

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.

MICROSOFT "MORRO" LAUNCH SOON

Microsoft is trying another approach to helping its millions of users to protect their computer systems from unauthorised and malicious attacks. Their objectives have been to try and reduce the negative effects of their being so successful in the operating system market. This has made them a target for every hacker and online fraudster on the planet. Many would, perhaps rightly, rather claim that this unenviable reputation has resulted from producing and releasing poor quality products.

Microsoft did produce their Windows Live OneCare service, but it failed to attract users away from mainstream products available from market leaders like Symantec and McAfee.

Their latest attempt is to produce a free product that they have code-named "Morro". Morro is a simple product, designed to tackle viruses, spyware, rootkits and Trojans only.

Naturally, the "paid-for" competition is claiming, with some justification, that users now want and need an all-in support service. Some of the competition have moved to providing not only protection from malware, but also a firewall, anti-phishing facility, identity protection and automated fine-tuning of the computer's resources (disk fragmentation, deletion of temporary files etc.).

No release date for Morro has yet been published as the product is undergoing final testing in-house, and release is expected in the second half of 2009. It is by no means clear that this latest attempt to help its huge user population struggle with protection of their systems will be successful. There are already other free utilities available that have gained an excellent reputation – AVG being a prime example.

CORPORATE SOCIAL NETWORKING

The use of social networking technologies in a business environment has been discussed previously and for some the idea has produced scorn and concern that using such technologies in business is inappropriate and inevitably leads to loss of productivity and could bring other undesirable problems to companies.

However, when banks and others in the financial services sector begin to start talking about using social networking, then perhaps it is time to take the idea a little more seriously!

A study group from within the Financial Services sector recently met to discuss how social networking can in fact help them to get closer to their customers. They are beginning to recognise that by forming communities of customers and using a more social environment to develop relationships they can learn more of what customers are expecting. Supporting customer services is an obvious area that could be just one area where this technology can be used. Already many large (mainly IT) organisations are using online "chat" facilities to handle support issues relating to their products and services. This has proved extremely successful.

Banks are not likely to start using Twitter or Facebook in a corporate environment, and any application of similar technology will need careful planning. However, financial services organisations will need to accept current trends and take advantage of the technology. This also applies to smaller businesses who can obtain considerable benefit from embracing this fast developing technology to develop customer relationships.

DIGITAL BRITAIN REPORT PUBLISHED

The final "Digital Britain" report, which was discussed briefly in the February 2009 edition of *Understand IT*, has now been published by the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) and Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR).

The 250-page report is intended to provide a roadmap or blueprint for the future UK economy based on digital telecommunications.

However, although some of the criticisms voiced earlier have been addressed, many still feel that some major opportunities have been missed or avoided.

The main concern in the IT industry is that the commitment to a universally available 2Mb Internet service is laudable, but doesn't go far enough. The provision of fibre optical links only "to the kerb" is felt to be a major failing, leaving the final section of the digital infrastructure in what is now extremely aged copper. By not committing to install fibre optical links to the desk (home or business) will result in a severe limit on the future potential available bandwidth.

Many other countries, some of them major competitors to the UK, are already implementing (some even close to launching) broadband services at 100Mbps to substantial percentages (75-100%) of their populations.

The technology they are using and their commitment to fibre to the desk will in future allow them to increase services to 1Gbps. The UK on the other hand will be limited to only 50Mbps. Here, it is likely that only new buildings will be equipped with integral fibre optical connections.

The other major criticism of the report is that it does not address business needs comprehensively. Stephen Carter (Minister for Communications, Technology & Broadcasting) admits this, citing that large organisations are sophisticated users of technology whereas the vast majority of businesses are small and their needs are addressed in the report in the same way as are residential users.

Despite the many criticisms, the final report is comprehensive, in some respects controversial, and is worth reading. A copy of the report (in Adobe PDF format) is available from:

<http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/digitalbritain-finalreport-jun09.pdf>

TECHNICAL TERMS EXPLAINED

Malware

This stems from **Malicious Software** and is a general term covering a range of small software programs propagated via the Internet and designed to infiltrate and cause nuisance, actual damage or disruption to computer systems. Examples of Malware are viruses, WORMS, Trojans, spyware and adware.

Spyware

See above – spyware is a term used to describe small programs that are placed on a computer system to monitor activity and report such activity back to the perpetrator. Cookies, which are regarded as many as Spyware often have a legitimate purpose in identifying you as a previous visitor to a particular web site and recognising the areas that you are interested in. Others do regard cookies as having a malicious intent, which can sometimes be the case.

Adware

These are also small programs that are surreptitiously installed on computer systems and which will play, display or download advertising material. Adware can be regarded in a similar manner to spyware.

Rootkits

This is a relatively new phenomenon in the hacker's arsenal of tools to compromise a remote PC. A rootkit is a program or set of small programs that are maliciously installed on a computer and which are designed to hide their presence and intent from the system's operating system.

In other words, the operating system, and often any security monitoring software, may be unaware of the processes being carried out "behind the scenes". Rootkits are now frequently used to enlist the PCs of unsuspecting users (called "Zombies") in distributing spam emails and launching denial of service attacks.

Key loggers

These are small programs that are secretly installed on a computer system (perhaps by a rootkit attack), and which record key strokes entered by the unsuspecting user and transmitted to the perpetrator. Key loggers are therefore able to capture information like User IDs, passwords, bank account, credit card, PIN and other security numbers.

STANDARD MOBILE PHONE CHARGERS!

At last, the mobile phone industry has demonstrated some common sense and agreed a standard battery charger design. Nokia, Sony Ericsson, Motorola, Apple, LG, Samsung, and Texas Instruments have all signed up to an EU-wide standard.

This means that it will no longer be necessary to purchase a new charger when you change manufacturer of your mobile phone, or even when you change models from one manufacturer. It also means that if you are away from home, staying with friends or whatever, you will be able to use any available mobile phone charger to re-charge your phone's battery.

The agreement to a standard will see new chargers appearing next year.

FIREFOX BROWSER VERSION 3.5

The Mozilla Foundation has recently announced that the new version of Firefox (version 3.5) will be launched officially on June 30th.

The latest version of the browser will include a raft of new features, most of which are "under the bonnet" and therefore unseen. However, one much awaited facility is the "private browsing" mode. In this mode, Firefox will not retain information on a number of things, including which web sites you have visited, the pages viewed, forum, or search bar entries, and file download details. It will also not save cookies or cache any files whilst using the private browsing mode.

This latest version of Firefox has been in gestation for a long time. Originally dubbed Version 3.1, so many new features have been added that Mozilla increased the release level number to 3.5. By the time you read this, it will be available for download.

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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