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IT WEEK

THE NEWSWEEKLY FOR THE CONNECTED ENTERPRISE

04.04.05 ■ Vol 8 ■ No 13

Government leads way to digital Britain

DAVID NEAL

The government launched a new digital strategy last week, designed to get all UK citizens online. IT chiefs could find themselves called on for support, as a core element will be forging closer ties with industry.

The government will work closely with firms to improve online security, and with the banking industry to boost online authentication. It will also look to improve the IT skills of the nation, by setting up a low cost home PC leasing scheme for students.

Infrastructure improvements will be coordinated by the Broadband Stakeholder Group (BSG), which includes government and private sector representatives. "We're making sure the UK exploits and benefits from connectivity," said BSG chief executive Anthony Walker. He added that encouraging web novices to buy broadband may prove the greatest challenge.

Walker argued that service providers should focus on promoting what broadband can deliver, rather than its technical capabilities. "We have to talk about the services and applications, such as voice over broadband, that mean something to people," he said. "The fact that it is 'always on' would be meaningless to many people."

John Higgins, director general at Intellect – an IT industry body that contributed to the strategy – said the plan is well timed. "Over the last couple of years the government has lost focus on its IT activities, and has suffered from a lack of leadership," he added.

Higgins said leadership by the government and partnership with the private sector are foundations for a successful digital Britain. "We are getting to a difficult stage [in UK IT development] and need to succeed in implementing technology," he said. "A new initiative is exactly what's needed for renewed energy and focus. There is a lot of interest from Intellect members, many of whom are in the ICT and content industries."

Walker supported the calls for a sharper focus, adding, "The next few years will be critical. Other countries are starting to move on this same agenda, and it is vital the UK keeps pace."

→ Local government IT, p5 → MPs want stronger IT laws, p7 → E-government faults, p27 → www.strategy.gov.uk

Bridging the digital divide

Government will encourage internet novices onto broadband

It will accentuate services, applications and comms network

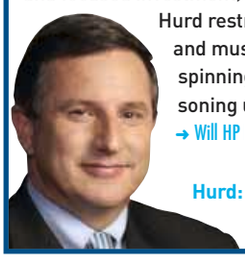
It will work with industry on new services and adoption

Metrics man leads at HP

■ HP is likely to focus on efficiency rather than R&D after naming NCR veteran Mark Hurd as chief executive.

Hurd presided over a multiplying of the firm's stock price in his two years as NCR boss and has been called "a master of the metrics" by Steve Milunovich of Merrill Lynch.

HP devotees might prefer a leader committed to the "HP Way" of innovation but Hurd is likely to highlight execution. "My management style reflects a fundamental belief in cost discipline and focused investment," he said.



Hurd restructured NCR and must consider spinning off or jettisoning units at HP.

→ Will HP lose its Way? p12

Hurd: Oversaw NCR restructuring

Pack protects Win Server 2003

DAVE BAILEY

Microsoft has released the first service pack for Windows Server 2003 (WS2003), to strengthen security and potentially save IT managers a significant amount of time and effort. Experts said the improvements are long overdue.

The pack, made available for download last week, focuses on security and includes a firewall, said Mark Tennant, UK Windows Server product marketing manager. "There are several enhancements, the key one being the Security Configuration Wizard," he added.

The wizard identifies the server's role in its current installation and then automatically blocks all ports and services not associated with that role. Microsoft said this reduces the points of possible attack against WS2003.

Gary Barnett of analyst Ovum welcomed the release. "Anything that simplifies the process of securing and managing servers has got to be a good thing... [But] some might ask why they didn't do this a long time ago."

A new wizard blocks the ports and services not used by the installed server roles

In some ways Microsoft is catching up with Linux, which already offers easier role management, said Barnett. "All operating systems must bear in mind the mortal administrator as opposed to the 'Jedi' administrator," he added.

WS2003 SP1 is also the underlying technology for the 64bit editions of WS2003 and Windows XP Professional, due to be available in late April.

The 337MB service pack can be downloaded from the URL below.

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■ HP's iPaq H6340 reviewed → www.itweek.co.uk/products/hardware/1162257
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Circulation and Back Issues

Tel: 01858 435344 Email: help@vnuservices.co.uk
To register for IT Week products and services, visit:
www.vnuservices.co.uk/itweek
UK – annual subscription rate: £89.97 UK – back issues: single copy: £5
Other countries: rates available on request
Digital Edition assistance: www.zinio.com

Published by VNU Business Publications
IT Week, VNU House, 32-34 Broadwick Street, London W1A 2HG
Tel: 020 7316 9000 Fax: 020 7316 9709
ISSN 1462-396x All rights reserved.
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Mailed by Ailec Mailing Services Ltd, St Austell
IT Week is printed on paper produced from timber from sustainable forests
Printed in England
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COMMENT Madeline Bennett

Will scammers cause major identity crisis?

The success of online attackers who fool consumers and elude banks' security systems does not bode well for the UK's proposed national identity card scheme

Internet users are being bombarded by all manner of attacks and attempts to prise them away from their hard-earned cash. Inboxes are being filled with myriad offers of medication and requests to help out former rulers of distant nations whose money is now carelessly trapped in bank vaults.

Once users have got rid of the spam, the next task is to catch the phishing emails. If someone is unfortunate enough to have missed the warnings about these attacks, they could well be fooled into believing the scam emails purporting to be from their online bank, and visit a fake web site set up for the purpose of gathering as much personal data as possible to allow phishers to drain out money.

But these fake emails shouldn't fool too many people – especially because they often come from a bank with which the individual does not even hold an account.

The basis of these scams is identity theft, a growing problem in the UK. Recent figures have put the national cost of identity fraud at about £1.3bn a year. Meanwhile, the theft of a laptop from a US university last month resulted in the exposure of the personal information of thousands of people.

But despite the apparent obviousness of the spam and phishing scams, people are still falling for these tricks. And more worryingly this is not leading to a realisation among the victims that they are fools for parting with their cash too readily, either through greed or carelessness. Instead, it is fuelling fears about the dangers of e-commerce and online banking sites.

Recent research from analyst firm Forrester highlighted such attitudes. It found that less than a third of European internet users were confident about the security of their personal financial information when carrying out online transactions.

The growing fears are slowing the uptake of internet services. According to the study, two-fifths of users who don't bank online cited security concerns as the reason.

The blame for security problems is being laid at the feet of the IT industry, firms doing business online, and the government. It seems online safety is the responsibility of everyone but consumers.

There are grounds for this attitude. If organisations are going to make their services available online, they should take steps to protect transactions and prevent theft. After all, they will be the ones making money from the online services.

While organisations and users continue to look for a definitive solution, the UK government is getting involved in the security business with its ID card proposals. Although this isn't as much an attempt to protect personal data as to gain complete access to it.

If these proposals go through, individuals will probably find it even harder to protect their personal information, as it will be stored on a central database – a tempting target for hackers and scammers.

Hopefully, the government won't implement the proposals until it can guarantee 100 percent security of the stored data to foster user confidence. But since such complete protection has evaded even the financial services industry, with its reputation as a leader in IT security, any solution is likely to be a long time coming.

→ madeline_bennett@vnu.co.uk

EMC software controls SANs

Storage giant EMC beefed up its storage control capabilities last week by launching management software specifically for storage area networks (SANs).

EMC ControlCenter SAN Advisor features an automated data import engine that allows firms to download SAN environment data for testing, modelling and change management. Dennis Ryan of EMC said automating the process would help IT managers to avoid many of the risks of downtime associated with manual SAN management.

The software also incorporates SAN design and change management functions to let firms check the compatibility of new devices or updates before deployment. Automated monthly updates from the EMC E-Lab Support Matrix ensure the latest device data is available.

The tools will be available bundled with EMC's existing ControlCenter management suite.

Tony Lock of analyst Bloor Research said there is burgeoning demand for such SAN management systems. He added that businesses need to automate SAN management to help them handle ever-expanding networks.

2005 to be year of smartphones

IT managers are showing growing interest in smartphones as business tools, and 2005 is expected to be the pivotal year for enterprise adoption, according to mobile software specialist Intuwave.

Research released last week showed 47 percent of enterprise IT managers would consider deploying smartphones, up from 33 percent in a similar survey in 2004.

Handset costs and a limited 3G availability were cited as the main barriers. But Steve Swatman of Intuwave said perception lags behind reality as 3G networks are now rolled out.

→ T-Mobile SDA smartphone with GPS, p22

Companies are increasingly likely to deploy smartphones

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IT WEEK NEWS

Xeon MP powers mid-tier servers

MARTIN VEITCH AND ROGER HOWORTH

Intel has introduced a new family of Xeon MP processors, bringing its 64bit extensions to four-way and higher servers for the first time.

The five new chips in the Xeon MP line are aimed at mid-tier enterprise servers and use a platform codenamed Truland. This includes the new E8500 chipset and supports EM64T 64bit extensions, up to 8MB RAM caches, PCI Express I/O, DDR2 memory and Demand-Based Switching for ratcheting down processor speeds to cut power consumption.

Support is also included for future processors with dual-core and virtualisation capabilities.

Most buyers will select four-way configurations but Intel said designs will extend to 32-way systems. Vendors with early products include Unisys, which announced that its ES7000 multiprocessor server will be available fitted with the new chips.

Intel's Truland platform

- Xeon MP supports four-way to 32-way configurations
- PCI Express I/0 and faster front-side bus
- RAM — DDR2 memory and up to 8MB of cache
- Demand-Based Switching power-down capability

"We're seeing increased demand for 64bit computing based on Intel processor architecture across Europe, especially for BI [business intelligence] apps and large databases," said Michael Hjalsted of Unisys.

Dell will use the new Xeon MP chips in its PowerEdge 6800 and 6850 servers, priced from £2,889. The servers will be available with optimised configurations for Oracle and SQL Server and upgraded OpenManage management software.

Dell is also testing a new consulting service intended to help firms combat overheating in their datacentres, due to ultra-dense servers and other factors.

Though Intel recently said it is pushing its 64bit Itanium processor as an alternative to IBM and other big-iron providers, the new Xeon MP 64bit capabilities and increased use of scale-out architectures are causing overlap between the two processors at the high end.

Dell said it did not expect to see any increased demand for Itanium despite plans for a "Montecito" dual-core version of the processor this year and a drive to make the deployment of systems more cost-effective.

Neil Hand of Dell said, "It's not the growth opportunity that might have been asked for. Itanium is increasingly looking at the highest part of the high-end marketplace. That's not what we're looking at."

→ Java apps face 64bit penalties, p15

Microsoft scheme helps boroughs to share data

MARTIN VEITCH

The first fruits of Microsoft's push towards sharing apps between public-sector peers appeared last week, as the London boroughs of Newham and Kingston showed off programs that will be available to their counterparts across the UK.

Kingston's e-ticketing system, developed on Microsoft Commerce Server, will be made available through the Local Authority Open Application Sharing Portal that has now gone live on Newham's site. The portal is part of Microsoft's global effort, the Solution Sharing Network, to promote the exchange of information and tools among public bodies.

Funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the My Kingston ticketing program is a transactional site for access to local events. The Basingstoke and Deane local authority will adopt the solution and it is envisaged that others will follow, supplementing the program with new capabilities.

The Kingston app will be available to other boroughs

Kingston IT manager Robin Prince said the scheme would help boroughs hit their target of putting all public services online by the end of 2005 and achieve savings mandated by the Office of Government Commerce. "If more boroughs do this it helps us in sharing skills and expertise," he added.

Newham head of ICT Richard Steel was recently made Public Sector CIO of the Year, following last year's decision to adopt Microsoft instead of open-source software.

Oracle last week said a big NHS initiative has gone live with Oracle Financials providing 47 organisations with shared financial service capabilities. The number is due to grow to 250.

→ Report finds e-government faults, p27

Doubts delay RFID rollouts

Adoption of radio frequency identification (RFID) wireless tags is in danger of stalling, due to increasing doubts over reliability and fears of rising costs.

According to a report due this month, *RFID – Seen the Pilots, Now What?*, from AMR Research, most firms have no imminent plans to invest in RFID technology.

AMR Research surveyed managers from 150 firms at two RFID conferences. Though over 60 percent had attended three or more RFID events, only eight percent had a strategy to deploy the technology.

Reliability is a barrier for adoption, according to Nigel Montgomery, director of European research at AMR. "Up to now it has taken a lot of effort to get 100 percent read rates, which has increased costs."

But David Sommer at IT trade organisation Comptia argued that businesses could incur even greater costs in the long run if they delay pilot testing, and are then forced to hurry deployments under pressure from their trading partners.

IN BRIEF

Recycling law delayed

■ The EU's Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment (WEEE) Directive will not be made law in the UK this summer as planned. Implementation of the IT recycling law has been put back to 2006.

→ www.dti.gov.uk/sustainability/weee

BT speeds up broadband

■ BT's Business Broadband users will get a boost this month as the firm increases connection speeds by up to 400 percent to a maximum of 2Mbit/s, at no extra cost. The firm said the upgrades could also reduce costs and improve service levels.

→ www.btbroadbandoffice.com/speedchanges

Outsourcers may lack skills

■ Analyst Gartner predicts business process outsourcing (BPO) will generate $134bn of revenue in 2005 – up eight percent on last year. The analyst advised firms to check that BPO providers have enough qualified personnel to meet the growing demands, and said some new vendors are likely to lack certain expertise.

→ www.gartner.com

New open-source stack

■ Open-source firm SourceLabs last week released its SourceLabs AMP product, an integrated stack of infrastructure software. The product integrates the Apache Web server, the MySQL database and the PHP development environment.

→ www.sourcelabs.com

O2 emergency service system

■ O2 last week announced the completion of the five-year rollout of its Airwave emergency services radio system to all police forces in England, Scotland and Wales, covering 99 percent of the country.

