

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.

END OF THE ROAD FOR WINDOWS '98 AND WINDOWS ME VERSIONS

Microsoft have just announced that with effect from July 11, 2006 they will no longer provide support for the following versions of their Windows operating system:

Windows '98

Windows '98 Second Edition

Windows ME

The effect of this announcement is that Microsoft will no longer produce or issue security updates for these versions, nor will they offer support, other than continued availability of technical support articles available via the Microsoft knowledgebase of information. The withdrawal of support is in accordance with Microsoft's Lifecycle policy, details of which can be found here:

<http://support.microsoft.com/lifecycle/>

All users still using the above versions should seriously consider upgrading to the more feature-rich and more secure Windows XP version.

OFFLINE FILE SYNCRONISATION

Windows XP provides a very useful facility for those who work with a mobile device – handheld computer, laptop etc. The Offline File synchronisation facility ensures that you are always working with the most up to date version of any files that may need to reside on both your office server and your laptop.

Once the facility is enabled on the mobile computer, you simply select the files on the server (assuming you are connected to the network, and can access the files you need) and mark them to make them available off-line. Windows will then automatically synchronise copies of the file(s) selected at the times you stipulate (see below for detailed steps). NB: Some file types (program or MS Outlook .PST files for example) cannot be synchronised using this facility.

In order to configure this facility, you first need to enable it. On the mobile computer, do the following:

1. Go to Windows Explorer and select TOOLS and FOLDER OPTIONS
2. Select the OFFLINE FILES tab and enable Offline Files (see figure 1 below)

3. From this dialogue box you can also select when to synchronise your files i.e. when logging on or when logging off the computer (or both).
4. You might also want to add a shortcut to the offline files folder on your desktop so that you can find the files easily.

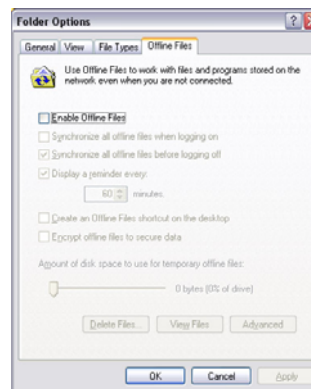


Figure 1

5. Click on OK, and return to Windows Explorer.
6. Now, navigate to the folder or file(s) on the network server or peer computer that you wish to make available to you when you are offline (disconnected from the network).
7. Select the folder(s) or file(s) and right-click with the mouse. In the drop-down menu, select the option MAKE AVAILABLE OFFLINE.

In future, depending on the settings you have made, the files identified will be synchronised automatically.

At any time, you can access the Offline Files Folder on your mobile device (using the desktop shortcut if you specified it). Opening the folder will produce a list of the synchronised files. Any specific file can be manually synchronised (assuming you are connected to the network) by selecting the file, right-clicking with the mouse and selecting SYNCHRONISE from the drop-down menu. The file will immediately be synchronised.

Finally, you can re-configure the Offline Files synchronisation settings at any time by selecting SYNCHRONISE from the TOOLS menu in Windows Explorer. The resulting dialogue box enables you to specify synchronisation for specific files/folders, network connections (in the event you have more than one), and for when logging on/off, when your computer is idle for specific periods of time, or at scheduled times.

MORE VULNERABILITIES IN WINDOWS AND MS OFFICE

Microsoft has just released another set of patches designed to fix vulnerabilities discovered not only in Windows itself, but also in Office products – specifically Outlook and perhaps more importantly Powerpoint.

MS is now issuing patches in one tranche each month – typically a Tuesday, which is becoming known as “patch Tuesday” within the industry.

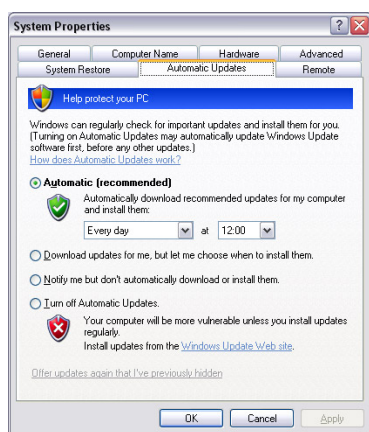
These latest vulnerabilities could all, potentially allow a hacker to gain access to your computer and take over control and run malicious programs.

The flaw discovered in Powerpoint has been particularly worrying, because in this instance the Trojan does not need the user to interact with it, by opening an untrusted attachment in an e-mail, for example. Its execution is totally automatic.

Please make sure that the Windows Update feature on your computer is switched on to ensure that these updates are automatically downloaded and installed as soon as they are released by Microsoft. Not to do this leaves you extremely vulnerable to such attacks.

If you are running Windows XP (Home or Professional versions) and do not know how to turn this feature on, then just follow these steps:

1. Go to CONTROL PANEL and double-click the SYSTEM icon.
2. Select the AUTOMATIC UPDATES tab and you will see the following dialogue box:



3. Make sure that the AUTOUPDATE radio button is checked. You can then specify how often and at what time, the system will check for updates, download them and install them in the background. Alternatively there are other options to select, but the first is the recommended option.

MCAFFEE LAUNCHES SEMI-ANNUAL SECURITY JOURNAL

McAfee, the anti-virus organisation has recently launched the first in what is being proposed as a semi-annual publication of a security journal. They claim that the new publication will not just be a list of vulnerabilities, fixes and statistics, but will cover some of the security issues head-on, providing analysis of the various threats that we all face and, as they put it “taking sides” when blame is to be apportioned.

The journal could be regarded as somewhat technical in nature, and not necessarily for the less IT literate. However, it does promise to provide more in-depth analysis of the threats that emerge almost daily.

You can view a copy, either online, or it can be downloaded (in PDF format), after providing some basic registration information, from here:

http://www.mcafee.com/us/threat_center/white_paper.html

There are also a number of other interesting White Papers available for download from the same address.

SECURITY OF YOUR WIRELESS NETWORK

The proliferation of wireless access devices has, as predicted, been immense over the past year. The ease of use and flexibility of having wireless access to the Internet, not only in small businesses, but in the residential market, has proved to be extremely popular and costs for such devices are falling dramatically.

It is now very easy to purchase a Wi-Fi broadband router, connect it to your broadband service and allow suitably equipped desktop PCs or laptops to access the Internet via this peer-to-peer network.

It is interesting to take a Wi-Fi enabled laptop computer around most streets in almost any city centre to discover how many wireless networks (hotspots) are in range (about 100 metres typically). It is even more interesting to observe just how many of these devices are not secured and therefore providing open access to anyone within range.

The implementation of security (typically using the WEP (Wired Equivalent Privacy) protocol, is easy and available on all devices, but not normally installed by default. Users of these devices must ensure that the protocol is switched on and using the highest level of encryption available – usually 128-bit.

If you require assistance in what is a fairly technical area, please call Alan Finch on 01224 697457 for assistance.

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>