

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.

SEASONS GREETINGS

As yet another year comes to an end, we on the production team of *Understand IT*, would like to take this opportunity to convey our best wishes for the festive season and the coming year.

The current economic climate is extremely worrying for most business (and individuals), but on the positive side, the coming year may also provide the challenge and impetus to reduce operating costs, focus on improving business processes and make more effective use of your existing technology. It may also encourage businesses to identify and take advantage of business opportunities that will arise, even in a declining economy.

There are many pundits who are predicting that with prices falling now is the time to invest in assets that are now perhaps affordable, and which will increase in value with time. There is little doubt that the economy will recover, albeit this may take some time.

We wish you all the success in the future, and if May Day Consulting or Facilitators International LLP can assist in any way, our experienced consultants are only a telephone call or email away.

HELP IN PREVENTING CYBERCRIME

An innovative company based in Esher in Surrey was recently awarded the prestigious BT Flagship Award for Innovation at the 2008 British Computer Society (BCS) IT Industry Awards. The event was held in London in early December.

GARLICK is a young and extremely innovative company offering a somewhat unique service to both businesses and individuals. Garlik was formed by the former Chief Executive Officer of EGG plc, the online banking service, its former Chief Information Officer and a former president of the BCS. It has offices in the UK and New York, USA.

The company's web-based service is called Data Patrol, and is a subscription service that enables consumers to find and understand what personal information about them is in the public domain and manage how their identities appear online.

The objective is to inform users as to where their personal information is located on the Internet, manage it, assess whether its presence puts them at risk from Cybercrime and take steps to protect themselves.

The key benefits of the innovative service (according to Garlik) are:

- Continuous monitoring of the Web and other Internet sources for personal and sensitive information
- Weekly report updates with easy to use tools to manage the results
- Alerts if we find personal and sensitive information exposed online
- Quarterly report on the local area
- Expert support & advice if personal information is found at risk.

Once registered with Data Patrol, you will receive a weekly report on the result of searches by Data Patrol (which are carried out on a daily basis) of billions of web pages and publicly accessible databases.

During the registration process, it is of course necessary to provide some information about yourself or your company. This typically will only include name, postal address, email address and date of birth, principally used in carrying out searches.

Only under certain circumstances, determined by you, will Data Patrol ask for your credit card details. You will only be asked for a partial credit card number which will be used to provide potential matches with details found during the extensive searches carried out by the service on your behalf.

The cost of this service for individuals is £2.99 per month. The cost for commercial companies is not disclosed on the company's web site, and it is therefore necessary to contact them for further information.

More information on the service can be found here:

<http://www.garlik.com/index.php>

Cybercrime continues to be an area of growing concern for most people, with research reports appearing with increasing regularity covering subjects ranging from virus/Trojan infections that quietly subvert thousands of PCs into generating spam, to "phishing" scams that are designed to harvest personal and banking details in order for accounts to be plundered.

Garlik have also produced a report on Cybercrime, which can be freely downloaded (in Adobe Acrobat format) from here:

http://www.garlik.com/static_pdfs/cybercrime_report_2008.pdf

ANOTHER SECURITY FLAW IN MICROSOFT INTERNET EXPLORER 7

You will probably have already heard elsewhere that Microsoft were recently made aware of a very serious flaw (yes, another one!), in their web browser software – specifically version 7 (although earlier versions are also known to be affected).

The browser can potentially allow hackers to run malicious programs on a computer running the browser, albeit only under specific conditions.

As a result of the serious nature of this particular flaw, Microsoft broke their normal routine of publishing program "patches" or fixes only on a certain day in each month, to publish a fix for this flaw immediately.

This is to remind you that if you run any version of Microsoft Internet Explorer, then you should immediately download an update by accessing the following address:

http://www.microsoft.com/protect/computer/updates/bulletins/200812_oob.msp

Alternatively, ensure that your Windows Update feature is enabled and correctly configured to automatically download published updates as and when released by Microsoft. You can find the Windows Update feature under CONTROL PANEL in either Windows XP or Vista.

If you are concerned about any vulnerability that you feel you may have, then please contact Alan Finch on 01224 697457 as soon as possible.

ANOTHER REPRIEVE FOR WINDOWS XP

Microsoft has once again announced a further extension on its withdrawal of Windows XP from commercial sale.

This is the third time that their deadline has been extended, and is seen as further evidence of the lacklustre acceptance and problems users are experiencing with Windows Vista.

Windows XP was originally scheduled to be withdrawn in January 2008, but will now be available until May 30, 2009, although orders will have to be fulfilled by that date. However, a version of XP designed to be used with ultra-low-cost laptops will continue to be available through 2010.

Many consumers appear to be biding their time and waiting for the next version of Windows (Windows 7), which Microsoft are trying to target for launch at Xmas 2009.

VIRGIN MEDIA LAUNCHES 50MB INTERNET SERVICE

There has been a great deal of criticism over broadband services on offer across the UK in recent months. We have covered the issue ourselves in previous editions of *Understand IT*.

Virgin Media has recently announced the availability of their new 50Mbps broadband service for a cost of £51 per month. This is currently one of the fastest commercial services being provided in the UK.

Unfortunately, the service is only available to a relatively small number of centres of population across the UK currently served by the Virgin Media fibre optic network. They claim a current potential market of 1.3 million homes in parts of Scotland, areas in the Midlands and some of South London. However, they plan to extend this coverage to a further 11.3 million homes in these areas by next summer.

Unfortunately, this service will not be in northern Scotland anytime soon, but it does indicate how the market for high-speed broadband is developing. As always though, its availability is focused only on large areas of population!

There continues to be one complaint most often heard about broadband services – and this applies to every service provider in the UK. It is that the speed "sold" by the service provider is rarely, if ever achieved.

The way broadband services are engineered uses some method of contention, which means that if you are the only subscriber online at a particular time of the day or night, then your anticipated speed will be achieved.

However, if you are in contention with a number of other subscribers connected to the same servicing exchange, then your speed will drop dramatically the more of them are online at the same time. It very much depends on how many customers of a particular service provider are in your local area, and how often they are actually online!

There is now much pressure on service providers not only from their own customers, but also from the advertising watchdog, to ensure that what is actually on offer is delivered, or at the very least, the effects of contention are clearly explained at the time of signing up for one of the services available.

Having said this, there are some reputable service providers who try to provide a cost-effective and reliable service. If you are looking to upgrade your existing service, or looking for a more reliable and cost-effective service, then 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>