→ www.airwaveservice.co.uk

Finance law requires reports

■ The Operating and Financial Review (OFR) passed into law last week, requiring UK quoted companies with a financial year after 1 April to provide an analysis of current and future performance in annual reports. The first reports will be due next year and may require firms to make changes to their IT reporting systems.

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IN BRIEF

NetIQ offloads WebTrends

Systems and security management specialist NetIQ has agreed to sell its web analytics software subsidiary WebTrends to private equity fund Francisco Partners. Nick Sharp, vice-president at WebTrends in Europe, said the deal, which is due to close before July, would allow both vendors to focus on their core markets. Sharp added that WebTrends plans to continue its drive to offer more consultancy services around its hosted and licensed software, which helps companies to measure and optimise web activities.

→ www.webtrends.com

E-crime details released

The National Hi-Tech Crime Unit (NHTCU) will release research on the impact of computer crime on business at tomorrow's e-Crime Congress in London. Among the speakers at the event will be eBay's chief security officer and former White House cyber security adviser, Howard Schmidt.

→ www.e-crimecongress.org

CRM hosts extend their range

MARTIN VEITCH

The strongly contested market for customer relationship management (CRM) software is heating up as leading vendors prepare new releases for the growing hosted sector.

UK business software giant Sage will next month launch a beta-test version of its hosted service, called SageCRM.com, and plans a commercial service to be available from late this year.

The firm said that although some prospective customers are interested in online applications for fast deployment and to keep down capital expenditure, it expects most demand from companies with about 20 user accounts.

"There's an opportunity to get CRM out to more customers but we still believe that to get the most out of a CRM system there has to be further investment," said Gerry Carr, Sage CRM marketing manager.

Over the next few months, Sage also plans to release a series of free integration tools connecting its CRM and accounting software lines. The firm will also change the name of its US subsidiary Best Software to Sage after settling a dispute over rights to the name.

Siebel last week said it is forging more links between its hosted contact centre and CRM service offerings. The firm said it would build on last year's acquisition of Ineto Services by providing support for voice over IP (VoIP). This will mean calls can be routed from Siebel Contact OnDemand to call centre staff working from home on VoIP links.

The new capabilities will be available as part of Siebel CRM OnDemand Release 7, which is available now in North America. A UK service is likely to follow shortly. The release will also include new analytics capabilities for reporting on call centre performance.

In hosted software, both Siebel and Sage will be up against the marketing might of Salesforce.com, the best-known name in online applications.

In July, Salesforce plans to post its Summer 2005 release that includes Multiforce, an environment that will allow users to jump between Salesforce and other hosted applications.

"You can have multiple applications presented to you with one look and feel from one environment," said Tim Knight, Salesforce product marketing director.

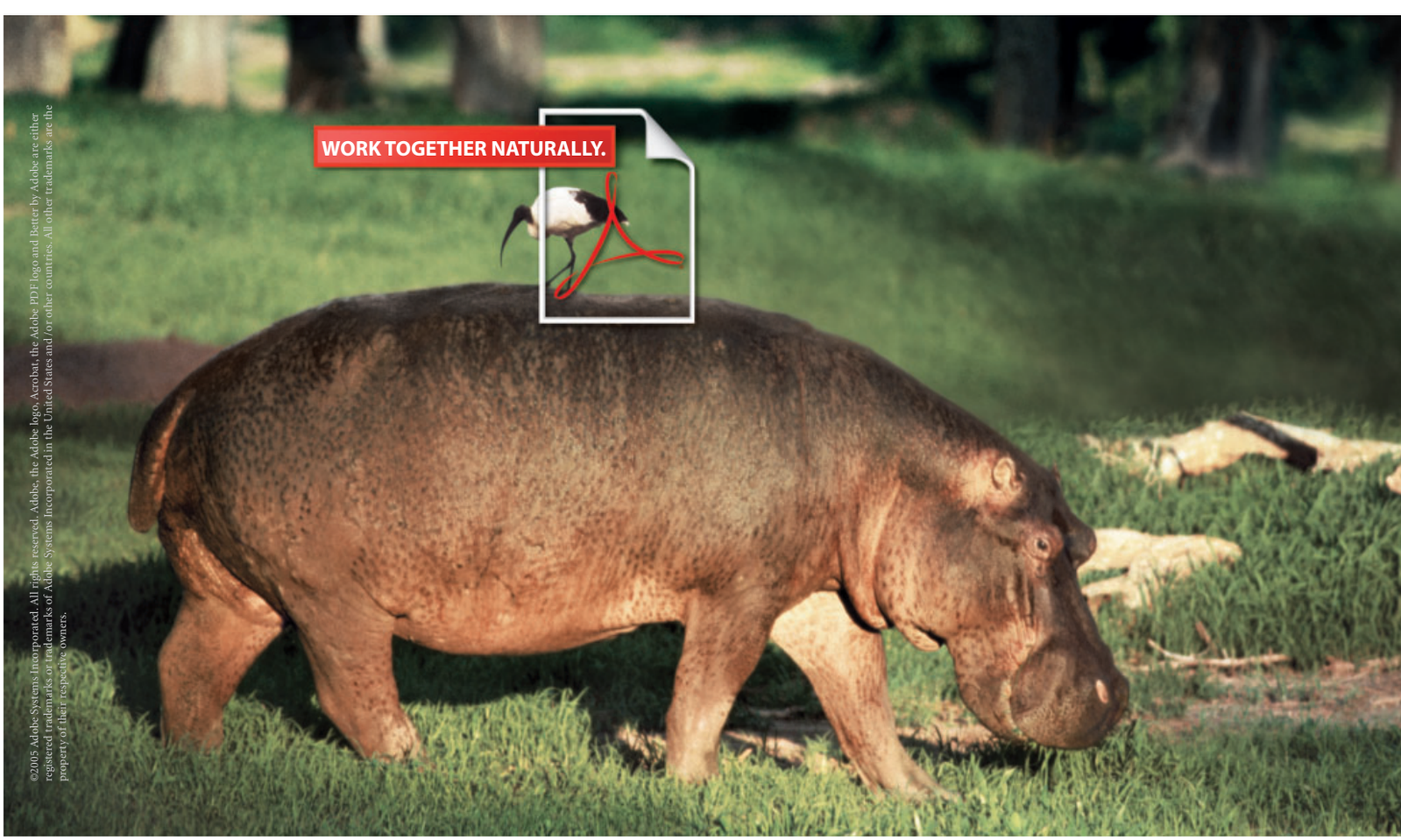
IBM has discussed similar plans for hosted software.

NetSuite, another hosted applications company, last month released NetFlex, a rival customisation and application development platform based on web services that it said would not require applications to be hosted.

→ CRM suffers from a PIMs hangover, p16

Hosted CRM options grow

sage	Starts beta-testing a hosted CRM service next month
SIEBEL	Now forging better links between its hosted offerings
salesforce	Will allow users to switch between hosted applications



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Bodies leave Info Act gaps

Many bodies appear to be coping well with requests under the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act, according to new research. However, a lack of reporting systems could mean problems in future if the number of requests increases.

In a survey of 66 NHS organisations, carried out by web site Freedomofinformation.co.uk and IT firm Harlequin Solutions, most said they were able to deal with information requests within the 20-working-day limit set by the act.

But just over half do not have a dedicated reporting system for tracking FoI requests – a worrying statistic, according to John Ashton of Freedomofinformation.co.uk. And only eight organisations said they had a document management system in place to manage their publication schemes.

Ashton predicted that the number of information requests would increase steadily as people get used to using the new law, which came into force at the start of this year.

➜ Report finds e-government faults, p27

MPs make the case for tougher IT laws

DAVID NEAL

MPs will this week call for a strengthening of the Computer Misuse Act (CMA) after criticism that the law is too weak to cope with the latest threats. However, security experts said even the new proposals do not go far enough to deter computer crime.

The All Party Internet Group (Apig), a government technology watchdog, believes penalties for offences under the current law are not strong enough. But Derek Wyatt, head of Apig, will have just 10 minutes to make his case for changes when he addresses Parliament on Tuesday.

Apig's proposals include the addition of a specific "denial of service attack" offence, and an increase to the penalty for hacking offences from six months to two years.

Wyatt: Calling for stiffer penalties for online attacks

"This new bill will strengthen the arm of law enforcement agencies to deal with those who maliciously attack networks," commented Richard Allen, Apig vice-president. "This reform is necessary if we are to treat [attacks] with the seriousness they deserve."

According to Wyatt, Apig's efforts to amend the law have been undertaken in the hope that the government will liaise with it after the general election.

However, some experts argued that the proposed amendments are still insufficient. In a statement, Alan Lawson of analyst firm Butler Group said, "These recommendations are simply too light. [They] are not strong enough to prevent any significant illegal activity, as hardened criminals would continue to ignore this legislation."

➜ www.tinyurl.com/5po8p
➜ www.tinyurl.com/1x2m

SECURITY WATCH

Apple OS X patches

■ Apple has released a cumulative security update for Mac OS X desktop and server versions 10.3.8 and earlier. The update fixes buffer overflows and a local privilege escalation.

➜ www.tinyurl.com/3vj8q

Mozilla suite .gif flaw

■ The common library used to render .gif images in the Mozilla browser before version 1.7.6, the Firefox browser before 1.0.2 and the Thunderbird email client before 1.0.2 contains a heap-based overflow. Users are advised to upgrade all three components via the following URL.

➜ www.tinyurl.com/7ynbd

Telnet client vulnerability

■ The Sans Internet Storm Center has advised those using Telnet on their networks to disable all Telnet daemons and use SSH instead, after two similar flaws affecting Telnet clients were discovered that cause buffer overflows. FreeBSD, Linux variants, Solaris and Mac OS X versions of the client are affected.

➜ www.tinyurl.com/4gux5

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IN BRIEF

Microsoft bows to EC

Microsoft and the European Commission (EC) have finally agreed on a new name for a stripped-down version of Windows software. The product will be called Windows XP Home Edition N, as suggested by the EC. Microsoft was fined €497m (£342m) last year by the EC and ordered to issue a European version of Windows that does not bundle in Windows Media Player.

→ www.microsoft.com

StormShield guards networks

SkyRecon announced last week that its StormShield behavioural security system is now available in the UK. The Windows-only package operates at the kernel level and has an enterprise-grade architecture with clustering and load-balancing capabilities, the firm said. It can be administered centrally to protect systems, applications and the network. The server runs on Windows 2000 Server and Server 2003, and the client and the admin console run on Windows 2000 SP4 and XP.

→ www.tinyurl.com/6wc7u

Sainsbury's regains IT

JAMES MURRAY

Sainsbury's has revealed plans to move its Accenture-controlled IT team back into its London headquarters. But experts warned there is a danger that such reversals in IT outsourcing deals could be counter-productive.

The supermarket outsourced its IT unit to consulting and services firm Accenture in 2000, and Accenture will continue to run the unit.

A spokeswoman for Sainsbury's said the relocation was motivated by a desire to improve efficiency and cut costs after Sainsbury's freed room at its headquarters following redundancies. "It will be more efficient to have the Accenture staff in the same building as the people they are serving," she said.

She added that this was not a case of Sainsbury's taking the IT team back under its control, insisting the firm remained committed to its contract with Accenture.

Douglas Hayward of analyst firm Ovum said the move would get senior IT staff closer to the heart of the business. "The main problem Sainsbury's has had over the last few years is that IT and business transformation got out of sync."

But some experts suggested the decision looks like a first step towards Sainsbury's reclaiming control of the division. Marianne Kolding of research firm IDC said, "[The move] seems very counterintuitive. Unless Sainsbury's is preparing to insource the team."

Sainsbury's is currently renegotiating its business transformation contract with Accenture, after writing off £260m last October for costs associated with flawed supply chain systems.

Sainsbury's to insource?

- Sainsbury's has moved the IT team it outsourced to Accenture back into its headquarters.
- Sainsbury's said the team will still be run by Accenture, but the move will improve communications and cut costs.

Verizon set to purchase MCI

Telecoms carrier Verizon seems to have landed the winning blow in its battle to gain control of MCI, with a new bid of approximately $7.6bn.

Subject to the usual approvals, the Verizon deal will build a large, financially stable company that could push deeper into the UK and Europe where MCI already has a significant presence. Also, following on from other huge telecoms merger agreements, the deal could lead to more stable pricing generally.

Experts said that rival Qwest, which challenged an original agreement between Verizon and MCI in February, is now likely to drop out of the bidding.

Some analysts applauded the likelihood of a Verizon victory.

"Verizon is in much better financial and operational shape to take on a company of MCI's size and do what needs to be done to turn it around without sinking itself in the process," wrote Ovum analyst Jan Dawson in a research note. "Qwest-MCI would have been a disaster," he added.

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SunGard to sell out

MARTIN VEITCH

Disaster recovery leader SunGard Data Systems is to sell out to private equity groups in a deal worth about $11.3bn. The company said the move will make it a more nimble competitor.

SunGard, which protects many blue-chip financial services firms, will become the property of six groups, including Bain Capital and Goldman Sachs. The agreement means that SunGard will no longer spin off its Availability Services unit as previously planned and will relinquish its public company status.

Though some industry watchers have argued that equity groups would be more interested in generating profits than investing, SunGard said it would not be relegated to cash-cow status.

"Our investors are focused on the technology sector and take a long-term view of investing and growing the business," said chief executive Cristóbal Conde. "When you run a public company you are always having to make trade-offs. As a private company we will be able to favour long-term investment."

Conde: "As a private company we will be able to favour long-term investment"

Analysts said more leveraged buyouts could follow in the IT sector. But some doubted whether this deal would prevent the eventual spin-off of the Availability Services business continuity unit.

