

Article Archive 2004

December 2004 - Under Attack!

Crime is rife on the Internet, and one of the exploits which has received significant press recently is the Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack. There have been numerous high-profile outages caused by such assaults, and the nature of these attacks makes protection from them difficult and costly. With an increasing proportion of businesses becoming reliant on the Internet to carry out their day-to-day business, online assets are considered an easy target. There are few more profitable crimes which can be undertaken in comfort, from thousands of miles away, and insulated from the victim by national boundaries.

November 2004 - Streetwise in Cyberspace

What is more damaging crime or the fear of crime? A topical question; on the radio last week I heard a pundit claim that children have suffered a 90% reduction in their freedom to roam in a single generation. This, it was suggested, was due to an exaggerated fear of violet crime which is simply not supported by the statistics. The argument (in part) was that children were being inadvertently put at risk because they fail to develop the skills and self-reliance they will need as teenagers / young adults early enough.

October 2004 - The eBay Revolution

The name eBay' is fast becoming a household name and there can't be many Internet users who haven't succumbed to the lure of the world's largest online auction. In fact, eBay is now the most popular site that UK office workers visit when they should be working! What you may not realise, as you sit in front of your PC frantically trying to outbid your eBay rivals, is how many other people around the world are doing exactly the same thing and just how big a phenomenon eBay has become.

September 2004 - Balancing Strategy and Tactics

Information technology has been, and continues to be, the dominant factor behind changes in the way organisations manage information and service delivery. In theory, the rapid evolution of hardware, networks and software development tools creates countless opportunities to improve productivity by reorganising the way we do things to create ever greater efficiency and service. In practice however this can be much harder to achieve. This is particularly true with some of the more abstract or aspirational projects which seek to implement a completely new way of working on an existing business.

August 2004 - When less is more

In a couple of recent articles I have written about the growing propensity for all kinds of consumer electronics devices to have overlapping features. Phones can be radios and satellite navigation systems whilst personal organisers try to double as cameras and phones etc. Whilst this makes life interesting for the gadget enthusiast, the boundaries of form and function can get very blurred and sometimes it only serves to remind us that some things are best done with a dedicated tool designed specifically for the job. In fact often the extra features are primarily there to aid the sales process either to differentiate products from their competitors or to create demand for upgrades.

July 2004 - Hitting the Road Again

One of the promises of the telecommunications revolution was a society in which we spend less time travelling, and more time communicating at a distance. The vision presented was of a world where commuting was replaced by computing, and meetings we held by videophone or by donning a virtual reality headset. Aspects of what was perceived as the lifestyle epitome have indeed been realized, but in practice there are many activities which we need, or choose, to carry out in person.

June 2004 - Form Factor

Being involved in IT and having more than a passing interest in useful (in the widest possible sense of the word) gadgets and gizmos I often find myself discussing peoples latest phone / DVD Recorder / computerized toaster in much the same way as people talk about the football or the weather. One of the things that has struck me recently in observing the things we all buy is the ever changing interaction between the form factor of a device and its functionality.

May 2004 - Re-Use IT

As the "Energy from Waste" plant nears completion, the re-use and re-cycle debate continues the outcome of which we will have to wait for. However, to a lesser or greater degree we all re-use and recycle, if you doubt me, take a look in your garage or garden shed and you will see what I mean! Perhaps the best exponents of this lifestyle are the generations that lived through the austerity years of the war and post war era, where re-cycling and re-use was out of necessity rather than desire, unlike the disposable culture that our children are being brought up in today.

April 2004 - It's mine, it's my 'precious'

The world of the World Wide Web is always changing, and has been available for long enough that most of us have long ago set out on our online journey. In fact, many organisations have had a website for long enough that it has become "precious" to them, remained unchanged for too long, and so maybe, has become a little too 'precious'.

March 2004 - E-Mail and the World Wide Web - time for an upgrade?

When we talk about the Internet, we are often referring to the World Wide Web and E-Mail. They are undoubtedly the killer applications which catapulted the Internet into the commercial sphere, but they are both showing their age in one way or another.

February 2004 - "It says what?"

Welcome to the 21st century the 'communication era', or is it? No one will dispute the fact that we can communicate with each other faster and more easily than we have ever done previously, but have we really improved the quality of our communication?

January 2004 - "The Digital Organisation" - Jobsworths and control freaks need not apply

It's official, investing in computers does increase productivity! This startling conclusion, based on the work of Eric Brynjolfsson, an MIT economics professor, was the basis of a full page article in the Financial Times recently. Given the overwhelming importance of productivity growth, both to individual companies as they strive to compete and to the economy as a whole, I decided to look up the published works of professor B. and see how he had come to his conclusions.