



Solving Your IT Problems



News

Support Update

IT Bromley & Croydon offer a variety of support agreements ranging from Diamond Support with a **guaranteed** next day on-site service, through to cost effective support unit agreement for smaller businesses. For more information on support agreements please contact David Lees on 020 8777 2921 or visit www.ITCroydon.co.uk/support

Small Business Server 2003

Several years ago server based computers were restricted to small businesses with eight or more computers, with fairly advanced requirements.

Microsoft have moved the goalposts significantly with the release of Small Business Server 2003, where, with the falling price of entry level server computers, it is now possible to buy a server computer including operating system for under £1,000.

It needs to be stated that the average business will want to add on a few extras such as a tape backup device and an upgraded specification, but nonetheless this still equates to an affordable and practical solution for many small businesses.

The main advantages to purchasing a server computer with small business server 2003 are as follows...

- Data can be shared around a network quickly and securely, through a centralised login process
- Microsoft Exchange is included and therefore provides a powerful email and shared calendar solution.
- Backups can be automatically set to run daily on to a high capacity tape.
- Small Business Server 2003 provides a secure gateway for connecting in to the network remotely.

Small Business Server 2003 is still very much in its infancy and the first service pack is due shortly, to incorporate some of the security updates recently released in Windows XP Service Pack 2. At the time of writing the first published Microsoft administrators handbook just arrived hot off the press and so comprehensive support will take time to become fully available; however this is a significant move by Microsoft to compete against rival products and to make server based computing available to all small businesses.

We consider it a compliment when you recommend ITBC to your friends and business contacts.



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Small Business IT Services

- ⇒ Consultancy & IT Assessment
- ⇒ IT Project Management
- ⇒ PC & Network Installation
- ⇒ Internet Solutions
- ⇒ On-site & Remote IT Support
- ⇒ Anti-Virus & Security
- ⇒ Flexible Support Options



Anti -Virus & Security Issues

The risk from outside attack in the form of viruses, worms and intrusion from the Internet poses a major threat to small businesses.

At best these can result in computer downtime, servicing costs and a general annoyance. At worst all data from a computers hard disk can become erased or a computer can be harnessed to transmit junk email messages to clients and the outside world.

All in one software products appear to offer a complete solution for single users or small offices, although the level of configuration required and problems encountered can be quite daunting.

For older computers especially Internet Security packages can effectively bring the computer concerned to almost a standstill, as well as for users still using dial up Internet access and so great care needs to be taken in selecting an appropriate protection level of protection.

Single firewall products such as Sygate Personal Firewall Pro offer a good balance between security and functionality for Windows 2000 / 9x computers, as well as single servers. New products are also appearing on the market which attempt to intelligently stop new threats, such as Finjan Surfinguard.

Windows XP Service Pack 2 users already have a basic level of firewall protection to help prevent unauthorised access from the Internet and so often all that is

required is Anti-Virus software, with the addition of perhaps anti-spyware.

Spyware is the latest form of Internet based threat whereby files are invisibly downloaded on to a computer, that then signal to various Internet sites to display 'pop up' adverts. These spyware processes can also leak confidential information to the Internet, slow down a computer or even cause Windows to completely crash.

2005 edition anti-virus and security software also contains the ability to detect and remove spyware processes, although at present additional software such as spybot or spysweeper, is often also required. In extreme cases more than one anti-spyware product is required to fully eliminate spyware from a computer.

Spyware network protection products are also appearing such as CA's Pest Patrol and advanced versions of Symantec and McAfee software are also incorporating spyware protection. Also even Microsoft are now releasing their own antispyware software.

Ideally, even in a small network environment, some form of hardware firewall is also required, especially with the low cost of entry level 'all in one' products such as D-link's 504T router, which provide basic protection to help stop unauthorised network access from the Internet.

For servers it is also possible to implement a solution which filters email and junk

email messages before they reach a users mailbox, without unduly impacting on performance.

In an ideal world the Internet Service Provider would be providing this service, to prevent any potential problem messages from even entering the computer system and in fairness many are starting to offer this as standard.