In a research note, Samad Masood of analyst Ovum wrote, "As a public company the separation [of the Availability Services business] would have been to aid investor visibility into the separate underlying businesses. Now that this is no longer the case SunGard's new owners have the freedom to do with it as they please." Masood predicted this "easily packaged" business would be sold after the deal goes through, expected to be in the third quarter of this year.

Virtualisation via AMD chips

AMD has disclosed the first details of the virtualisation technology it will add to its Opteron and Athlon 64 chips, which it said will enhance software-based virtualisation tools with dedicated hardware support.

The technology, codenamed Pacifica, will appear in AMD 64bit chips in the first half of 2006. It will feature enhancements in both the processor core and the on-chip memory controller to support virtual machine operation. A full specification is due later this month.

Virtualisation enables a computer to operate virtual machines that have their own separate memory spaces and may be running a different operating system from the host. This gives firms greater flexibility in deploying applications, as virtual machines can easily be moved from one host system to another.

Intel is also putting virtualisation support into its processors, and expects to ship a desktop chip with its technology, codenamed Vanderpool, later this year.

→ www.amd.com/enterprise

IN BRIEF

Service keeps email safe

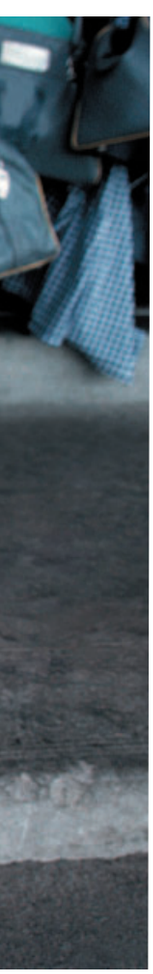
■ Email security and management specialist MessageLabs has launched its Boundary Encryption service, supporting private communication between mail servers at different companies. The service offers a secure private email network so firms can communicate with selected partners using SMTP over transport layer encryption. The managed service means firms do not need to run desktop encryption tools, according to MessageLabs.

→ www.messagelabs.com

Juniper eyes VoIP specialist

■ Network and security specialist Juniper Networks last week signalled a move into the voice over IP (VoIP) market by announcing a deal to acquire Kagoor Networks. The acquisition will give Juniper access to Kagoor's Session Border Control (SBC) technology. Used by about 100 carriers worldwide, this technology enables network operators to deploy cost-effective VoIP and other rich media services, said the firm.

→ VoIP telephony, p25 → www.juniper.net



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20-21 APRIL
Wireless LAN Event
Olympia, London
→ www.wlanevent.com

24-27 APRIL
WinHEC
Seattle
→ www.microsoft.com/whdc/winhec

Oracle buys into ID management

MARTIN VEITCH

Oracle has acquired identity management software developer Oblix in a move that will help secure access across the enterprise giant's burgeoning software lines. The purchase is part of a wave of recent merger activity in the access and identity sector.

Oblix specialises in single sign-on, identity management and user provisioning. Oracle intends to continue offering Oblix products including CoreID, ShareID, and CoreSV as standalone packages but will also fold Oblix features into a broader identity infrastructure product.

In a statement, Oblix chief executive Gordon Eubanks said the combination will provide IT buyers with "an unprecedented ability to build identity into their software infrastructure and applications".

Experts agreed the deal would allow Oracle to provide more secure access and help firms comply with regulations. Steve Craggs, vice-chairman of the Integration Consortium user forum, commented, "Everyone is concerned about identity management, not just because of fraud but also because of legislation such as the US Patriot Act."

The Oblix deal cements Oracle's position as leader in the current IT merger and acquisition rush, following its recent agreement to acquire retail software developer Retek and the completion of its mega-deal to buy rival applications provider PeopleSoft.

The acquisition of PeopleSoft could make Oracle well placed to meet growing demands for identity management systems. Roberta Witty of analyst Gartner said, "The HR application is the starting point for identity and access management for internal staff."

Other industry watchers noted that the Oblix deal plugs a hole as Oracle's acquisition-based growth has forced a heterogeneous approach to security.

Firms specialising in identity management tools have been much in demand by broader IT suppliers recently as analysts predict steeply growing sales. Radicati Group last year forecast that the value of the sector would grow from $738m in 2004 to $10.2bn by 2008.

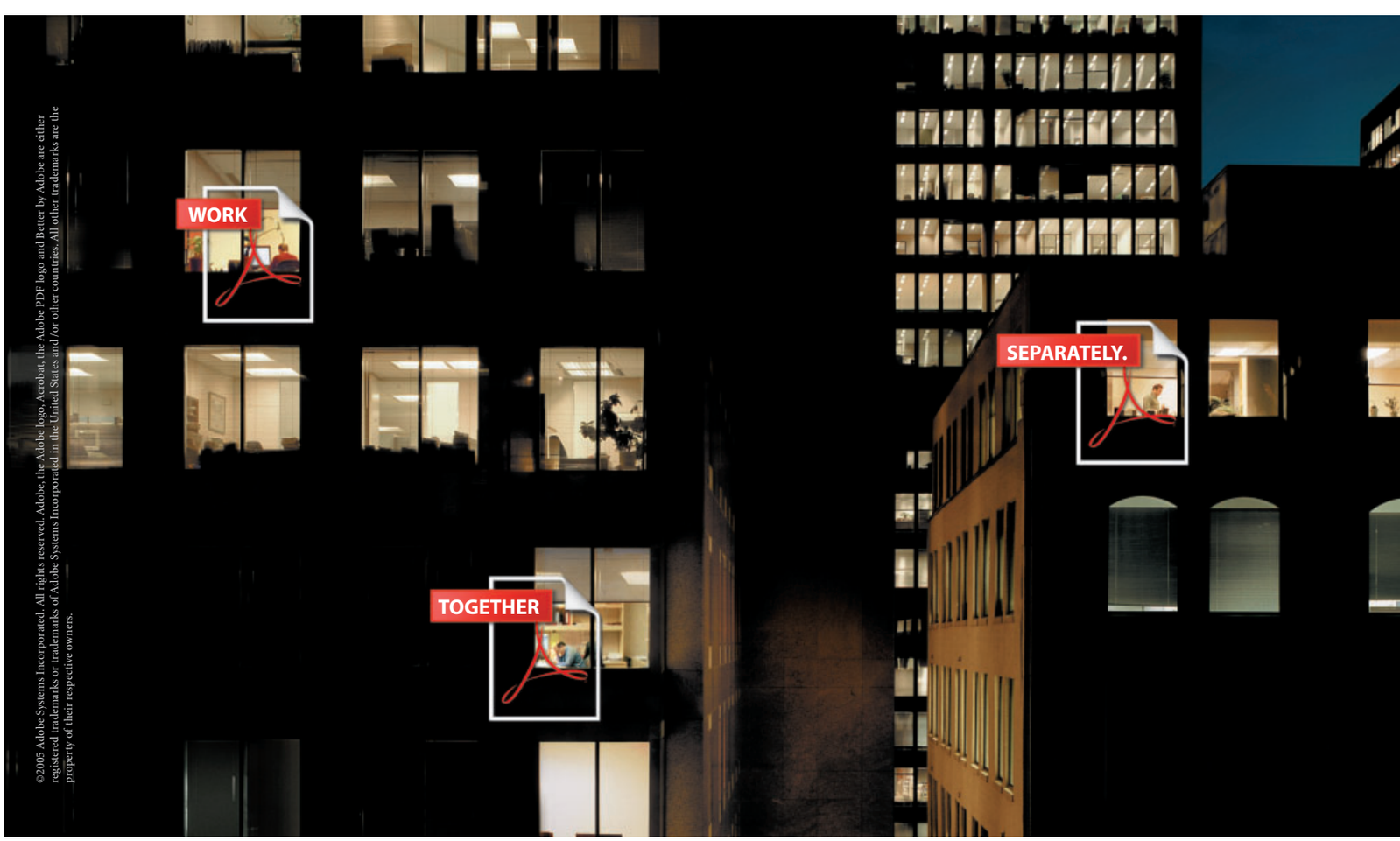
Last year, Computer Associates spent $430m on Netegrity. The software firm bolstered its portfolio again last week by acquiring eTrust Cleanup, a mainframe identity and access management system, from security company InfoSec. Also last year, HP bought TruLogica.

The activity could encourage Microsoft to strengthen its hand beyond the current Identity Integration Server, and force middleware giant BEA to make a move.

→ CA acquires identity access tools, p27

Oracle's recent shopping spree

- Collaxa purchased for process management
- ERP — PeopleSoft merger to gain scale to challenge SAP
- Retek purchase to aim at the retail sector
- Oblix acquisition to bolster identity management



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Group aims to secure VoIP

The Voice over IP Security Alliance (VoIPSA) has formed a working group to set security standards for new VoIP products.

The Security Requirements committee is one of five groups set up by the alliance to initiate new standards. Other committees will cover issues of research, testing, best practice and education.

VoIPSA is an open group of companies established last month to address security for VoIP technology. Some 50 companies have signed up, including MCI, PricewaterhouseCoopers and Samsung.

The organisation said its short-term projects to develop a threat taxonomy and define security requirements would feed into the newly-formed committees.

It has also announced the election of its first board, with David Endler of 3Com's network security unit, Tipping Point, as chairman.

BorderWare will chair the Security Requirements committee.

→ Approach VoIP with caution, p25

→ www.voipsa.org

Sybase gagging order may put firms at risk

DENNIS FISHER

Recent legal moves by Sybase to prevent publication of details of flaws in one its products could make firms more vulnerable to attack in the future, security experts warned last week.

The legal developments came last month as Next Generation Security Software (NGS) was preparing to publish the technical details of vulnerabilities in Sybase's Adaptive Server Enterprise product.

NGS notified Sybase of the issues and the software vendor released patches for the flaws three months ago. However, Sybase sent a letter notifying NGS that it would be in violation of Sybase's end-user licence agreement if it published further information about the flaws.

Mark Litchfield, a co-founder of NGS, said he was shocked by the response. He added, "In eight years we have never had a response like this. The typical response [from vendors] is favourable." The legal manoeuvring could hurt users and vendors by stopping the distribution of critical security information or by forcing researchers to publish advisories and code anonymously to avoid prosecution. If Sybase's legal action is successful, other vendors could well follow suit.

Larholm: "The only thing that will happen is all of us good guys will not want to notify the vendor [of flaws]"

Thor Larholm, senior security researcher at Windows security specialist PivX Solutions, said the move has serious implications for system security. "The only thing that will happen is that all of us good guys won't want to notify the vendor," Larholm added.

→ www.ngssoftware.com → www.pivx.com

→ www.eweek.com

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25-26 APRIL
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→ www.tinyurl.com/6sje4

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IT WEEK LEADERS & LETTERS

Better late than never

Microsoft's release of Windows Server 2003 Service Pack 1 (SP1) late last week will come as welcome news to IT managers, many of whom will have burnt much midnight oil trying to ensure that infrastructure is as safe as possible from outside attack. The question that many will want to ask Microsoft is: "What took you so long?"

SP1 tightens security with a Configuration Wizard that looks at the precise role of each server and blocks off all unnecessary services and ports. After SP1 has installed, it also blocks inbound connections to the server until Windows Update has put in place the latest security patches. It also includes the updated Windows Firewall introduced in Windows XP SP2 last year.

"Microsoft is finally addressing the security implications of its software's versatility"

But many business customers must be asking why Microsoft did not include such features in Windows Server 2003 right from the start. Many of the security weaknesses of Windows must have been apparent even before the release of the platform two years ago.

Firms can draw some comfort from the fact that Microsoft has now moved to address the security implications of its software's versatility, even if it is long overdue. But the reassurance may be short-lived. Given that Windows XP SP2 needed additional security updates just weeks after its release, IT managers will be wondering whether the latest security measures will come up to scratch.

Will HP lose its Way?

In his first media conference call since accepting the post of HP chief executive last week, Mark Hurd could say little concrete but it was pretty clear that his focus will be on bringing hard-nosed efficiency to the company.

Aside from a passing reference to HP's "proud history of innovation", Hurd said little to reassure those who fear his reign will end the HP Way, the fabled ethos of heavy spending on innovation that made the firm a Silicon Valley legend.

Compared to the superstar status enjoyed by many high-tech CEOs, Hurd is an unknown quantity, but in his CV, interviews and writings, he shows every sign of being a driver for efficiency rather than a Next Big Thing visionary.

His references to cost disciplines and execution suggest that some old cobwebs will be blown away – and HP has plenty of them to lose. Its PC operation remains vast but contributes little to the bottom line; and the server business lacks direction and operational excellence. At the same time, many feel HP's industry-leading imaging and printing business could benefit from operating in isolation.

Hurd will doubtless spend a few months assessing his inheritance before making strategic changes, but the likelihood is that the practice of ploughing cash into R&D will be curbed in favour of industry standards and leaner operations.

How to play safe with passwords

■ It is no longer feasible to have just four passwords, as IT body Comptia suggests (*Users need many passwords, 28 February; Letters, 14 March*). Instead, I use a PDA to store account details and passwords in a strongly encrypted file, or "password safe".

I could have used my PC or a Java-enabled mobile phone, but the PDA is never connected to the internet and so offers added protection. The safe itself cannot prevent password theft – keystroke loggers can still observe passwords as they are typed into a web browser.

Rather, an increase in the popularity of password safes would allow web sites to support better authentication in the future.

My hope is that banks will acknowledge the potential of password safes to reduce fraud.

There is a clear win for any bank that provides its expertise to an open source project, to improve the design and popularity of a password safe application.

James Soutter

Cards raise risk of identity theft

■ While the government's identity card project has suffered a setback (*Lords block ID card proposals, 28 March*), I've yet to learn why a physical ID card is actually necessary.

In the case of an identity check it is possible to submit a biometric signature to a national database to see if it matches the claimed name. If, on the other hand, the police or other agencies intend to confirm identity by the possession of a card, then why bother with the biometric data? The card will be expensive and seems completely unnecessary.

