

# 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.

## LOW COST CALLS TO COLLEAGUES OVERSEAS

A very impressive new low-cost telephone service is now available – aimed at British ex-patriates living or working overseas.

The service rivals the Skype telephone service that we have covered in recent issues. This service also uses VOIP (Voice Over IP) which just means that your telephone call is converted to digital information and transmitted via the Internet in the same way as all other internet traffic.

However, in this case, a telephone service provider uses UK based geographic non-specific telephone numbers freely available for rent from British Telecom.

British Expats (at <http://www.britishexpats.com>) is promoting the service, the infrastructure for which is provided by FireFly Telecom.

All that your overseas colleague (or yourself if you are travelling/working overseas) needs to do is to log on to the British Expats website (see above) and register (for FREE) the phone number overseas on which you want to receive calls from the UK. You will also have to provide your email address and a contact telephone number. The site then automatically allocates a matching UK number (usually in the 0844XXXXXX number range. As many numbers as you want can be registered under the one “account”.

Once registered, you publish the number(s) to your family, friends and colleagues, and anyone in the UK can make a call to the allocated 0844 number and it will automatically be routed over the company’s Internet network to the overseas number(s).

The cost to the caller is a low-cost flat rate determined by their own telephone service provider. The cost is also irrespective of the country in which the “destination” number is located, since the caller is simply calling a regular UK phone number and pays the appropriate local call charge.

For example, the writer is currently based in Malaysia, and is now able to receive calls from the UK to either his regular landline or his mobile phone at a cost to the UK caller of 4.4p and 5.5p per minute respectively. A considerable saving over the regular direct-dial cost of calls to Malaysia.

As indicated above, the service is free to register and costs nothing for the recipient of calls, only the caller pays the call cost which will appear on his/her regular phone bill.

The only proviso is that each allocated number must receive a call initially to activate it, then at least one call within each subsequent 90-day period, or it will be automatically discontinued and may be allocated to another user.

An enhancement to the service is that you can now decide to have a call to any one of your registered numbers routed to them all simultaneously, causing each number to ring at the same time. The first of the telephones to answer the call stops other telephones ringing! The wonders of technology!!

In this way, you can ensure that wherever you are, you will receive your calls, even if you are in a different country – that is, assuming that you never want to miss a call!

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## NEW VERSION OF SKYPE (WITH VIDEO)

The latest version of the Skype software is version 2.5.0.130 (at time of going to press), and includes the ability to make video calls if you have a webcam connected to your PC.

You can download the update from here:

<http://www.skype.com>

Other facilities already included in Skype are:

Skype to Skype calling (free)

Skype Out – by purchasing credit in 10 euro units, you can make calls to any regular telephone in the world at extremely low cost.

Skype-in – you can “rent” a regular telephone number in any one of 14 countries. Your correspondents can then call you for the cost of a local call.

SMS – you can send an SMS (text) message to any correspondent who has a mobile phone (you will need to have credit with Skype for this service).

Conference calling – you can have a conference call with any number of correspondents simultaneously.

Text chat – you can have a text conversation with any of your contacts, providing they are online.

We have discussed the Skype “phenomenon” a few times in recent editions. The company now claims that their software has been downloaded 150+ million times and have around 50 million active users. This is indeed astounding for a company who launched the beta version of the system in August 2003!

For those who have yet to experience what the system offers, here is a quick overview.

When you launch Skype, you will see the main panel, which shows a number of tabs across the top, the default one of which provides a list of contacts for whom you have details. To make a call to a contact, you just highlight the name of your contact and hit the green telephone button. To hang up the call, hit the red button – its that simple.

The next tab allows you to make calls to any telephone (providing you have subscribed to Skype-Out and have sufficient credit), and the final tab provides a log of incoming and outgoing calls.

The buttons on the top menu are self explanatory.

If you would like assistance in downloading or setting up Skype, or indeed have any questions about Voice Over IP (VOIP) technology, then please call Alan Finch on 01224 697457.

## Wi-Fi NETWORK SECURITY

Two clients recently approached us asking for assistance in configuring their laptop computers, firstly to access their own office network, but also so that they could connect to a “public hotspot” wireless network. They were also interested in hearing what security risks were involved in using public networks.

We have covered this topic in a little detail in past issues, but thought it timely to include some more advice and help on the subject here.

Firstly, most public networks are more usually unsecured, i.e. they employ no security or encryption, since implementing these features would mitigate against them being freely available to the public.

By definition therefore, there are risks in using such networks for accessing or sending information that is sensitive or confidential, for example, to your home office network, or accessing your online bank account etc. If you need to use a public hotspot, bear this fact in mind.

A planned future enhancement to wireless technology will address the current lack of security, but as with all things technological, there will always be someone trying to exploit them for his/her own gain.

It is likely that many major conurbations will be fitted with multiple Wi-Fi “cells”, much like mobile (cellular) radio. This will provide the ability to use your notebook whilst on the move, with the connection moving as you travel. The City of London is already far down this particular route.

Providing you take good technical advice, fully understand any risks and take the necessary precautions, then you should not be intimidated from using what are very useful facilities.

For those who are not familiar with configuring a laptop to access a wireless network, the following are the steps you need to take and assumes that your laptop has a Wi-Fi card installed internally, or using a PCMCIA PC card or other similar device:

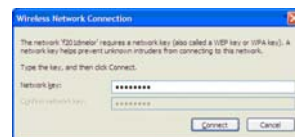
First, you need to enable the wi-fi facility (refer to the documentation on your laptop or device on how to do this).

Then, when you power on your notebook, the Wi-Fi facility should automatically detect any compatible wireless networks within its range (usually around 100 metres). To see this list of networks, you need to right-click on the Wi-Fi icon in the system tray at the bottom right hand of the task bar. You will then see the following dialogue open:



The network at the top of the list is usually the one with the strongest signal and most likely the closest. It will also indicate whether it is secured or unsecured. If it is unsecured (public or open), you simply hit the CONNECT button and it will proceed to connect automatically to the network within a minute or so.

If the network is secured, (as your own office or home network should be), then when you hit the CONNECT button, you will see another dialogue box:



This box asks that you enter a key. The key is generated by the wireless access router on your network and will consist of a number of hexadecimal characters. This key should be kept secure and only be provided to authorised users of your network. Once entered correctly, the computer will then proceed and connect to the network.

The documentation that came with your access router will explain how to generate the key. Note: it will need to be configured into every mobile device that needs to connect to your wireless network.

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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