For larger small businesses a dedicated firewall product such as the Watchguard 6TC or a Check Point 105, provides intelligent traffic analysis to prevent unauthorised processes from signalling out to the Internet. These products also support 'Virtual Private Networking' which allows a remote user to securely connect into the office network, using the Internet as an extended network.

Finally it should be noted that the Windows update utility on all workstations and servers should be set to 'automatic update' where applicable, to ensure that the latest security patches are applied automatically.

However be careful of any emails attachments purporting to contain vital security updates for your computer, because invariably these will contain viruses.

All in all there are no simple answers to Internet security and a considerable amount of time and resources needs to be invested into making a computer system secure; however the cost of inaction is often higher!

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Featured Security Products:

- **Watchguard Firebox 6TC**



- **Check Point Safe Office 105**



- **Dlink 504T**



- **Webroot Spy-Sweeper**



- **Finjan Surfinguard**



Backup Against The Wall - Part1

I have yet to come across the computer user who has not lost or mislaid work at some time or another. Often computer backup is one of those important areas that is not urgent and therefore never quite seems to come to the top of today's priority list. That is until the day arrives when our vital data is missing, corrupted, deleted or sent to oblivion by a hard disk failure.

Many backup devices are available for around £100 and others are virtually free. Some of the common backup issues, questions and solutions are explored below.

Part 1 Backup Versus Disaster Recovery

It is important to note that most basic backup software, including software usually bundled with an operating system, does not offer a disaster recovery option and therefore to facilitate full disaster recovery additional software has to be purchased.

On its own backup software will only enable data files to be restored in the event of a hard disk failing or the operating system becoming corrupted. In order for the data files to be accessed again the new hard disk will need to have the operating system re-installed and an array of display, sound, network, printer and other device drivers, before finally the original programs can be re-installed. Once this lengthy and sometimes problematic procedure has been completed, then the data files can actually be restored and work can continue.

However some computers can be restored from the manufacturers original CD's quite quickly, in which case a backup of just the files created may be all that is required. Although if the computer concerned is a file server, has been configured at length, or does not have the original media backup, the disaster recovery software option is essential.

Disaster recovery enables everything to be restored in one fail swoop, providing of course that your computer can access the device holding a copy of your entire hard disks data, without the operating system. This is where many USB devices come unstuck, because generally USB devices are only activated after the operating system has been re-installed and are therefore not much good when the operating system is actually on the USB backup media!

Most other backup devices can be accessed, providing a bootable floppy disk or CD-ROM have first been created using the backup software's disaster recovery option. Starting the computer, with the first disaster recovery disk inserted, then allows you to connect directly to the backup device and the restoration process begins. A carbon copy of the original hard disk will then be transferred to the new hard disk and shortly afterwards everything is back the way it was before the disaster happened. Basic computer start-up disks can usually be created from within the operating system, which allows the user to at least access the computer's hard disk, in order to try and solve more minor problems.

If the computer refuses to start-up from the A: floppy disk drive or the D: CD-ROM drive it may be necessary to enter the BIOS (by pressing DEL, F1, F2, F10 or ALT B as the computer starts up) as an option may have been pre-set to prevent starting up the computer from either a floppy disk or a CD-ROM accidentally.

When choosing any backup, or disaster recovery device, always be aware of the size of the information on your hard disk that you need to back up. Most hard disks nowadays are so much bigger than the capacity of smaller backup devices and so even if these devices are offering a disaster recovery option, the cost of buying large quantities of backup media may be prohibitive.

With the advent of fast Internet connections it is now also possible to use a secure remote backup site, which offer both a basic data only backup option and a full disaster recovery solution.

The Future of Windows XP

Windows XP has now been around on the marketplace for over four years and so has already exceeded the lifetime of Windows Millennium by over two years!

However surprisingly there are no immediate plans to replace Windows XP and instead it has recently been overhauled in the shape of XP Service Pack 2.

Service Pack 2 could almost be called a new release of Windows due to the major changes incorporated inside it and this update has recently been launched as a free upgrade.