Moreover, holding lots of other personal data on the card seems an open invitation to identity theft, no matter how good the government thinks the security will be.

Reginald Brown

IT staff must hold governance reins

■ Having read Martin Banks' column (*Governance rules strengthen IT chiefs, 21 March*), I felt compelled to share my experience of the opportunities and threats presented by governance laws.

The biggest threat is when compliance and risk management solutions are bought by disparate areas of the business. This places a huge burden on the IT department, which must cope with conflicting demands, piecemeal implementations and a lack of control.

The opportunities outlined in Banks' piece are there for the taking. By actively championing a coherent strategy for compliance management, the IT professional will enjoy the recognition that he or she deserves – both in and out of the boardroom.

Martin James, OpenPages

Regulations pose storage challenge

■ Extending the deadline for Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) Act compliance by a year may indeed provide welcome breathing space (*SOX compliance brings rewards, 21 March*), but should not disguise a broader issue.

SOX is merely the tip of the iceberg. From the Data Protection Act to the FSA, Money Laundering Regulations to the Patent Office, there are many regulatory bodies ruling on how UK companies should conduct business. Finding the right data archiving solution is a minefield.

The answer is for vendors and channel partners to work more closely with IT chiefs to understand the implications of regulations. The right solution may indeed bring additional benefits to the business. But get it wrong and an expensive investment may achieve only partial compliance and damage the efficiency of the business. A self-inflicted 'double whammy'.

Paul Hickingbotham, Hammer

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IT WEEK COMMENT

Martin Butler

Who holds IT vendors to account?

As internet difficulties grow, it is unclear whether the private sector is the solution or the problem

It takes only a quick trawl through the technology-related news sites to realise we are all in serious trouble. Security breaches, phishing scams, out-of-control spam, peer-to-peer copyright infringements, identity theft – the list is endless.

Technology that was meant to make our lives simple is creating a world of chaos. We are coming close to meltdown and no one seems able to stem the tide.

The internet used to be a place of freedom. Back then there was talk of creating a new internet, one controlled by businesses – but the resulting furore caused this to be scrubbed from human memory. Maybe it's time to reconsider.

Surely an internet controlled by businesses is to be preferred to one owned by scum. Let's face it, that's what has happened. What's the worst that could happen if businesses ran things? We wouldn't be inundated with pornography, we could access information relevant to our needs, and we could take back control of our lives.

A great deal of fuss is made about freedom of speech. In China, internet cafés are monitored to ensure state-proscribed web sites are not accessed. Is that really any worse than allowing every type of obscenity, illegality, and downright nastiness into our lives? It might not be as easy a question to answer as it was a few years ago.

Technology vendors constantly push the boundaries. Unfortunately, they are caught up in their own world of money spinning and have forgotten some moral responsibilities that come with running a business. Morals and businesses are not two words that sit together well, but they used to exist (perhaps sometimes uncomfortably) side by side. Now that is gone. Billionaires give large sums of money to charities to improve lives while running organisations that impoverish everyone's lives.

> **"Vendors are caught up in their own world of money spinning and have forgotten some moral responsibilities"**

Firms rush to market with the latest technology, but never consider how it might be used to make our lives worse. If you mention responsibility, these innovators will point the finger at everyone but themselves, while reeling in the cash pretending to fix the problems they created.

Perhaps even more worrying is the increasing reliance on modern technologies. There is a growing assumption that everyone has (or wants) the newest gadgets.

It won't be long before people without mobile phones will be excluded from accessing a whole range of services. Major electronic stores are no longer selling VHS recorders because, they tell us, there is no longer a call for them.

I find it hard to believe that everyone wants (or can afford) DVD recorders. Nor that those same people are ready to throw away their investment in video tapes.

Who is pulling the strings? The answer is simple. It is the same people who force us to use the latest technology despite the risks.

→ martin.butler@butlergroup.com

Lem Bingley

Unsafe at any speed

Regulators should look again at the bundling of IE with Windows – on the grounds of public safety

Roadside speed cameras are, we're told, there for our own safety. There is a well-known fund-raising element to their positioning, of course, but until recently I assumed that they would not actively be installed where they might encourage carnage. But now I've spotted one where this appears to be so.

A yellow box vulture sits watching the northbound carriageway of the A12, a few hundred yards up from the Blackwall Tunnel. It focuses on a section of road that narrows from three lanes abruptly down to two, via the loss of the slow lane.

This stretch of road is already challenging if you don't know, ahead of time, that your lane is about to merge with the crash barrier, but now there is the added distraction of the camera. Just when drivers need to check the position of rival vehicles, they are instead checking their mph.

I have no proof that this camera causes accidents, but over the Easter weekend I passed it several times and saw more than the average number of near-misses, wild swerves, and Hackney hand signals. The lesson is that the-powers-that-be don't always put our safety at the top of their "to do" lists.

Similarly, we are all supposed to feel reassured that EU regulators are getting tough with monopoly-abuser Microsoft.

Sadly, the monopoly police have seized on the issue of whether Windows comes bundled with a Microsoft Media Player, or is left open for the likes of RealPlayer.

A much bigger problem – the continued presence of Internet Explorer as an integral part of the world's most widely deployed desktop – continues untouched, apparently beyond the interest of our public guardians.

It is bizarre in the extreme that music and video playback should receive such special attention from regulators, while Microsoft's sluice-gate for worms, viruses and hackers is left undisturbed. It seems like fussing over a grazed elbow while ignoring a gunshot wound to the head.

I'm not saying Windows should ship without internet connectivity. A basic HTML-rendering, file-fetching program is a necessity. But IE – with all its bells, whistles, and flaws – ought to be optional.

I was not surprised to learn that Internet Explorer can now reach out and hurt you even if you choose to run another browser. The first cross-browser attack recently emerged, which uses Java facilities within browsers like Firefox or Opera to invoke a dormant Internet Explorer. It then gamely agrees to install spyware.

The root of this risk is too much predictability. IE is predictably present on Windows desktops, residing in predictable folders, offering predictably wide-ranging facilities and, in general, is predictably poorly patched. It's like leaving a key under your doormat. Whether we use IE or not, it seems, we are stuck with its dangers and the need to keep an eye on it.

While Microsoft and the EU argue over details of the Media-Player-free Windows, the rest of the Windows-using world must carry on coping with Internet Explorer. It's like driving while constantly looking over your shoulder.

→ lem_bingley@vnu.co.uk

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Comment Customer relationship management systems **p16**
Analysis How will firms benefit if Microsoft puts Services for Unix into the upcoming Longhorn version of Windows? **p16**

ENTERPRISEWEEK

EDITOR Roger Howorth

SERVERS, STORAGE AND DATACENTRE DEVELOPMENTS

Java apps face 64bit penalties

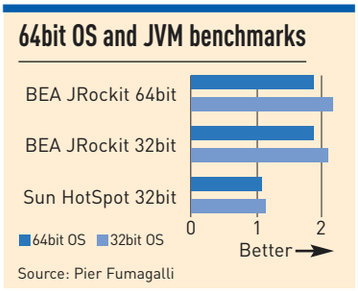
ROGER HOWORTH

Independent tests of popular Java virtual machines (JVMs) running on 64bit Xeon chips show Java applications may run slower in 64bit environments, because Java vendors have yet to optimise software for the new chips.

The tests were carried out by Java expert Pier Fumagalli, who was evaluating new server hosting options for a busy Java-based web site. Normally such in-house research remains private, but in an unusual step, the author of this report, who works for *IT Week*'s publishing company VNU, has made the results available on his web site at the URL below.

"There is no doubt, Java doesn't gain much by running on the 64bit version of Linux for x86_64 architectures," states Fumagalli. "The results clearly say that if you have any code whatsoever that still runs at 32bit, it is going to be between five and 15 percent slower with a 64bit operating system."

The results are of great interest to firms running Java-based applications and considering upgrading server hardware or JVM software.



The findings raise questions about the theory that because JVMs have 64bit architectures they will always run better using 64bit operating system and server hardware.

To some extent the results support the use of such hardware, but they show software vendors have yet to take full advantage of the 64bit capabilities of Intel's latest Xeon EM64T hardware.

"Results from the 64bit IBM JVM clearly show that a 100 percent 64bit environment gives some advantages," said Fumagalli. "It's four percent faster, for now, but its JVM is branded for AMD64, and therefore I suspect that IBM's compiler optimisation settings did not include Nocona, the optimisation required for Xeon EM64T, but the AMD-specific optimisation flag."

Although Xeon EM64T and Opteron have identical 64bit x86_64 instructions, internally the processors use different microcode, so compiler optimisations need to be made specifically for each chip to get the best results.

The tests were conducted using servers fitted with two 3GHz Xeon EM64T processors, 2GB of RAM and the Gentoo Linux operating system.

The results indicate that the optimal combination of 64bit processor and JVM software could double the application performance, or halve the server hardware costs.

"I would like to see the BEA JVM compiled to work at 64bits only and optimised for the Xeon EM64T," wrote Fumagalli. "Given the results, that combination could get an extra four or five percent by running in a 64bit-only environment, pushing the results up to around 225kB/s of throughput [or more than double the worst performing combination or 32bit OS and JVM]."

Fumagalli warned that the test results relate to a specific application and other software may produce different results.

→ www.tinyurl.com/6u2hw

MySQL database update promises better views

ROGER HOWORTH

Developers of the MySQL open-source database have released the first public beta of version 5. The series 5 release adds important new capabilities, including support for stored procedures, triggers and updatable views.

Security has also been improved, and a few features to support legacy applications have been removed. For example, support for the Isam storage engine has been removed, as has the support for Raid options in MyIsam tables. Firms using these features should convert their Isam tables to another format before upgrading.

The public beta of MySQL 5 offers improved security

The upgrade has been broadly welcomed. A contributor to an online discussion site said, "MySQL 5 is a huge leap forward, and most of the [previous criticisms of it] will probably become moot. When MySQL 5 is released, PostgreSQL will get some more open-source competition and that is a good thing." However, others were more circumspect. One expert said, "I think the real question here is, are all of these features supported under one table type? MySQL has full text search and relational constraints, but not both at the same time because of the different table types. Unless the MySQL team can get all these features together in MyIsam, I don't expect a big uptake."

MySQL is not generally regarded as providing leading-edge performance, and it seems there have been no architectural changes to improve throughput.

"I still think one of the biggest problems with MySQL is the method it uses for storing tables on the disk," said another poster to the same forum. "Storing tables in a single file becomes very limiting in terms of disk I/O. They still need to focus on scalability and enterprise performance for large systems."

→ www.tinyurl.com/54f7o

Alteris adds safety audit capabilities

IT WEEK STAFF

■ Automated software provisioning specialist Alteris is to acquire audit and vulnerability management specialist Pedestal Software for around $65m.

Pedestal's tools complement Alteris's suite of desktop and server management products, which includes basic hardware and software audit tools plus desktop personality migration capabilities.

Bill Andrews, Pedestal's vice-president of marketing, said the main reason firms buy its tools is for automated auditing of configuration policies. "We can check for allowable hardware and software installed [on a system] and check system settings such as password length policy," he said.

Andrews added that though such tools cannot directly check the Windows passwords against policies, it can use LHI Technology's L0phtcrack security tool to try to discover the user's password using various methods, and so could report on people using easily guessed passwords such as children's Christian names.

Andrews said many firms buy audit tools following costly problems. "Our customers are [using these tools] because of previous security breaches. For example, someone has already stolen information from their database." Other firms opt for automated audit security tools after audits identify lax security. "If there is a subsequent breach and the original audit comes to light during judicial discovery that spells big problems," Andrews added.

The Pedestal tools come with 45 predefined security policies, many of which are based on de facto standards such as NSA or Nist recommendations – both US government security agencies.

Alteris expects the deal to be completed this month.

TEAM LinG - Live, Informative, Non-cost and Genuine!

COMMENT Roger Howorth

CRM suffers from a PIMs hangover

Most CRM tools are glorified personal information managers, and like PIMs they offer limited value

I must confess that when it comes to customer relationship management (CRM) software, I took my eye off the ball a long time ago. In part this is because I tested far too many PIMs – personal information managers – many years ago while working for a magazine that benchmarked kit.

Back then most of the products were rather flaky; adding new data was laborious; and by and large once your customer data was stored inside them it was not a trivial task to get it out of one and into another.

Well, it seems to me that CRM systems of today are basically the PIMs of yesteryear with networking added on. With the help of a little TCP/IP, it became possible to add groupware functions, plus more stable databases and more accurate clocks. All of which is great, but none of it actually helps to get information out of your desktop applications and into the CRM database.

The main challenges of CRM are to get good data into the system, minimise duplication, ensure data is up to date, and then perhaps manage it to ensure some data can remain private while the rest can be shared far and wide.

But to me, all these things add up to little more than glorified phone books linked to a calendaring system. Surely CRM is, in essence, a relatively simple database with relatively simple reports and some temporally triggered procedures.

The link between PIMs and CRM might seem spurious, but GoldMine was one of the PIM products then, and today it is positioned as a CRM system. Beside several couplings of the words "customer" and "relationship" on the GoldMine site, Googling for GoldMine PIM produces some 10,000 hits, while searching for GoldMine CRM yields around 150,000.

I guess the advent of ubiquitous LANs and internet connectivity enabled standalone PIMs to evolve into enterprise CRM and then hosted CRM systems. I reckon online, or hosted, CRM is as successful as it is because it hides the simplicity of the back-end systems from the customer. It's the opposite way round compared with most hosted offerings, which tend to hide the complexity of the back-end systems from customers.

"Hosted CRM hides the simplicity of back-end systems, whereas most hosted offerings hide back-end complexity"

Perhaps I am cynical because most of my experience of these things has been from the receiving end. Like so many people, I question the long-term benefits of hassling customers with unsolicited phone calls or SMS messages to cajole them into buying something they don't really want or need. I recently received a phone call at some ungodly hour on a Sunday from someone trying to upsell me a larger lettuce or some such nonsense.

