

# 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.

## KEYBOARD INPUT LANGUAGE AND FOREIGN CHARACTERS

Have you ever wondered why some of the keys on your keyboard do not produce the correct character when pressed? For example, you may find that when you press the @ symbol (shift + 2), you will get the “ character instead.

The reason for this is probably because you have a US keyboard layout, but are using a UK keyboard definition within Windows. The effect of this is that the keys above will be reversed, so that you have to use the @ key to get the quotation mark and vice versa.

There are two ways to correct this situation. You can either purchase a UK keyboard (it will have a UK pound sign above the number 3), or you can redefine the keyboard as a US keyboard, so that when you hit the key you need, it will produce the correct character.

To do this, go to CONTROL PANEL and REGIONAL AND LANGUAGE OPTIONS. Then select the LANGUAGES tab from the dialogue box and DETAILS from the TEXT SERVICES AND INPUT LANGUAGES section of the dialogue. (see below):



In the DEFAULT INPUT LANGUAGE box at the top, change the language from ENGLISH (UNITED KINGDOM) to ENGLISH (US). Re-start your computer, and all will be well.

One downside to this solution is that the UK pound sign will disappear and be replaced with the hash symbol, as per the letters printed on the keyboard (above the number 3).

However, if you only use the pound symbol occasionally, this can still be inserted in any Word document by using the Insert Symbol option.

Alternatively, and perhaps of more wider interest, you can insert many foreign characters by using the little known Windows Alt key-codes feature. To do this, you will need to use the keypad (usually on the right hand side of the keyboard on most keyboard layouts). To activate the keypad, hit the NUM LOCK key. You can now insert any number of different foreign characters, simply by holding the ALT key down, and keying in a four-digit code. For example, the UK pound sign is code 0163. When you release the ALT key, the selected character is inserted in your document, spreadsheet or whatever application you are using. Most foreign characters, using the grave, acute, circumflex, tilde, and umlaut can be inserted this way. A full list of the characters and equivalent codes can be found here:

<http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/international/accents/codealt.html>

## VOICE OVER IP (VOIP)

The subject of VOIP has been covered in previous editions of *Understand IT*. The use of the technology continues to gain momentum, with some of the IT industry's biggest players all trying to gain a foothold in what is becoming a very lucrative business.

eBay, the Internet auction giant has recently acquired Skype. Skype is the innovative company that developed a simple (and free) software application that runs on a PC equipped with a microphone and speakers, and which allows users to make free international calls via their Internet connection.

Skype has only been in existence for around 2-3 years, and was purchased for around £1.4 billion!

Many in the industry do not understand eBay's interest or logic in purchasing Skype, for what on the face of it seems like a very high price. However, eBay obviously sees that it fits in with their corporate strategy.

VOIP will provide your business with excellent quality and virtually free voice communication, with both companies who also use VOIP and with others who do not (using Skypeout – see previous articles on the subject). If you require further advice about how to implement VOIP in your organisation, call Alan Finch on 01224 697457 as soon as possible.

## INTERNET FAX SERVICES

We recently discovered an Internet based faxing service that is both inexpensive and efficient. You may already have a fax machine that is always suffering from paper jams, or is an old device that still uses roll-feed thermal type paper that rolls up when you receive the fax. You may not have a fax machine at all, but need one – this could be a useful alternative, since you can send faxes using your email, their own message “client” software, or the web interface that they provide.

The eFaxFree service is free but will only allow you to receive faxes. You have to create an on-line account, which will include the allocation of a valid local telephone number (which can be toll-free), in almost any city in the world. Therefore you can have a “fax presence” in almost any country or city.

Received faxes are delivered as an attachment (typically in either PDF or TIFF format, depending on which you select) to the email address that you specify in your account profile.

If you wish to send faxes, you will need to upgrade to either eFaxPlus or eFaxPro versions at a cost of £7.50 or £11 per month respectively. The facilities available with each of the two versions include online storage of received faxes, fax broadcasting, voice-mail etc. depending on which version you select.

With either version, you can send faxes in one of three ways:

1. via your existing email client software (e.g. Outlook)
2. by using eFax’s own free eFax Messenger client software (free download)
3. by logging onto the eFax website and send a fax from there.

When sending a fax, the fax is sent to the eFax server, transmitted to the number provided with the fax, and a delivery report is sent to your email address. The cost of each transmission is charged to your account and is a per page charge. Rates are as listed on the company’s web site and faxes are transmitted from the USA.

You can read more about this service at:

<http://www.efax.com>

This service is one of a few similar systems that can be discovered by searching for fax services on the Internet. As usual, we do not warrant that this service is fit for your particular situation without further investigation.

Other similar services that you might want to investigate can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.faxsav.com/>

<http://www.send2fax.com/>

<http://www.faxaway.com/>

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## UNIFIED MESSAGING – WHAT IS IT?

Many in the IT industry have been talking for some time now about “unified Messaging”, but to the layman, this piece of jargon is as mystifying as many of the other terms that are very often slipped into every day techno-speak. Here, we will try to explain what this term means, and how it might benefit your organisation.

Firstly, we have discussed in this edition, and previous editions, the subject of Voice Over IP (VOIP), which is basically using your internet connection to make cheap, sometimes free, long distance telephone calls.

Similarly, in this edition, we have an article (above) on sending and receiving fax messages via your internet connection.

Add to this, Instant Messaging (such as MSN or Yahoo Messenger) and Video Conferencing, and of course electronic mail, and you have the building blocks of what the term “Unified Messaging (UM)” is all about.

The principle aim of UM is to integrate all these forms of communication into one user interface on your desktop. In other words, to be able to send and receive voicemail, electronic mail, fax, video conference etc through one piece of “client” software, for example Outlook.

With the merging of all these different technologies onto the IP network (the internal LAN or Internet), this total integration becomes a real possibility. All that is required is appropriate format translators to enable items from all these technologies to appear in your inbox in the same form.

One simple example would be a voicemail message delivered via the internal or external VOIP service appearing in your inbox as an incoming message. Double-clicking on the message icon will cause your IP-enabled telephone handset to ring and you will receive your voicemail message.

Similarly, other communications will appear in your inbox, with appropriate icons to differentiate the media involved, but the important point is that they can all be delivered, “read” and managed using the same user interface. Watch this space for more on Unified Messaging in coming months.

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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