, spyware and firewall components, as well as facilities for tuning the performance of your computers and ensuring that they are kept up to date with the latest software downloads. The performance tuning component regularly backs up important system files to external storage and deletes old and unnecessary files that often clog up your computer.

The product is currently only available in the US (from June 1st) and will be rolled out in other countries over the next 12 months. It is not just a piece of software, but for the price of US\$49.95, includes online support and updates for 3 PCs for a 12 month period.

See Microsoft's Windows Live OnceCare web site at:

<http://www.windowsonecare.com/Default.aspx>

NEW MS WORD VIRUS

Microsoft is planning to release an emergency patch for their Word word processing package that has been targeted by a new virus.

Called Backdoor.Genwui, the virus is delivered as an e-mail attachment in the form of a Japanese Word document. An unwary recipient who opens the booby-trapped document will fall victim to the virus which opens up a backdoor on the PC. The virus then reports back to a website in Asia, telling it the computer has been compromised.

To date, only one company appears to have been compromised by the virus, but more are sure to follow.

To ensure your Windows XP and Office software is continuously up to date with security patches, please make sure that your windows update feature is switched on (so that updates are automatically downloaded) or use the MS Windows update service, which you can find at:

<http://update.microsoft.com/microsoftupdate/v6/default.aspx?ln=en-us> (Remember you will need to be using Internet Explorer Version 6 or higher for it to work!)

Updates to the Office suite of applications can similarly be found here:

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/officeupdate/default.aspx>

FUEL CELLS TO REPLACE LITHIUM ION?

We recently found a news report that Toshiba, amongst others have been working for a number of years on developing a more effective type of power supply for laptop/notebook computers.

Toshiba in particular appears to be getting close to producing a commercial product. It is using a fuel cell that doesn't store power as in conventional Lithium Ion batteries that are used in most modern laptops. Instead the fuel cells convert Methanol into electrical power by a electro-chemical process. The prototype fuel cell uses a small cartridge (100ml) of Methanol which can be topped up or replaced rather like a printer cartridge.

The advantages are that the power produced is instantaneous (it doesn't need to be charged first), and potentially can provide up to 10 hours of power from one cartridge.

The disadvantage at this time is the physical size of the fuel cell. However, Toshiba is working on reducing the size of components and hopes to produce a commercially available fuel cell by next year.

Beta testing of pre-production units by users has produced a variety of reactions, some of which are based largely on concerns about leakage of chemical and other safety issues. However, Toshiba seems confident of producing a commercial unit that is small and efficient.

Other companies also working on similar technology include Fujitsu, Samsung, Sanyo and Hitachi.

EXTORTION VIRUS CODE CRACKED

The encryption code used by a malicious virus to "lock" up an infected computer's files until a ransom is paid, has been cracked.

The ARCHIVEUS virus was first spotted in early May, but to date there has only been one victim, a nurse from the UK. The cracked password has been published as:

"mf2lro8sw03ufvnsq034jfowr18f3cszc20vmw"

E&O

We have an apology to make – in last month's edition, we had an article about Skype's online translation services. The heading of this article read **SKYPE ONLY TRANSLATION SERVICE**. This should of course have read **SKYPE ONLINE TRANSLATION SERVICE**. We apologise for letting this slight typo get through our usually high-quality proofreading process.

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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