For CRM systems to be truly effective, shouldn't they be integrated into the phone networks so they can measure how long it takes for the person to hang up the phone or delete the message? Armed with those metrics, perhaps companies would argue convincingly for lower prices from their CRM suppliers.

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Operating systems ANALYSIS by Martin Banks

Windows opens up to Unix

How would firms benefit from the inclusion of Services For Unix in Windows Longhorn?

Summary

- Experts believe it is likely that the next version of Windows will include Services for Unix (SFU), a tool that allows Windows systems to host Unix applications.
- Such a move should make it easier for enterprises to consolidate server systems.

Is Microsoft planning to put Services for Unix (SFU) into the upcoming Longhorn version of Windows? Currently the company is promoting SFU as a way of hosting Unix applications on Windows systems, which usually involves at least minor alterations to the application source code. So SFU is also a way of making Unix developers familiar with Microsoft's developer toolkits such as Visual Studio.

If Microsoft makes SFU more accessible by putting it in Longhorn it could also undermine the market for Linux and Unix systems.

SFU could also help firms to more easily integrate legacy applications into modern systems. "SFU was firmly positioned by Microsoft as an aid to organisations who have a great deal of legacy code and who want to be able to better integrate Unix applications with Windows applications," said Andrew Butler of analyst Gartner Group.

Butler added, "The ability [of Windows with SFU] to support two operating system layers [concurrently on the same hardware would] encourage more hybrid forms of application, where one operating system supports part of the code base and the rest is delivered by a different operating system."

Butler also argued that Microsoft wants to discourage developers from writing new Linux and Unix applications. "Therefore, while Microsoft might well integrate SFU more closely with Windows, it will prefer to encourage further evolution of the Mono standard as a mechanism to enable software vendors [and developers] to follow dot-Net concepts and yet still be able to develop a single code base that can run under Windows or Linux."

Jon Collins of analyst firm Quocirca said it is very likely that SFU will appear in Longhorn. "Microsoft has always positioned SFU as a 'mere' subsystem but it is far more than that, because Microsoft does not want to compromise its position as a one-OS company," he said.

There are various ways of using SFU – either to run existing applications natively, or as a porting environment for application elements that require Unix services, said Collins. "The incorporation of SFU into Longhorn would make migrations simpler for those companies looking to move away from legacy platforms, but there are alternative approaches – not least running virtual machines on a smaller number of more powerful servers, and migrating applications into virtual environments running on top of Linux or Windows."

There may be a danger of Microsoft breaching antitrust regulations if it embeds SFU in Longhorn, though Rob Hailstone at research firm IDC argued that the nature of underlying operating systems is becoming less important as more and more applications are delivered as modular services.

"Initiatives such as web services standards should take the operating system out of the strategic software equation," he argued. "If application components can communicate with each other via standards-based messages, this makes the choice of platform a tactical decision rather than a strategic one. It will still be necessary to consider all of the old scalability, performance, availability and skills issues, but these decisions can be made on a case-by-case basis."

Hailstone: "Web services standards should take the OS out of the strategic software equation"

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INTERNETWEEK

E-BUSINESS, INTRANETS AND ONLINE TECHNOLOGY

Comment The prevalence of 'leet speak' in modern communications may be doing the English language more good than harm **p20**

Analysis IAC to give Ask Jeeves location-based advertising **p20**

EDITOR David Neal

Yahoo expands desktop search

MATT HICKS

Yahoo has started to move desktop search capabilities beyond the information sitting on a user's hard drive.

Late last month, Yahoo updated its desktop search application with support for indexing and search across the web-based Yahoo Address Book and archives of Yahoo Messenger instant messaging sessions.

When Yahoo first released a beta of Yahoo Desktop Search in January, it outlined plans to quickly tie in a range of its online services into the applications. Along with the online address book, Yahoo said content from its email, photo-sharing and online groups services will also be made searchable through desktop search.

"This is all just the beginning," wrote Warren Wan, product manager for Yahoo Desktop Search, in the company's weblog.

"Our goal is to make the word desktop in 'Yahoo Desktop Search' refer simply to the place where you launch the product."

Users can archive and search Yahoo Messenger text

To activate indexing of Yahoo Messenger sessions, users must choose to archive chats in the instant messaging client. They can then search the archived sessions whether they are online or off. Once indexed, contacts from the Yahoo Address Book will also be available, again regardless of whether users are online or disconnected.

Yahoo is not alone in expanding the features and types of data for desktop search. In March, Google Desktop Search moved out of beta and Google confirmed plans to offer an enterprise version of the application. And specialised search software vendors Copernic Technologies and Isys Search Software recently updated their desktop search products.

Copernic last month launched version 1.5 of its free Copernic Desktop Search software. Its new features include support for the indexing of email and attachments from the Mozilla Thunderbird and Eudora mail clients, and there is a new box inside the user interface that displays the number of matching results in various categories.

Isys in early March began an external beta test of its next release, Isys:desktop 7. The release offers faster indexing and querying, categorises results on the fly and supports the searching of web history.

Isys said its tool is designed for business use. It is expected to release the new version later this year.

→ Jeeves to build up local services, p20

→ www.eweek.com

Yahoo search continues

- Yahoo has launched an updated version of its desktop search app.
- Users can now search Yahoo's web-based Address Book.
- The update lets Yahoo Messenger chats be archived and searched.

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European domain name finally given the go-ahead

MATT HICKS

Approval of the .eu top-level domain for the European Union came a step closer late last month, after the internet's domain-name oversight body announced its support for the proposal.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (Icann) said its board of directors had decided to back the establishment of .eu, a move first proposed by the European Commission.

The latest development comes after months of contractual negotiations between Icann and Eurid, the Belgian registry selected by the European Commission to operate the domain. However, general availability of .eu domain names is still at least a year away.

Eurid said .eu will now be included in the domain name system root, or master directory, overseen by the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (Iana).

"Having .eu in the root sets the green light for the launch of .eu," said Eurid general manager Marc Van Wesemael in a statement.

By the end of the year, Eurid plans to begin accepting early registrations of .eu domains from government bodies and firms holding trademarks and other rights to names in a so-called "sunrise period". The sunrise period is expected to last about four months.

Eurid is still finalising its policy for .eu registrations, which must gain the approval of the European Commission. The registry will also have to develop a network of registrars – the companies that directly sell .eu registrations to consumers and businesses. To start that effort, it plans to publish its agreement for registrars in May.

Creating a domain name for the European Union has not been easy. The European Union first proposed .eu in 2000 as a way of identifying European companies and institutions and to encourage electronic commerce in Europe.

But instead of gaining quick approval the .eu domain has been delayed by a number of legislative and bureaucratic hurdles.

→ www.eurid.org → www.eweek.com

Top-level domains

.eu	Signifies a European presence
.org	Non-profit organisations
.biz	Restricted to business use

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Macromedia upgrades its web controls

DAVID NEAL

- Macromedia is offering free downloadable updates to users of its Contribute web content management and publishing system – available from the Macromedia web site at the first URL below.

The updates bring Contribute to version 3.1 and Contribute Publishing Services to version 1.1. Both bring improved enterprise functionality, web services connectivity, and support for Really Simple Syndication (RSS) activity feeds.

Tom Hale, the firm's senior vice-president, said that the new tools could help firms to improve communication and remove bottlenecks. "This release [enables] enterprises to improve the way organisations and teams publish to the web," he added.

Macromedia emphasised that the upgrade improves administrative controls and increases flexibility. The support for RSS activity feeds allows administrators to customise the systems so that any changes to the site are delivered via an RSS reader. This means that users and administrators can get immediate notification rather than waiting for an email.

Improved sub-site management functions enable elements of control to be distributed to other users, while the administrator retains final cut and approval.

Other new features enable better integration with other enterprise systems, such as Macromedia's own Breeze web and video conferencing app, an LDAP/AD connectivity interface to improve searches and queries; and staging to live deployment – letting developers test elements of sites before going live.

A full list of additions is available at the second URL below.

→ www.tinyurl.com/5tb73

→ www.tinyurl.com/4pska

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John Minnick
Manager, Technology Development, Siemens

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	Content Management Server
	Host Integration Server
Information Work Infrastructure	Exchange Server
	Office SharePoint™ Portal Server
	Office Live Communications Server

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COMMENT David Neal

The threat of m0d3rn language

The way people use the English language online may horrify purists, but can firms resist the trend?

According to language experts in the US – not an oxymoron – critics of "leet netspeak" are wrong. It seems that the online way of chatting does more good than harm to the English language.

Netspeak, such as the above "leet", which means elite in pierced-eyebrow circles; acronyms like "lol", which stands for laugh out loud; and an assortment of smiley faces, such as the ;-) winking colon; are popular among the youth of today. And so netspeak words and symbols litter emails and instant messaging like McDonald's wrappers litter parks.

As an example, I might write, "This is an article about the prevalence of leet speak in modern communications." In the hands of a leet speaker this would become, "7his is 4n 4r7ic13 4b0u7 7h3 pr3v413nc3 0f 1337 sp34k in m0d3rn c0mmunic47i0ns." According to the aforementioned "3xp3rts" this is not as bad as it sounds, or reads.

Although critics wince at the lack of proper punctuation, and the presence of abbreviations, acronyms and "out there" spellings, the experts say we should not be so picky. At a recent event in Washington they discussed the language used on the internet, and concluded that though much of this communication is inaccessible to the uncomprehending, it actually complements, rather than damages, standard English.

Some weeks ago, I wrote in my column about the importance of using plain English in communications – for which I was heavily criticised by one man with too much time on his hands and too many dictionaries at his disposal. My point, which missed its mark like darts thrown by Stevie Wonder, was that if you want people to understand what you are talking about, you have to talk to them in a way that they will understand.

Personally, I think that there will always be a place in English for even antiquated words like "betwixt", but I am also a big fan of new words. Recent examples include verbs such as "to Google", and words such as "cyberslacker", "phreak" (which means to get a free phone call), and "fuzzy logic", which have all been added to the Oxford English Dictionary and to the day-to-day conversations of many of us.

"Words and symbols of leet netspeak litter emails and messaging like McDonald's wrappers litter parks"

I am not suggesting that firms should now start to correspond in this way, but it may not be long before they have to. In the US, the relatively new word "blog" was voted as the top word of 2004 by a dictionary publisher. The word earned its place by being one of the most looked up terms in 2004, a period in which the use and significance of blogs grew. Merriam-Webster defines a blog as: "a web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments and often hyperlinks".

As more and more businesses are using blogs to inform their customers and staff it is not unusual for this to be a search term on their web sites. Will "leet" and others be far behind?

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Search technology ANALYSIS by Matt Hicks

Jeeves to build up local services

IAC hopes location-based advertising will help make Ask Jeeves a search leader

Following its $1.85bn bid for search firm Ask Jeeves, e-commerce giant IAC has plans to increase the service's market share, create a more powerful combination of search capabilities and content, and help firms to target advertising for searches tied to specific geographical areas.

However, some experts predict difficulties in fitting Ask Jeeves' search properties with IAC's consumer sites, ranging from Ticketmaster to Match.com and Expedia.

IAC chief executive Barry Diller has predicted that Ask Jeeves will increase its market share at the expense of heavyweights Google, Yahoo and Microsoft's MSN.

Allen Weiner of analyst firm Gartner commented, "On paper, the combination looks pretty powerful. [Diller] gets himself a portal platform at a reasonable price. He adds to [Ask Jeeves'] revenue instantly by giving it more traffic and adds to the power of his sites with the ability to manage content."

Ask Jeeves ranks eighth as a search service in the UK

Diller declined to forecast how much of the market Ask Jeeves would gain but said the acquisition would immediately drive more traffic to the search service. "We're convinced that all this hyper growth [in search] is still at the beginning stage," Diller said. "A group of four to five players are going to be able to thrive."

Ask Jeeves is ranked fifth as a web search destination in the US and eighth in the UK. Unlike AOL, which uses Google's results, Ask Jeeves uses its own search technology – the Teoma algorithmic engine it acquired in 2001.

Dan Hess of market research firm ComScore Networks said in a statement, "The combination creates intriguing growth opportunities, given that there is relatively little overlap between the IAC and Ask Jeeves audiences." But analysts said IAC must do more than simply draw more traffic to its various sites, given the intense competition.

Mark Mahaney, analyst at American Technology Research, questioned IAC's track record.

"There may be revenue synergies – especially with [IAC] promoting the Ask Jeeves search box on every [IAC] site – but our view is that [IAC's] record of generating revenue synergies has been limited to date," Mahaney wrote in a research note. "Further, we note that to date, [IAC] has had difficulties in integrating its numerous acquisitions."

One of IAC's aims is to develop advertising business tied to local searches for results connected to particular geographical areas.

In the past year Ask Jeeves has expanded its local search options to compete with its major rivals. As part of these services, Ask Jeeves is already working with IAC's Citysearch local information service.

Summary

- Online commerce firm IAC has agreed to buy web search firm Ask Jeeves for $1.85bn.
- IAC runs sites including Ticketmaster and Expedia, and plans to develop Ask's local search features to attract advertising.

Local search services are a growing business and the global search providers see a good opportunity to attract more advertising. The Kelsey Group predicts that the local-search market will grow to $3.4bn in revenues by 2009.

In an email interview, Greg Sterling, programme director at The Kelsey Group, raised concerns about IAC's management.

"We've seen IAC make big predictions in the past and fail to deliver," said Sterling. "I think that the potential is there to make Jeeves a leader in local search, if the focus and the resources are put behind the effort. But local search business is as competitive as general web search, if not more, and simply saying [Ask Jeeves will succeed] will not necessarily make it so."

