

# 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.

## **NEW GOVERNMENT PROMISES MORE AMBITIOUS BROADBAND SPEED**

The new Culture Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, has promised to provide the UK with the best broadband network in Europe. He described the previous Government's commitment to a universal 2Mbps broadband service as pitifully inadequate, and claimed that a more ambitious plan would generate up to 60,000 new jobs and contribute £18 billion to the country's GDP.

On the face of it, these are very bold words from a new Government – we wait with anticipation as to how the Government proposes to fund this new plan.

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## **WINDOWS SERVER AND WINDOWS XP – REDUCED SUPPORT IMMINENT**

Microsoft has warned users of the impending discontinuation or reduction of support and updates for some of their older operating systems with effect from July 13, 2010.

The operating systems affected are:

**Windows Server 2000** - will no longer be supported with security updates.

**Windows Server 2003** - will move from mainstream support to extended support, meaning it will see security updates but no new features

**Windows XP Service Pack 2** – Support in terms of new features will on July 13, 2010.

Since there are a large number of users still running Windows XP on their desktop PCs, it is particularly important that these users either:

- a) Upgrade to a new version of Windows (Vista or Windows 7)
- or
- b) Download and install Service Pack 3 (if you have not already done so). This will give you improved security protection, but Microsoft will no longer provide additional features to this version of the operating system.

If you are still running Windows XP, and are not sure whether you have Service Pack 3 (SP3) installed, simply go to CONTROL PANEL, select the SYSTEM icon and the version of windows and installed service pack will be displayed.

If you are still on Service Pack 2, then we recommend that you install Service Pack 3.

The best way to do this is to ensure that Windows Updates are configured to automatically download and install – this means that Service Pack 3 should already be installed.

If for some reason it has not, then you can go here:

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/help/learn-how-to-install-windows-xp-service-pack-3-sp3>

to manually download and install Service Pack 3.

Installing SP3 does not mean that Windows XP will continue to be supported, but it will at least have the latest security modifications applied.

In the longer term, users of Windows XP should seriously consider an upgrade – to Windows 7.

If you require assistance with any of the above processes, or maybe you require assistance in upgrading to a later version of Windows, then please call Alan Finch for assistance on 01224 697457.

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## **APPLE IPHONE 4 – DESIGN FAULT, TOO MUCH HYPE AND FREE PUBLICITY!**

It has been an embarrassing time for Apple, since the recent launch of the much-hyped iPhone 4. No sooner had it been launched, many users (some of whom had waited in line for many hours to purchase said device) reported problems with the signal quality.

The design of the new model includes a metal band around the edge of the device, which doubles as the antennae. Many users have reported that if the device is held tightly in the left hand whilst operating the touch screen, then the signal strength appears to weaken considerably.

Apple have investigated these claims, and announced that in fact the signal strength is not affected simply by holding the device in any particular way, but rather it is a software fault that is incorrectly displaying the signal strength on the touch screen. In other words, it is a graphics display problem and nothing more. A fix is being prepared to correct this problem.

In a further development, many in the industry are complaining of the high-profile given by media, both TV, newspapers and online, to anything with the Apple logo. Many new devices are launched in an average year, by many different companies, but none are given the treatment afforded to Apple. This would appear to be unfair free publicity!

## THE END OF EMAIL?

An interesting debate appears to have started on the proposition that email as we know it is going to die in the not too distant future.

The claim is that even though it is projected that the number of email accounts will increase from 2.9 billion today to 3.8 billion in 2014. At the same time, the number of registered accounts on social networking sites like Facebook will increase from the current 2.1 billion now to 3.6 billion in 2014. The theory is that an increasing number of mobile users are switching to using SMS, Instant Messaging or Social Networking sites like Facebook to communicate, at the expense of sending emails. This is seen by many, particularly the younger generation, as being old technology.

On the other hand, others are making the point that notwithstanding the inroads that social networking sites are making in the business arena, email will continue to grow and become an even greater benefit, particularly to business, replacing the traditional mail services.

We tend to agree with those who believe that email is here to stay for a very long time, albeit plagued by phishing attempts, potentially laden by viruses or Trojans, or just simply junk or spam. I guess this doesn't sound a very good supporting argument, but all these problems can be alleviated by using robust security software and taking sensible precautions. After all, SMS, Instant Messaging and social networking sites have also all been subjected to attack by fraudsters and hackers!

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## MS INTERNET EXPLORER – VERSION 6 - SECURITY THREAT

It has been reported that as many as 25% of users are still using the ageing version 6 of Microsoft's Internet Explorer. Whilst this is an improvement on the 34% reported in January 2010, it is still surprising that users are reluctant to upgrade to the latest version – particularly since it is free.

There has been widespread publicity about the vulnerabilities in IE Version 6, which has led it to become a prime target for hackers and fraudsters. If you are a user of Version 6 of IE, then you are encouraged to upgrade by going here:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/internet-explorer/default.aspx>

The upgrade is simple, takes only a few minutes, and will significantly improve the security of your PC when browsing the Internet.

If you are unsure of which version of IE you are currently using, then select HELP from the IE menu, and then ABOUT. This will display a panel showing the version of the browser you have installed.

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## CLOUD COMPUTING

In the February 2010 edition of *Understand IT*, we included an article on this subject and explained a little about the concept and its potential advantages. This month, we continue to explore what is perhaps likely to become one of the major topics of the year (or maybe longer).

Such are the potential benefits of Cloud computing that the entire IT industry seems to be buzzing with new developments, new services and an increasing number of organisations that are moving in the direction of this arguably new (is it?) concept in computing.

As explained in February, Cloud computing is the term that has been applied to a concept whereby computing systems and services are provided remotely on servers located within the Internet, rather than in-house on an organisation's own computing servers.

As with any new direction in IT technology, there are the proponents and the detractors. The proponents include finance or operations directors, who see major financial benefits in significantly reducing investment in in-house hardware, software, and of course personnel. If applications are moved to hosted services located off-site, without any impact on functionality or performance, then there are major financial savings to be made.

The detractors on the other hand are naturally concerned about security – should an organisation trust these Cloud based applications and storage of an organisation's data? They are also concerned about the impact on the IT work force – the loss of employment by the in-house IT staff. There is also an argument for being wary of dispensing with what could be many man-years of experience and trusting the support of an organisation's IT to third parties. However, the idea is no different from outsourcing because this is really what Cloud computing is all about.

Of course, Cloud-based applications and services will still need support, so the impact on the IT work force is not necessarily as dire as some would suggest.

This subject will be discussed in many more articles here and elsewhere in coming months. If you would like to discuss how Cloud computing could be applied to your organisation, then please call Alan Finch on 01224 697457 for advice.

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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