

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.

PHORM – AN UPDATE

In April 2008, we carried an article about the “service” being developed by a commercial concern called Phorm. There are a number of legal, security and privacy issues surrounding the development and implementation of this service and we’re now able to provide the promised update on the current situation.

The Phorm “service” works by monitoring and taking a copy of the traffic generated when a user browses the Internet. It then analyses the text in this traffic for keywords (in web sites visited, search terms entered etc.) and then uses the resulting information to insert targeted advertisements on those sites visited by the user concerned (those sites that have signed up to use the PHORM service).

The purpose of this process is that PHORM is able to direct advertising material to you, the user, based on your browsing history or experience, which it is thought will make your web browsing considerably more personal. The advertisers, who have signed up for the PHORM service are then able to target individual web browsing users with a more “personalised” experience, offering more “relevant” advertising.

The UK government has now formally responded to a request from the EU Commissioner for Media and Telecoms, Vivian Reding for clarification about the service, and whether it contravened any data privacy legislation.

In its response, the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) has endorsed the web monitoring system saying it will conform to privacy laws.

Phorm itself has repeatedly claimed that its service will not store personal information, internet protocol (IP) addresses or browsing histories and that its future use would involve an ‘opt-out’ policy. However, this is against the background of an early initial trial by BT (one of the ISPs who have heavily backed the technology) which was carried out without the knowledge of its users, which many now believe was illegal. The Foundation for Information Policy Research has claimed it contravenes the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA). Phorm has now been forced to accept that there would be an opt-out policy.

The service is still undergoing tests and the legality or otherwise is still being debated, not only in the UK, but Europe wide.

MS WORD – FORMAT PAINTING

Have you ever had the need to replicate the formatting of a particular piece of text in MS Word? You may therefore have found the format painter facility in Microsoft Word. For those who have not, here are a couple of hints and tips on how to use it.

Firstly, having created and formatted a piece of text – it could be a heading or a paragraph with complex formatting. You decide that you wish to apply the same set of formats to another block of text within your document. To do this, just follow these steps:

Either

- (a) Select (highlight) the entire piece of text, including the paragraph mark at the end of the section of text – this “captures” all formatting, including spacing, indents etc.
- (b) Just place your cursor anywhere within the text of the section concerned – this copies only the character formatting.

Then click on the format painter icon in the Standard toolbar. If you are not sure which icon this is, just hover your mouse over the icons in the Standard toolbar until you see the Format Painter highlighted.

Then go to the section of text to which you want to apply the formatting and click anywhere in the section. The new formatting will then be applied to your selection.

One tip: If you wish to apply the same formatting to a number of sections in your document, simply double-click on the Format Painter icon. You can then re-format as many paragraphs of your document without the need to use the format painter icon repeatedly.

CONSULTANTS – SOME LIGHT HUMOUR!

A consultant died and went to heaven.

There were thousands of people ahead of him in line to see St. Peter. To his surprise, St. Peter left his desk at the gate and came down the long line to where the consultant was, and greeted him warmly.

St. Peter took the consultant up to the front of the line, and into a comfortable chair by his desk. The consultant said, "I like all this attention, but what makes me so special?"

St. Peter replied, "Well, I've added up all the hours for which you billed your clients, and by my calculation you're 193 years old!"

MS OUTLOOK – MAIL HOUSEKEEPING

Many of us do not spend enough time carrying out housekeeping on our inbox and we have encountered clients maintaining inboxes with many hundreds of messages in them. This is not only inefficient, but it results in difficulties trying to follow any email “conversation” (where multiple messages are sent between you and a correspondent).

Many web-based mail systems (for example Google Mail) provide many gigabytes of storage and claim that it is not necessary to delete your mail (except perhaps spam mail). However, they do provide tools to tag and filter messages, and the ability to create folders to store mail. How many Google mail users actually use these facilities?

MS Outlook is a “client” program running locally on your computer and works by downloading mail from the ISP’s server onto local storage (usually deleting it from the ISP’s server at the same time. This means that your mail all resides on your local computer. You can also have multiple accounts associated with Outlook (how many email accounts do you have?). The result is that you can download mail from multiple email accounts into one single inbox.

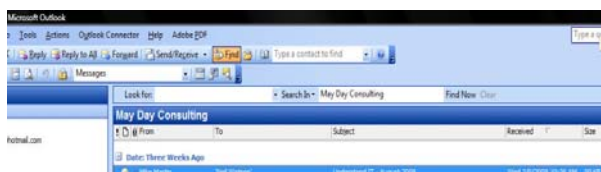
One disadvantage of this of course is that you cannot access your mail remotely unless you have some kind of remote access to your office network and your Outlook inbox.

Another disadvantage is that the amount of mail in your Outlook inbox can become unmanageable unless good housekeeping practice is followed.

MS Mail has a number of features that can be used to display, filter and manage large amounts of mail, perhaps from many different accounts:

Filters or Views

The Outlook Advanced toolbar contains a dialogue box for displaying predefined views of your mailbox (see below). If the Advanced toolbar is not displayed, then go to VIEW, TOOLBARS and click on ADVANCED – this will put a check mark against the toolbar and it will be displayed.



The default view (or filter) is MESSAGES, which just shows all messages in order that they were received, with the newest at the top of the page.

You can select other views or filters by clicking on the down-arrow on the right hand side of the box and other choices are shown – including messages received within the last 7 days only, unread messages, or a timeline that shows when messages were received.

Here you can also define a new view and save it for future use. For example, you can create a view that displays messages by category. For this to work, you would need to add a category tag to each message, but once set up, you can display all messages grouped by the categories that you have predefined.

Rules

Filtering messages just displays all messages depending on the filter or criteria that you have applied to the inbox (or other folder) – it does not reduce the number of messages contained within your inbox.

A more efficient way of managing your incoming (and outgoing) mail is to create folders, in rather the same way as you would within Windows Explorer. You can then use the RULES feature of Outlook to determine where to put messages when they first arrive, rather than just leaving them in your inbox.

Creating a rule is quite simple, and you can see more detail on creating rules by reading the article on the subject in the February 2006 edition of *Understand IT*. This useful feature allows you to automatically file messages in a specific folder, depending on the subject or who the message is from (or which address it has been sent to). In this way, messages from regular correspondents on set subjects could be automatically filed away when it arrives. You need not miss these messages if you create a short-cut in the FAVOURITES section of the left hand panel in outlook that shows all unread messages when you click on a standard view of all unread messages, regardless of which folder they have been placed.

Auto-archive

This is a further feature in Outlook that enables you to set criteria for each folder that automatically archives or moves folders and their contents to a separate Outlook mail folder (Archive folder), usually depending on the age of the message(s), although other criteria can be set for archiving. A more detailed explanation of how to archive messages in MS Outlook can be found by reading the article in the June 2002 edition of *Understand IT*.

By using a combination of the above features, Outlook will help you to manage the amount of mail in your Outlook mailbox.

If you require a more detailed explanation of these and other features of Outlook, then please contact Alan Finch on 01224 697457.

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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