→ www.ask.com → www.eweek.com

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Comment Any money that a Linux desktop suite can save must be offset against the cost of training and a blip in productivity p22

Review T-Mobile's latest smartphone puts users on the map p22

EDITOR Daniel Robinson

DESKTOPS, MOBILITY AND PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY

Tool mobilises legacy applications

DANIEL ROBINSON

NetManage last week introduced an update to its OnWeb product family for web-enabling enterprise applications, giving firms the ability to extend access to staff using mobile and wireless devices.

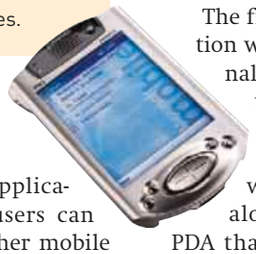
NetManage's OnWeb Mobile connects to back-end systems including mainframes, Unix and IBM iSeries servers, and re-publishes applications and data in a format suitable for handheld clients without needing any modifications to the original applications.

"We can connect to the whole range of enterprise applications, such as SAP and Siebel, and offer a choice of presentation on the device, including HTML or combining data from more than one application into a composite screen," said Eyal Orgil, NetManage's European marketing manager.

Orgil said that many companies have legacy back-end applications that still work very well, but they need to present the applications in a way that users can access via PDAs and other mobile devices that are typically equipped with small screens and limited processing power.

Data tailored to mobiles

- NetManage's OnWeb Mobile enables mobile access to enterprise applications, including legacy code running on mainframes.
- The OnWeb server presents the data in a format that is suitable for mobile client devices.



OnWeb can bring together data from several sources

NetManage gives firms the ability to simply represent the host screen on a browser, according to Orgil, but with a little work the display can be modified to make it easier to use. "Mobilising is more than just adding wireless access," he said.

To help the process, OnWeb Mobile comes with a point-and-click development environment with wizard-driven help to build the client-side application logic, and repackage applications into web services that can be downloaded to the mobile client if necessary. However, the amount of development work needed is minimal, Orgil said.

The final look of the application will depend on the original and on the information that has to be presented, according to NetManage. "You might end up with just a small standalone executable on the PDA that queries specific data from the back-end system," Orgil said. "It's the application that largely defines how you will need to interact with the OnWeb server."

OnWeb Mobile is licensed according to the number of users or concurrent users that access the back-end systems. Pricing has yet to be announced, but is expected to start at under £6,000, Orgil said.

→ www.netmanage.com/onweb

Red Hat plays host to diskless boot system

DANIEL ROBINSON

Qualystem Technology has released a new version of its Lan-PC software that enables diskless workstations to boot from a server instead of a local copy of Windows. The updated version improves performance and adds support for Red Hat Enterprise Linux ES as a host system.

Lan-PC 3 version 6, available immediately, enables a network of Windows client systems to boot from centrally managed Windows images, allowing administrators tighter control over the user environment and eliminating the requirement to install Windows on each system on the network.

Lan-PC gives IT staff more control over clients

Qualystem already supported a range of host platforms, including Windows, Unix and Linux. Qualystem said it was responding to customer requests to port Lan-PC specifically to Red Hat's Enterprise Linux ES server distribution.

Qualystem added it has boosted performance in Lan-PC 3 version 6 through improvements such as multi-threaded disk operations. The new version also works with another Qualystem tool, ActiveCloner, to speed up restore operations, according to the firm.

Lan-PC gets a revamp

- Qualystem has updated its Lan-PC tool that lets diskless Windows workstations boot from servers.
- Lan-PC 3 version 6 offers enhanced performance and adds support for Red Hat Enterprise Linux ES as a host system.

Under Lan-PC 3, each computer boots the operating system from a server hard disk using the Preboot Execution Environment (PXE) standard.

Administrators can allow users to customise their desktop environment and save their configuration, or force them to boot up each time with the initial configuration. The latter mode is useful for controlling kiosks or classroom scenarios, according to Qualystem.

Lan-PC 3 version 6 supports Windows 2000, Windows XP, or XP Embedded (XPE) clients. Pricing starts at €99 (£70) per seat.

→ Linux desktops, p22 → www.qualystem.com

New battery recharges in minutes

IT WEEK STAFF

Toshiba last week announced a new type of battery that can be charged much faster than those made using previous technologies. This means that mobile staff may in future only have to wait minutes for their laptop or phone to recharge before they can use it, greatly reducing downtime.

Toshiba's new battery technology, which it expects to bring to market in 2006, can recharge 80 percent of a power cell's energy capacity in only one minute, which the company said is approximately 60 times faster than the typical lithium-ion batteries in wide use today.

Laptops, for example, typically take several hours to charge their batteries, which can be a disadvantage if an employee needs to take their system on the road at short notice.

Although batteries using the new technology are still basically lithium-ion, Toshiba said it had boosted performance through the use of nano-scale materials, particularly in the negative electrode. The nano-particles quickly absorb and store vast amounts of lithium ions, without causing any deterioration in the electrode, according to Toshiba.

As well as allowing portable equipment to be recharged quickly, the new technology will lead to batteries with a longer useful lifecycle, Toshiba said. While current batteries lose their ability to hold charge relatively quickly, the new lithium-ion cells lose only about one percent of their capacity after a thousand charge/discharge cycles.

Toshiba said it expects the batteries to power a new generation of hybrid electric vehicles, but the technology is likely to be used in a wide range of applications if it delivers on its early promise.

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COMMENT Martin Courtney

Familiar Windows shuts out Linux

Firms considering alternatives to Microsoft on the desktop still face a steep and costly learning curve

Any standard is better than no standard at all is a mantra that many veterans in the technology industry have learnt through bitter experience. And for this reason, however much you may hate the security vulnerabilities, unnecessary features and general unreliability, there is at least one benefit to having Windows on your desktop PC.

Because Windows is the default operating system installed on the vast majority of PCs and laptops, whether destined for the office or the home, virtually every employee in the world already knows how to use it with some degree of competence. This also means that training costs are either minimal or non-existent.

The ubiquity of Windows also makes it the primary target for software developers. Therefore, any IT manager looking for a new application can be fairly certain that if they deploy Windows, they will be able to get their hands on the tools they are looking for and will have few problems installing or supporting them.

All of this means that though a casual observer might back the underdog and expect Linux to make a significant dent in Microsoft's market share in desktop PCs and workstations, there are good reasons to suggest the open-source platform will continue to fight a steep uphill battle.

Novell first threw its weight behind Linux four years ago, but the networking specialist has now broadened its portfolio to offer Linux desktop suites for both small and large businesses, as well as an open-source server platform to rival the once-mighty NetWare.

Building Linux into server operating systems that are used directly only by experienced IT staff is one thing because this type of user is generally more open to trying out new technology. But deploying Linux and Linux-based applications on the desktop PCs of staff, who have been using Windows for most of their working lives, is something very different.

Any money that a Linux desktop suite can save in terms of licensing and maintenance compared with Windows must be offset against the cost of training people to use the new operating system and associated software.

"Any money that a Linux desktop suite can save must be offset against the cost of training and any loss of efficiency"

Then there is the reduction in business efficiency that will inevitably occur as employees struggle to get to grips with the new platform. This price must also be taken into account.

There is also the question of whether the specific software required by many large organisations is even available for Linux in the first place. But the open-source community is trying to encourage developers to create more Linux software to reduce this shortcoming.

For its part, Novell is giving developers access to its distribution channel in a bid to make it easier and cheaper for them to get finished Linux open-source applications onto the market.

How much this will do to spread the open-source creed, only time will tell. Apart from the Windows fanatics, most computer users will be cheering on the challenger from the sidelines, at least.

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T-Mobile SDA REVIEW by Roger Howorth

Smartphone navigates via satellite

T-Mobile's Windows smartphone supports an optional GPS system for mobile staff

T-Mobile's SDA is a compact handset based on Microsoft's Windows Mobile for Smartphone 2003 software. The device is smaller and lighter than many rival Windows smartphones at 100g, and the add-on option of ALK's CoPilot Live navigation system makes it an attractive choice for mobile workers such as sales staff.

Available since March, the SDA is the first phone we have seen to offer Global Positioning System (GPS) software as a pre-installed option. Our unit had the CoPilot Live software, a separate Bluetooth GPS receiver with rechargeable batteries, a car kit including phone and GPS chargers, and maps of the UK stored on a Secure Digital (SD) card.

Because the SDA runs Windows Mobile, it integrates well with Microsoft's Exchange Server 2003 mail system, allowing users to synchronise email, calendar and contacts information over the air. It also features a built-in digital camera.

The SDA handset runs Windows Mobile for Smartphone 2003

In tests we were impressed by the small size of the phone, which makes it easy to carry compared with most PDAs. The supplied maps are stored on a 256MB SD card and use about 100MB of its capacity, leaving the rest free for file storage.

The phone's non-volatile memory also stores user settings such as email account details and the contents of the user's inbox, so resetting the device does not wipe out vital user data.

We were impressed with the search facility in the address book software, which can use the T9 system for predictive text input to quickly locate people's details without requiring their full names to be entered first.

The smartphone edition of CoPilot Live has been adapted so it can be used with the phone's numeric keypad rather than a touch-screen. It has also been customised so the Bluetooth link to the GPS receiver can be managed from inside the CoPilot software. Though the screen is smaller than that of most PDAs, we found it more than adequate for the navigation software.

We had few gripes with the CoPilot system. Like many of its kind, the navigation capability is lost if the user drives into a long tunnel or other area where GPS signals cannot be received.

On the other hand, CoPilot offers a few web services alongside the basic navigation tools. For example, we could email colleagues with a link to a special CoPilot web site where recipients could track our progress on a particular journey. Similarly, managers could use the web interface to send new waypoints or additional locations to a phone, and the phone's software would then recalculate the route as needed.

We tested the unit's mail client by connecting to internet-based Imap and POP3 mail accounts. The unit's SSL support let us use secure links to the Imap mail system, but we were unable to test SSL encryption with our POP3 mailbox as our service provider did not support it.

T-Mobile also provides an SMTP server that can be used by the phone to send mail. This is useful if service providers only allow connections from their own networks.

FINDINGS

The SDA is T-Mobile's first own-brand Windows-based smartphone, and the first we have seen to come with built in GPS mapping software.

- **Price: approximately £70 + VAT depending on service contract; £212 + VAT with GPS**
- **T-Mobile: 0800 956 5001**
- **→ www.t-mobile.co.uk/sda**

+ Compact; over 100MB of non-volatile memory for user data.

– No motion compensation if the GPS signal is lost.

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4 APRIL 2005

NETWORKWEEK

EDITOR Dave Bailey

VOICE, WIRED AND WIRELESS INFRASTRUCTURE

Comment Any organisation considering the transition to voice over IP for their phone services should think carefully about reliability and access to the emergency services p25

Operators unite to boost security

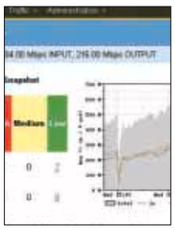
DAVE BAILEY

A number of industry giants have joined forces to form the Fingerprint Sharing Alliance, a global initiative to help network operators quickly and automatically respond to global infrastructure attacks.

Rob Pollard, vice-president for Europe at founder member Arbor Networks, said, "These attacks are coming in on many different interfaces [of an ISP's networks] and manually identifying these is a big problem. [This initiative means] I can sort out my local customers and then share the attack fingerprint with network providers worldwide."

Other members of the alliance include BT, MCI, NTT, Asia Netcom, Cisco Systems, Earthlink, and UK company Energis.

Current Analysis analyst Sandra O'Boyle said, "This is a step in the right direction to protect public networks; and enterprise customers will welcome the co-operation from network operators."



The alliance will use Peakflow SP to alert members

Pollard added that as well as sharing fingerprints of attacks, the system allows contact details to be exchanged so ISP network administrators can contact each other directly on a one-to-one basis, speeding up a process that previously involved communication via user forums, for example.

One major benefit is that service providers and their customers should now spend less time dealing with attacks. Another benefit is that the attacks should be mitigated closer to the ingress points. The improvements may also lead to enhanced service level agreements (SLAs) between ISPs and their customers.

The alliance will use Arbor's Peakflow SP system to alert members when attacks occur. Peakflow SP is an enhanced version of software already used by leading service providers worldwide to share attack fingerprints automatically across network boundaries, without revealing competitive information.

Peakflow provides real-time network views, enabling organisations to protect against worms, distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks and insider misuse, as well as traffic and routing instabilities.

"Network security is a top concern and with IP telephony growth it will become even more critical. There should be more shared security initiatives of this type," said O'Boyle of Current Analysis.

Rapid response to attacks

- A new alliance of telecoms and IT giants aims to help network operators respond more quickly to internet attacks.
- The Fingerprint Sharing Alliance will use Arbor's Peakflow SP software to co-ordinate the sharing of attack fingerprints.

Force10 switches into datacentre hardware

PAULA MUSICH AND DAVE BAILEY

Force10 Networks has released its first fixed-configuration switch – a move that the high-end network switch company believes will help it extend beyond its traditional network core market and into the datacentre.

The 1U Force10 S50 switch has 48 Gigabit Ethernet ports and two 10 Gigabit Ethernet uplink ports. The S50's switching fabric supports an aggregate switching capacity of 192Gbit/s and will process 20 percent more traffic than competitive offerings, said Force10.

"I don't know of another product that has the same switching capacity [in that type of design]," said Zeus Kerravala of analyst company Yankee Group.

Force10 aims to compete with the likes of Cisco, HP's ProCurve networking unit and Foundry Networks. Pricing for the S50 starts at £4,250 + VAT for the base unit and £3,460 + VAT for the two-port 10 Gigabit Ethernet interface.

