

UnderstandIT

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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.

BT AND TALK TALK BOTH BACK AWAY FROM PHORM

In another episode of the trials and tribulations of this service, it was recently announced separately that both BT and Talk Talk were suspending their involvement with Phorm. As a result, the Phorm share price declined significantly.

For those who are not familiar with the service provided by Phorm, it has been covered in *Understand IT* on a few occasions in the past year (See in particular the March and April 2009 editions).

The "service" provided by Phorm involves the interception of users' internet communications to identify areas of potential interest to that user. Targeted advertising material is then delivered to that user, based on the "experience" gathered by the Phorm system. This is why it has been dubbed "behavioural advertising".

Although an early participant in trials of the Phorm system, in early July, a BT spokesman stated: "We're interested in this area [targeted online advertising] but for now we have no immediate plans.

"It's more a case that we have other stuff to work on - Project Canvas, rolling out the fibre network and so forth - so we've taken a step out of Phorm and will see how it develops. [Our decision has] nothing to do with cost or privacy, it's about resources and priority," he added.

Then, a week later, Talk Talk, the second largest Internet Service Provider in the UK announced that it too would be ending its agreement with Phorm.

Phorm has repeatedly stated that their service does not compromise any privacy or security legislation or regulations. However, it has continued to attract considerable criticism from many quarters. Phorm has now said that it is continuing to trial its system with the largest Internet Service Provider in South Korea, and 15 other countries.

NEW PC OPERATING SYSTEM FROM GOOGLE!

Google has announced that they have been developing a PC operating system to rival Microsoft's Windows.

It has been known for some time that Google's long term strategy is to compete with Microsoft in a number of areas.

The new operating system which will be known as Chrome has been termed a "natural" extension of its Internet Browser of the same name. It will also be lightweight and fast - designed so that the netbook can be up and running on the web in seconds.

A netbook is a small notebook computer that is designed primarily for email, web browsing and using online, Internet based applications rather than running them locally on the computer's hard disk.

Initially, Chrome OS will be aimed at small, low-cost "netbooks" but will eventually be available for desktop PCs too. It will also be open source, which means that the code will be published and available for anyone to modify and enhance. This is the development model on which Linux was based (although it has to be noted that whilst Linux has a staunch following, it has not so far had a dramatic impact on the popularity of Windows).

Google claim that netbooks with Google Chrome Operating System (OS) could be on sale by mid 2010.

Google believes, as does Microsoft, that the future computing platform is the web. This is clearly the future - with ever increasing broadband speeds being rolled out in all countries - particularly in emerging economies where they are not suffering with legacy telecommunications infrastructures. This is where the netbook is going to be increasingly popular and affordable. Therefore, developing web-based, online applications that can operate with any flavour of browser, and accessed by inexpensive netbook devices running Chrome OS makes sense.

In its strategy to compete with Microsoft, Google has already developed a version of office software to compete with MS Office, but the Google version is online, not requiring the installation of many hundreds of megabytes of software on the user's PC. In response, Microsoft has also now produced an online version of their Office suite which works with the Windows Live online service (see the following article).

MICROSOFT OFFICE GOES ONLINE

Microsoft has indicated that it will compete head to head with Google in what is likely to become a major fight between the two giants. In its latest announcement in their response to Google, Microsoft has launched a free web-based version of its ubiquitous Office suite of software.

Office 2010 will include lightweight versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote when it ships next year. This is in direct competition with Google Docs that became available nearly 3 years ago.

Although analysts have given a cautious thumbs-up to the move, it could potentially be costly for Microsoft, who could be putting £2.4 billion in revenue at risk. However, for Microsoft, it is far more important to maintain the MS Office user base and keep people using their products. Both companies see online applications as being key to future growth.

MICROSOFT AND YAHOO FINALLY TIE THE KNOT

In yet another development that stresses the looming battle between the giants Microsoft and Google, it has been announced that Microsoft and Yahoo are to join forces in order to compete with Google.

The two companies will join forces in a 10-year agreement. The deal will see Microsoft's new BING search engine powering the Yahoo web site, and Yahoo will take on the role of advertising of Microsoft's online offerings.

Yahoo has been struggling financially for a number of years now, having been overshadowed by Google. A number of attempts at a merger last year all failed. Now, a new CEO is at the helm and a deal has been sealed.

Steve Ballmer from Microsoft was quoted as saying that the 10-year deal would provide Microsoft's Bing search engine with the necessary scale to compete.

Mr Ballmer added: "Through this agreement with Yahoo, we will create more innovation in search, better value for advertisers, and real consumer choice in a market currently dominated by a single company."

"Microsoft and Yahoo know there's so much more that search could be. This agreement gives us the scale and resources to create the future of search," he added.

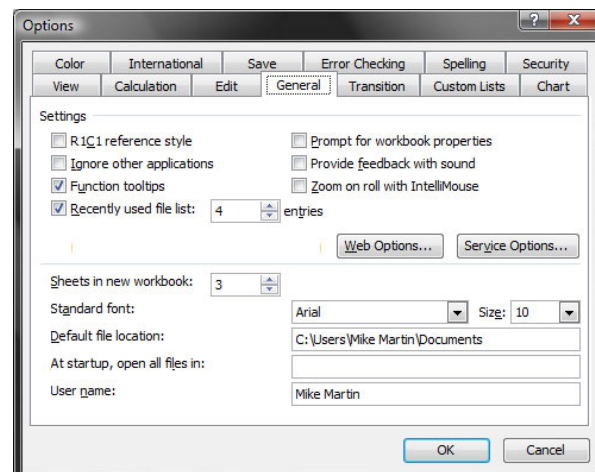
MORE MS EXCEL HINTS AND TIPS

Many of you may use MS Excel extensively in your work, others may only use Excel occasionally and are not familiar with some of the many functions available in Excel. The following is just a random sample of some of the things that are available within Excel:

Options

Firstly, you might want to take a look at the **OPTIONS** that can be customised in Excel.

The multi-tab dialogue can be found by selecting the **OPTIONS** from within the **TOOLS** menu:



From here you can change many things, including:

- Where files are stored by default, and if appropriate to automatically open files located in a specified folder (this can be useful if you use the same files regularly in your work)
- Default text font and size
- How many recently opened files are listed in the **OPEN FILE** menu and default number of worksheets in a workbook
- Various options when viewing a worksheet – gridlines, colours, toolbars, row and column headings etc.
- When calculations are done (automatically or manually)
- Default number of decimal places to be used
- Movement of the cursor after entering data into a cell

It is suggested that you review each of the 13 tabs and make any changes you feel appropriate.

Changing column or row width/height

If you need to change the width of a column or height of a row, you can do this by selecting the column or row and selecting **FORMAT**, **COLUMN** or **ROW**. You can then adjust the width (of a column) or the height (of a row), by entering the exact size expressed in points.

Alternatively, you can simply select **AutoFit**, then the row or column will automatically adjust to fit the data contained within the column or row. This can also be applied to multiple columns or rows simultaneously by selecting them all. The **AutoFit** feature also works by selecting the columns or rows and clicking on the line between the row number or column letter.

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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