The successor to Windows XP will eventually become Windows 'Longhorn', although expect this name to be changed before the eventual release date scheduled for late 2005 / early 2006.

This does provide a welcome breathing space to those of us who are just beginning to get used to the Windows XP interface and service pack 2 provides long awaited security enhancements, along with a large number of improvements and fixes.

However with Microsoft continually striving to make Windows more secure and with their recent spyware and anti-virus company acquisitions it will be interesting to see what features the next release contains.



Windows XP Service Pack 2...

Service Pack 2 is a major overhaul of the Windows XP operating system which was almost released as a new version of Windows.

SP2 was finally made available 18 months after SP1 and resolves a significant number of issues that have been prevalent over the last year or so.

Firstly many computers have been affected by an 'inadvertently downloaded utility' that redirects Internet Explorer's home page to a 'junk search engine'. This then automatically displays unrelated search results linking to premium content and adult sites. Up until SP2 it has been extremely difficult to remove this type of unwanted utility; however SP2

provides a list of all third party Internet Explorer add in programs and a check box to remove any unwanted ones.

Internet Explorer also comes with a long overdue pop up blocker as standard, which can be customised, although this in itself will not prevent pop up's caused by spyware..

Both Internet Explorer and Outlook Express have **improved security against malicious files attempting to download from the Internet**, as both programs now display a warning box prompting the user to stop the download concerned. Again this seems to be an improvement on a recent Outlook Express security setting which appeared to decide that all email attachments were potentially dangerous and refused to open any of them!

Windows XP SP2 also comes with a more sophisticated **built in fire-**

wall and now suggests that only one firewall should be installed on the computer. This is an interesting development as most market leading security firms have been producing complete security products for Windows XP (which in many cases have not exactly been trouble free), although many provide additional outbound traffic scanning.

In the light of this there will probably be a general move away from complete security products for Windows XP and the standard users' requirement will revert to an anti-virus program to complement Microsoft's upgraded firewall and their new anti-spyware software which is currently in Beta testing.

Anti-spam products will still serve a valuable addition to the desktop PC's armoury for the immediate future, although more and more Internet Service Providers are now effectively blocking junk mail before it even reaches a user's computer.

Below is a selection of recent Microsoft Office support incidents logged, along with the solutions offered. In time a database of problems and resolutions will become available on the www.ITCroydon.co.uk website.

Issue – After installing Microsoft Access an error message appears stating that *Access cannot start because there is no license for it on this machine.*

Answer – This is an unusual issue which has an even more unusual resolution. First locate a font in the Windows Fonts directory called hatten.ttf. Delete or move this font, re-install Microsoft Access and then the Microsoft Access will start normally.

Issue – Outlook frequently freezes, closes or refuses to load properly

Answer – It is possible that the Outlook data file (either a .pst or a .ost file) has become corrupted. Search for a utility on your computer called scanpst.exe, copy a shortcut to this program onto the desktop and then search for your outlook data file, including the option to search hidden files. Once located run scanpst.exe, browse to your Outlook data file and select repair.

Issue – Word refuses to open and generates an error message.

Answer – There may be an add-in trying to load whenever Word starts up, which is not able to open properly. Check the online www.technet.com database for the exact error message and the corresponding explanation. Add-ins are normally located in the Application Data\Microsof\Word\STARTUP directory and if re-named they will not be able to load the next time Word is opened.

Issue – Word opens but generates an error message when trying to save a document.

Answer – Again the error message may provide a clue as to the nature of the problem, which can be checked on www.technet.com. A recent incidence of this problem was actually caused by the default printer being set to a network printer that was not currently available. Word often checks the default printer when formatting a document and this problem disappeared when a different default printer was selected.

Issue – Microsoft Office generally seems unstable or applications freeze intermittently.

Answer – For unspecific problems it is best to try updating Microsoft Office via the office.update.microsoft.com website. A large number of program improvements and service packs are available there, which more often than not resolve general problems encountered with Microsoft Office.