However, some observers doubted that the S50 will help Force10 move beyond its installed base of customers. "Will they make a huge splash with this? I don't think so," said Current Analysis analyst Steven Schuchart. "For customers who've enjoyed their Force10 equipment but needed something less expensive and with less capacity, this lets those customers continue with Force10 equipment," he added.

Meanwhile companies wishing to move data and voice onto a single converged network were given more options last week after switch vendor Extreme Networks released a series of Layer 3 Gigabit Ethernet switches specifically for IP telephony, wireless and converged applications.

There are currently two switches in Extreme's new Summit 400-24 range, the 400-24t and the 400-24p, priced at £2,620 + VAT and £3,200 + VAT respectively.

The S50 is Force10's first datacentre switch

- www.extremenetworks.com
- www.force10networks.com
- www.eweek.com

New networking options

- Force10 hopes to extend its reach into the datacentre with the launch of its S50 switch.
- Extreme has released Layer 3 Gigabit Ethernet switches for IP telephony, wireless and converged applications.

WiMax must move quickly to beat DSL

DAVE BAILEY

- WiMax broadband wireless technology needs to make fast progress if it is to be a mainstream competitor to DSL landlines, according to Ian Keene of analyst firm Gartner.

Speaking at a recent WiMax event at the National Science Museum's Wroughton site near Swindon, Keene asked, "If WiMax is going to be 'very' as opposed to 'moderately' successful, then the question is, can WiMax be ready in time with low-cost equipment to take money away from the DSL service providers?"

Keene said the important time for WiMax will be when PC vendors integrate it into chipsets, and pointed out that Wi-Fi only took off after chipsets supported it. "The opportunity for WiMax is to get in sooner rather than later," Keene added.

At the Wroughton event, Intel and WiMax equipment vendor Alvarion joined forces to put on a demonstration of the technology.

The equipment for the demo was an Alvarion four-sector base station costing about £35,000, at Intel's headquarters; and BreezeMax 3500 customer premises equipment (CPE) costing about £400, at each of seven hangars.

The Alvarion CPE aggregated Wi-Fi feeds from roof-mounted 802.11a/b/g access points and then linked via WiMax to Intel's site in Swindon, about 5km away. Remote databases and the Science Museum's web site were accessed by staff using Wi-Fi-enabled Tablet PCs to catalogue exhibits.

Intel had obtained a test and development licence to use the 3.5GHz licensed radio-frequency band from Ofcom, to support the demonstration and further use by Science Museum staff.

- www.alvarion.com
- www.intel.com/netcomms/technologies/wimax

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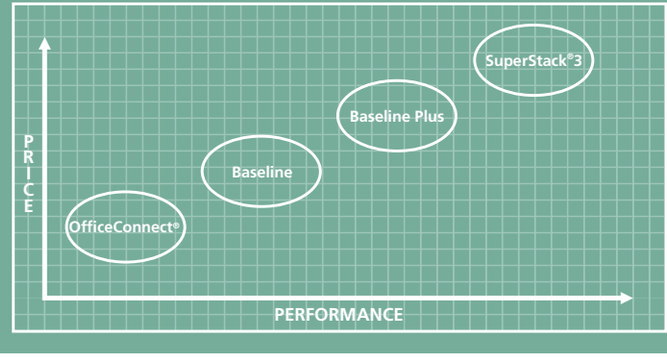

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COMMENT Bill Pechey

Approach VoIP with caution

Voice over IP services for teleworkers seem like a good idea in theory, but there are some drawbacks

Hardly a week goes by without a new voice over IP (VoIP) offering being announced, and if you have a broadband internet connection you can take advantage of these services.

The initial offerings were one-way – you could make calls to conventional telephone numbers but they couldn't call you back. The current crop offers a wide range of phone numbers, typically London numbers or 0870 ones, as well as other local area code numbers, and communications watchdog Ofcom is also offering numbers in the 054 range for users not always at a particular location.

The prices are low but it's not a good idea to use VoIP just to save money because similar tariffs are available for conventional landlines. However, there are many other attractions to the new services, especially for smaller companies. For example, it is easy to set up a Centrex-like service where no private branch exchange (PBX) is needed and each employee has a VoIP phone connected to the office local area network (LAN). This can save a lot of money and, because calls can be redirected to any internet connection, it is very useful for employees on the road.

VoIP services have advantages for the increasingly-popular "distributed company" where employees work from home or are in several small offices. VoIP can make the whole thing look like a conventional structure with all the PBX features and systems that would otherwise be set up with conventional telephone lines, which would be more expensive and not so flexible.

However, not everything is rosy, since the performance of VoIP systems depends on the quality of the internet connection. A few seconds interruption is usually not a problem for a data service but can cause serious difficulties when it comes to voice calls. In addition, you have to think carefully about what happens when the power fails. It is taken for granted that a conventional phone line just keeps on working, but with VoIP, battery-backed systems will be essential and a lot of LAN kit will have to be protected for voice services.

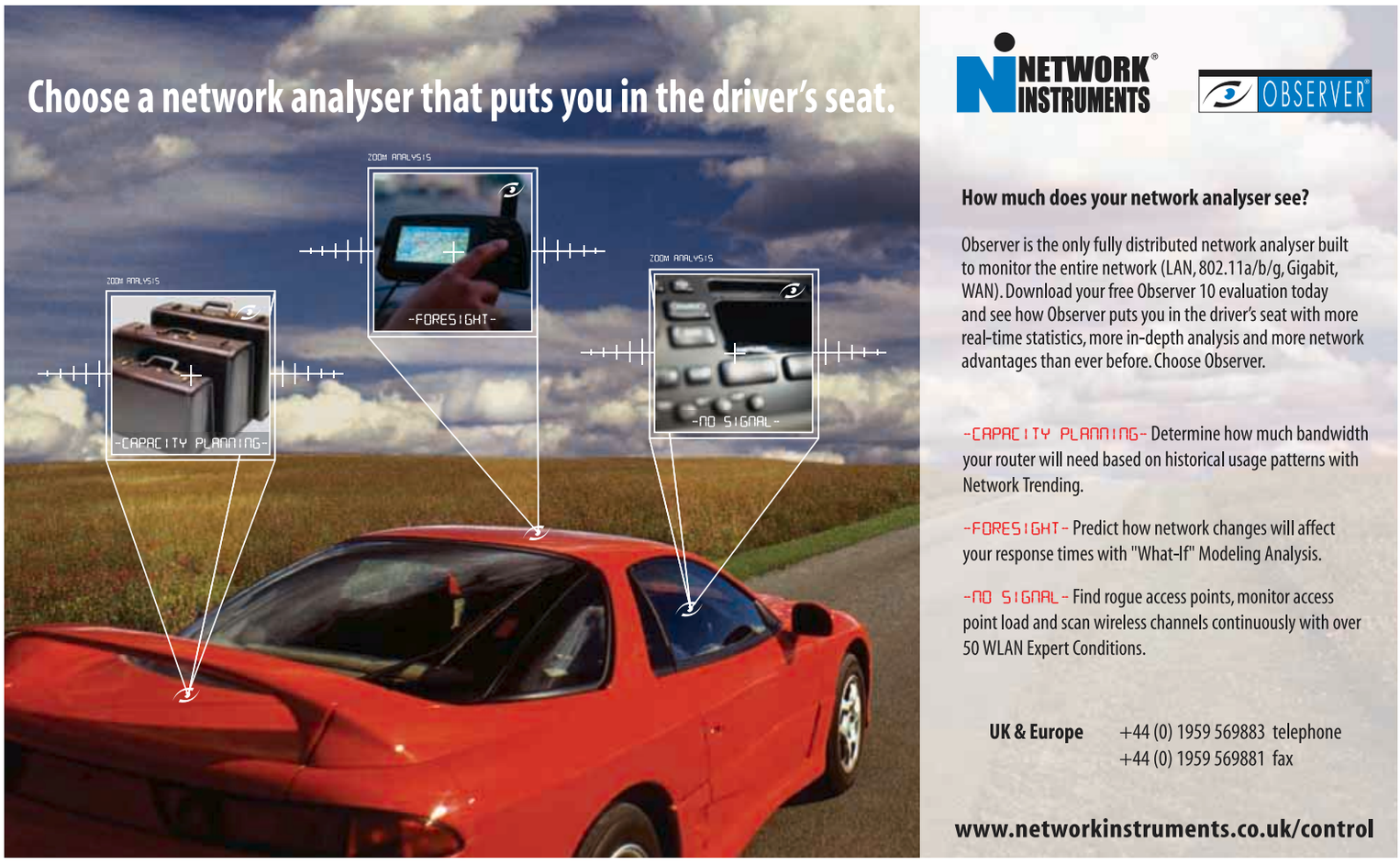
"How do you provide location information when a VoIP phone user could be calling from anywhere in the world"

Then there is the issue of 999 calls. A conventional call to the emergency services has higher priority and the networks provide information about the location of the phone, whether fixed or mobile. Providing higher priority on the internet is not a trivial matter, however, and how do you provide location information when the caller could be anywhere in the world? As a result, VoIP network operators are not keen to support 999 calls.

Ofcom has been looking into regulation of VoIP services and has consulted widely. The question of access to the emergency services has been the hottest issue. The conclusions should be available soon, although Ofcom has already indicated that it favours light regulation.

Some companies will use VoIP connections to provide extra capacity for an existing PBX, but it's a good idea to check the price of the extra gateway equipment required. Anyone thinking of switching to VoIP for their phone services should think carefully about reliability and access to the emergency services.

→ bill_pechey@ieee.org



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SMP 3a £50,715 - £54,543 p.a.

You will support the workstream managers in all aspects of project management including managing the integrated project plan and managing dependent risks and issues. You will work as the programme 'common decisions' project manager, managing common issues and decisions that affect the CRS solution. **Ref: NPIT 2874.**

Business Continuity Manager

SMP 3b, £45,504 - £48,905 p.a.

You will ensure that throughout the London Cluster, Business Continuity processes are designed, documented and maintained with Suppliers and the National Service Management Directorate, using the governance of ITIL processes, raising the awareness of Business Continuity to highlight and mitigate the potential risks and business impacts. **Ref: NPIT 2875.**

Registration Authority Manager

SMP 3b £45,504 - £48,905 p.a.

You will ensure that appropriate IT Security frameworks and authentication services are established and maintained for handling personal information in a confidential manner, to quality standards, as part of the London NHS CRS and National Spine. **Ref: NPIT 2872.**

Service Management Analyst

SMP 3b £45,504 - £48,905 p.a.

You will apply ITIL standards to assure Service Management governance of the London CRS programme and ensure that Problem, Change, Configuration, Software Asset, and Service Introduction and Release Management responsibilities across all the new applications are properly represented within the cluster governance structure. **Ref: NPIT 2868.**

Interface Analyst

SMP 3b £45,504 - £48,905 p.a.

Responsible for working with suppliers on the planning, analysis, development and testing of critical interfaces required by sites during CRS deployment, you will help sites plan the work that needs to be undertaken locally, mapping through interface engines and working with the legacy suppliers to identify any issues which may impede implementation plans. **Ref: NPIT 2869.**

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SMP 3b £45,504 - £48,905 p.a.

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SMP 4b £36,755 - £39,435 p.a.

You will provide specialist software testing input covering Module, System and Integration Testing, to ensure the CRS solution meets the agreed programme quality standards. This will include contributing to a wide range of testing activities, including development and review of guidance, test plans, test scenarios, test cases, problem resolution and delivery of testing services. **Ref: NPIT 2871.**

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Comment Why firms will want video conferencing **p28**
Case study How Cognos's ReportNet system helped antivirus vendor F-Secure improve sales reporting **p28**

MANAGEMENTWEEK

EDITOR Madeline Bennett

LEADERSHIP, LEGISLATION AND CAREERS INFORMATION

Report finds e-government faults

JAMES MURRAY

The Work Foundation last week criticised the government's IT strategy, claiming that mismanagement means the public sector is failing to maximise return on investment (ROI) from e-government projects.

The consultancy company's findings were based on a survey of government employees and the public. It concluded that failure to consult frontline staff, and poor communication with a public that is largely unaware of e-government services, resulted in a disappointing return on IT investments.

Ian Cockerill, government practice manager for Europe at Adobe Systems, which sponsored the research, said although there have been huge investment in public sector IT, most people did not feel that they provided the expected returns.

The Work Foundation report suggests that poor communication between managers, frontline staff and the public is at the root of the problem. Alexandra Jones, senior researcher at the Work Foundation, cited last year's delays in record checks at the Criminal Records Bureau as an example of the communication gap.

The bureau's new IT systems were installed on the understanding that over 70 percent of applications would then be made online. However, it found 80 percent of applications were still on paper, and this created a backlog. "The strategy wasn't necessarily wrong, but not enough people knew you could apply online and that there were incentives to do so," said Jones.

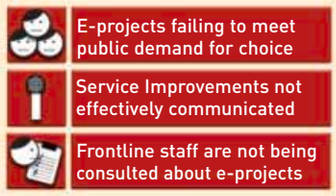
The report also claimed that the government, and particularly the Gershon Review of public sector efficiency, regarded IT as a panacea, and neglected the need for process changes. "Too many projects are skipping the business case phase and seeing technology as an end in itself," commented Jones.

The Work Foundation recommended that technology's role in public sector projects should be determined earlier. It also said there should be more publicity to encourage use of new services, and that frontline IT staff should be consulted and given more training.

The report's findings echo those of Socitm, the association for public sector IT managers. On the launch of its e2Government campaign in February, Socitm claimed the first wave of e-government projects had failed to transform processes.

The latest criticism is a blow to the government, which last December claimed 96 percent of government services would meet the target to be online by the end of 2005.

E-government shortcomings



Source: The Work Foundation

Microsoft beefs up its business intelligence

JAMES MURRAY

Microsoft Business Solutions (MBS) will enhance its business intelligence (BI) capabilities this month with new functionality for its Great Plains 8.0 business applications suite.

At the heart of the launch is a new BI foundation layer, including key performance indicators for MBS Business Portal, SQL Server 2000 Reporting Services Report Packs and SmartList Builder.

The Analysis Cubes for Excel product set, which Microsoft acquired from Professional Advantage in february, will also be included in the launch.

New modules will boost Great Plains' reporting abilities

Gerice Anderson, senior global product manager for Microsoft Great Plains, said that the extended BI functionality is expected to ship from mid-April. She added that the new tools would help businesses to extract data input into business applications, which would enable them to make better business decisions.

The new modules will be fully integrated with the Great Plains suite, so they will not require existing customers to migrate any data, according to Anderson.

"This is the first full Project Green release from Great Plains," said Anderson. "It shows our commitment to the existing product set while including greater integration."

The BI extensions will be accompanied by the release of Great Plains Extender – a tool to modify data-entry windows – as well as enhanced integration capabilities for the Analytical Accounting module.

The announcement completes a busy few weeks for Microsoft's Great Plains. MBS last month launched a range of modules with improved functionality for charities and public sector bodies, as well as free upgrades for SQL Server Reports and Business Portal 2.5.

Microsoft plans to launch Great Plains version 8.5 at the end of 2005.

BI boosts Great Plains

- Microsoft is to enhance its Great Plains business apps suite.
- A BI foundation layer will add key performance indicators for MBS Business Portal and reporting services for SQL Server 2000.
- New tools will help firms extract data from business applications.

CA acquisition adds identity access options

MADELINE BENNETT

Computer Associates has acquired an identity and access management system for mainframes, designed to protect firms against security attacks by closing down obsolete user access codes.

CA announced its purchase of eTrust Cleanup from data security vendor InfoSec last week. The technology is designed to identify and remove out-of-date and rogue accounts, to prevent unauthorised access to corporate systems.

The tools can also help firms to manage the demands of privacy legislation and auditing regulations such as Basel II and the US Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which require evidence that corporate data has not been tampered with.

The acquisition is evidence of the firm's security focus, according to Mike Small, CA's director of eTrust strategy. "We believe identity and account management is the cornerstone of security," he said. "Many security vendors have defined computer security as defending against hackers and viruses. I'm not saying that's not important, but another pillar is having control of who is allowed to access what."

CA already offers mainframe identity management systems, and the Cleanup technology will support its existing capabilities.

"Nearly all large firms depend upon the mainframe. But as it's matured people have been given accounts that haven't been removed," said Small. He added that the Cleanup product helps firms safely locate accounts for deletion.

CA was previously reselling the product as a third-party add-on, but Small said the acquisition now gives it complete control over development of the technology. "We've got a vision of an integrated, complete suite for identity and access management."

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COMMENT James Woudhuysen

Video conferencing means business

In future business will depend much more heavily on video systems for face-to-face communication

Do a Google search for "productivity benefits of video-conferencing" (including quotation marks) and you'll find three entries. So if the voice over IP community has been slow to explain the productivity benefits of VoIP, it has been slower still to foresee the coming revolution in PC-based video conferencing.

Yet Manchester Business School recently found that, of 36 UK and Irish firms planning to implement new technology, no fewer than 24 said they had video conferencing in mind. The main benefits of video conferencing, according to current users, are that it cuts costs and saves time, particularly in global applications.

But what are the wider business benefits? Ever since Gerard Nierenberg and Henry Calero's *How to Read a Person Like a Book* (1971) and Desmond Morris's *Manwatching: A Field Guide to Human Behaviour* (1977), the study of body language has become a subject of great academic and popular interest. Yet what is not so well known is how Charles Darwin's *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) revealed that the same facial expressions are common to human beings all over the world.

In a riposte to the racists of his day, Darwin affirmed humanity's common descent and what he called "the unity of mankind". It is this universal aspect of human facial expression that explains some of the global benefits of video conferencing.

The Japanese or the Chinese are all supposed to look the same, be inscrutable, and hate to "lose face". But in today's new phase of globalisation, where more and more of the production of the planet's wealth will involve Asia, even a Londoner can recognise, on a screen, when someone from the Far East is angry, joyful, surprised, afraid, distressed or disgusted.

Some psychologists say six emotional states are the building blocks of a repertoire of up to 30 complex emotions, including irritation, exasperation, pride, gratitude – and of course love. But the *productivity* of the human face, both to its owner and its audience, goes further than its expression of emotions. Working with the voice, a face can also help express the logic of an argument, and how an argument is being received.

"Working with the voice, a face can also help express the logic of an argument, and how it is being received"

We purse our lips when we concentrate on doing something. We open our mouth when listening intently. From infancy onward, the symmetry, asymmetry and animation of the face are powerful sources of communication. When the face comes to IT, it will finally confirm an old adage – that most interpersonal communication is actually conducted at a visual, not an aural level.

On-screen faces will not just be a fun "nice-to-have". They will dramatically improve the quality of comprehension in business – especially in global business, where different native tongues remain an impediment to clear and clearly understood global English.

It would be foolish to underestimate the power of the voice, and the advent of CD-quality voice calls to mobile phones is certainly a step forward. But in voice-only teleconferencing, distinguishing among, say, eight participants is tough.

Moreover, speech itself will be enormously assisted by the introduction of brows, eyebrows, twinkles, flared nostrils and all that.

People play movies on their faces, so faces on screens will be central to the future of business.

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Business intelligence CASE STUDY by Phil Muncaster

Unified reporting aids decision-making

Antivirus firm F-Secure needed a unified reporting tool to make it easier and quicker to compile and analyse business data, while at the same time ensuring accuracy

Summary

- Antivirus vendor F-Secure has deployed Cognos's ReportNet suite as a single, standardised reporting system for its sales performance worldwide.
- It says the system makes it easier for business users to bring together data from many sources to create and amend reports.

Like many firms, Finland-based F-Secure, a vendor of antivirus and intrusion-prevention tools, found it was struggling to manage huge amounts of data stored across disparate systems. To tackle the problem, it decided to look for a flexible reporting tool that could be used across the enterprise.

After looking at several options, the firm chose ReportNet from business intelligence (BI) tools vendor Cognos. One reason for the choice was that Cognos already supplied F-Secure with tools – PowerPlay for analysis; and DecisionStream to extract data from SAP and Siebel systems – so it was relatively easy to integrate the system with its other BI software, says Esa Martonen, chief information officer at F-Secure. This enabled the first reports to be generated just a few weeks after F-Secure chose the product.

Martonen: Data is available online and in real time

Previously, F-Secure's managers had been using a number of applications, including Microsoft Excel and Access, to track information and produce reports. The absence of a single unified system meant there were often disagreements over whose reports were the most accurate.

"Discussion was not on the correct level – it was difficult to steer the whole ship," says Martonen. "The most important reason for choosing ReportNet software was that we all needed to speak the same language and have a standard reporting tool."

Martonen says the implementation went very smoothly, partly thanks to the expertise of a local Finnish partner with experience of a range of Cognos products. This partner was able to give hands-on advice to the company and enabled F-Secure to avoid mistakes the partner had seen in the past.

"We also trained specialists in using the product for one or two weeks, which was helpful as it enabled a fast rollout," says Martonen.

Because ReportNet consolidates all of F-Secure's sales reporting requirements in a single system, senior managers now spend more time productively analysing figures and improving the business, rather than arguing about whether the figures are correct, says Martonen.

Martonen also praises the speed and usability of the ReportNet system. Because it is web-based, business data is available online and in real time from any location. "It is very easy now to create reports and to do it quite quickly," he says. "Reporting is a continuous process and it's important to be able to respond quickly to changes."

The new software has also enabled a specialist business unit to assume all reporting responsibilities, where in the past it was the job of an information systems unit, which also dealt with data integration. Martonen says the information systems unit can now concentrate its efforts fully on data integration and it has already been able to collect more data from more sources as a result.

For the future, F-Secure plans to extend the tools for financial reporting and cost reporting.

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ITSNEAK

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Just do it

Reader Paul Harper has sent in the best nomination so far for Sneak's version of Room 101, detailing an IT term or practice fit to be banished to oblivion. "The word 'paradigm'", he writes. "For several reasons, not least because it's just a poncy way of saying 'do it'. 'Paradigm shift' = 'Do it differently'; 'Develop a new paradigm' = 'We don't know how to do it yet'; 'Robust paradigm' = 'How the boss wants it done and we ain't arguing'; 'Paradigm failure' = 'It used to work but it's busted and we don't know why'; 'Paradigm implementation' = 'I can do it on my new BlackBerry executive penis-extension'." Yes, we all know where Harper is coming from. If you have a pet peeve, just fire up your penis-extension and drop Sneak a note.

Flimsy formula

It arrived a fortnight too early, so Sneak assumes this bonkers press release from Microsoft is not an April Fool's jest: "A London Metropolitan University survey, carried out on behalf of Microsoft, has found a precise play of variables is at work in business. Followed in the right ratio, they should help guarantee success." And the formula is S=0.77T+0.51R+0.17P-0.37C-0.2I+4.4, apparently, where the letters stand for success, trust, respect, passion, communication and intelligence. So, to form a perfect relationship with, say, Microsoft, Sneak must up his trust level to 0.77 from, well, zero; increase respect to 0.51 from zero; find some passion about the firm; communicate a bit; and suppress 80 percent of his intelligence. And then add 4.4...

→ www.tinyurl.com/3qvfc

"These nice people have analysed the linguistic patterns in your email and would like you to go with them."

Get shorty?

Sneak is a fan of the TinyURL service, as above, which takes long URLs and turns them into something that a sane person might bother to type, but it's a bit of a lucky dip. You can't tell that the link above takes you to a bonkers press release: it might take you to Sneak's personal phish pharm. So a warning of the destination would help. This is what the MakeAShorterLink service offers, displaying the target URL briefly to give a chance to opt out. The only problem? Links like http://makeashorterlink.com/?A2FC535CA. MakeAShorterLink seems to have forgotten that it would help – a lot – if its links were actually short.

Got a story for Sneak?
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LASTWORD

Who would trust a schoolchild with a pencil? There is a danger they would use it to draw on their desk and waste time, rather than write essays or tackle problems of quantum physics, so it's best not to take the risk.

This is the logic of conclusions drawn from Munich University's analysis of computer use by 100,000 15-year-olds in 31 countries. The academics said claims that computer use boosted academic performance were wrong and had not taken into account that people with PCs tend to be wealthier with all the advantages that brings. They added that distractions such as games and online chat might explain why more time spent on computers, leads to lower performance in maths and English.

This was welcome news for technophobes in the media. "Children's learning is hindered rather than helped by computers," said a *Daily Mail* report. But almost all missed the point: like pens or paper, computers are just tools that can be used well or badly. If the Munich analysis is right – a big "if" – it merely suggests there is poor supervision in schools and homes.

The Munich arguments may be useful if they make people look at the quality of educational computing rather than just the amount of time spent at computers. Much of the software for subjects ranging from languages to maths is excellent, so it would be a shame if it were abandoned along with copies of Doom.

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KEWNEYCOMMENT

Voice recognition may fail chattering classes

Is Bill Gates right to be so gung ho about voice recognition technology?

I have very bad handwriting. Actually, I'm not sure it qualifies as handwriting. I don't mean that you'd have trouble reading it. In fact, you'd probably be able to read it just fine, but you'd never understand how it could all be written by the same hand. And that won't do for computerised handwriting-recognition, which requires some sort of consistency.

So the first sentence of this column, written on a first-generation Tablet PC device, comes out "Than try bad handwriting" – and that's a very good example. Mostly, it is worse. And yet I know – because I show my now-antique ViewSonic Tablet to visitors and ask them to try this feature – that most people are astonished how good the handwriting-recognition is.

So it's hard for me to get a feel for how good the next-generation Tablet will be at voice recognition.

My sceptical soul says it will be worse than the current one is at handwriting; but I know that Bill Gates is entranced by the performance of the new speech chip, which ViewSonic is finalising for the next generation. Half of me remembers how enthusiastic Gates has been about some absolute turkeys in the past. And half looks at my friends, and the handwriting samples they've given me, and the spookily accurate transcription, and thinks: "Maybe... just maybe..." and wonders if there is a rollover this week.

The thing is, we write sentences. We don't speak them. And unfortunately, most voice recognition tests I've seen are tests of people reading aloud – from books, articles and so on.

That's not a fair test. Much of the business of recognition is context. It's not just the word: it's the words before and after. And in human voice interaction (conversations, duh!) much of that context is missing. "Have you...?" "Erm, no, not... because Dad. But...?" "I was waiting..." "Can't help that, Betty said it would be." "Well, Betty..." Just one ambiguous sequence of syllables in there, and transcription becomes a lottery.

And so, I don't feel that the speech chip won't work. I'm sure ViewSonic and Microsoft are onto a breakthrough. I'm just sceptical about how useful it will be. In short, I think most people's speech-writing matches my handwriting. You may be able to see what it looks like, but you'll need to be a human to understand it.

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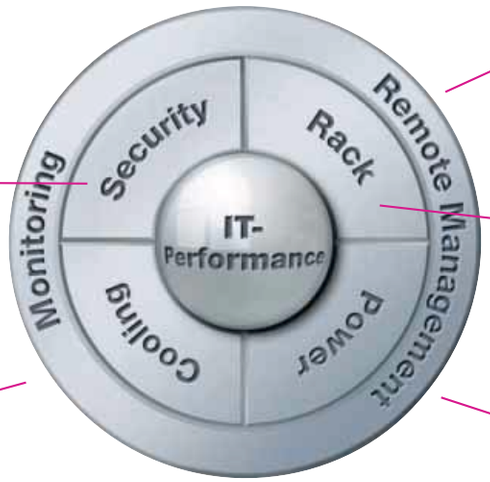

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