07/11/2011 |

Using your smartphone or tablet with your network-attached storage

31/10/2011 03:32

Why use your smartphone or tablet with your NAS

[1]There are times when you want to upload or download files from your network-attached storage device using your smartphone or tablet computer. Examples of this include offloading files from a low-capacity device, through making media that you took or acquired through your device available at all times from your DLNA-equipped NAS to simply backing up data held on your device.

Of course, you may simply treat that NAS simply as a network transfer point for your data. Examples of this may include working with documents that you start on an iPad and want to complete on your regular computer or conceptual “rough-shot” pictures that you take you your phone’s camera and want to work with further using Photoshop and other software on your computer.

How is it done

But how am I able to do this with my network-attached storage and my mobile devices? Some network-attached storage devices may use a Web front for the file collections where as others may implement certain extensions to DLNA for uploading and downloading some media files. This latter situation is infact a long-term goal for the DLNA Home Media Network, especially when it comes to shifting or syncing multimedia files like music or images.

These environments don’t necessarily provide a consistent or ideal user experience for the mobile device user. This can typically be due to a Web front that is optimised for desktop use only to DLNA server and client apps not offering the proper sync or file-transfer functionality.

SMB file-manager apps

The preferred method that I would use is SMB/CIFS network file handling which every network-attached storage device supports thanks to Linux’s SAMBA software. Even the USB-linked file servers that are an increasing part of high-end routers like the Freebox units do support SMB as well as the Internet HTTP and FTP file transfer protocols. This has been a standard for regular computing devices with the Microsoft Windows Platform since Windows For Workgroups 3.11, then was exposed to Linux regular computers through SAMBA and has been exposed to the Apple Macintosh platform since MacOS X.

The platform-based mobile devices now can join the SMB party through the use of SMB-enabled file-manager apps. These are typically low-cost or free apps that expose the mobile device’s file system and the SMB file shares (entry points) made available by computers or network-attached storages. Some of them have file-viewer functionality for file types not supported by your device’s file handlers.

iOS

Intuitive Commander[2] (App Store[3] – $0.99)

FileBrowser[4] (App Store[5] – $4.49)

Syncsellence[6] (App Store[7] – $5.49, free limited version App Store[8])

Android

ES File Explorer[9] – I use this on my phone (Android Market [10])

File Expert[11] (Android Market[12])

File Manager[13] (Android Market[14]) /File Manager HD[15] (Android Market[16]) – Rhythm Software

Blackberry

File Expert (Blackberry App World[17] – US$1.99)

File Manager Pro[18] (Blackberry App World[19] – US$4.99) – Terra Mobility

ArrangeIt File Manager (Blackberry App World[20] – US$1.99) – Conceptual Designs

The various app stores for the popular mobile-device platforms will list more of the file manager apps with SMB file transfer and you can find them using the terms “SMB file transfer” in your search query.

It is also worth noting that your NAS's vendor may offer file-transfer apps for their device on the iOS and/or Android platforms so you can transfer the files to their device. These programs may also work with the remote-access functionality that some of the consumer and SMB NAS units provide, thus keeping login credentials for the devices and streamlining the remote-access experience.

Other issues worth highlighting

iTunes-purchased content

You may have problems copying content that you purchased with iTunes on your iPhone or iPad directly to the NAS due to Apple's setup for these devices. But they have improved the iTunes and iOS setup to allow a user to download the purchased content to an instance of iTunes run on a regular computer even though they purchased it on the iOS device. This works best if the regular computer's iTunes library is referencing the NAS in question.

People who use iOS platform devices that aren't updated to iOS 5 will need to tether the device to their iTunes-enabled regular computer. Then they will need to use the "Transfer Purchased Content" option in iTunes to copy the content they bought on the device to the regular computer or NAS.

It will also be important to make sure that audio content is downloaded as MP3 files rather than protected M4A files.

One way that Apple can work this situation out better is to implement read-write ability to iTunes (DAAP) servers for the iPod media-management app in their iOS platform. Here, the software could then support improved "offload" functionality. This may not come about due to Apple's investment in and their fanbois' preference for the iCloud as a large-capacity storage service. But practically-minded Apple enthusiasts could place more value on a NAS as an extra-capacity data store so they know where their iTunes content is all the time.

File-transfer operating conditions

When you transfer files between your mobile devices and the NAS, make sure that you have a strong Wi-Fi signal at your mobile device and that the device has sufficient battery strength. This could be achieved through having the device connected to its charger while the transfer goes ahead.

NAS setup conditions

If you are transferring media files to the NAS, you would need to transfer them to the media folders that are referenced by the media-server software on that device. This may be made easier by using the file manager software's "bookmark" or "favourites" options to point to the start of the NAS's media folder tree.

It is also worth keeping other personal and workgroup shares on the NAS simply for backup or transfer purposes and referencing these with your file-manager app.

Conclusion

Once you are able to know that you can use the SMB file transfer method for moving data between your NAS, tablet and smartphone, you can see more value out of these mobile-computing devices.

Links

[1] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Smartphone-NAS-data-transfer.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[2] http://www.intuitivecomputers.eu/commander.html
[3] http://itunes.apple.com/app/intuitive-commander/id306478082?mt=8
[4] http://www.stratospherix.com/products/filebrowser/
[5] itms://itunes.apple.com/us/app/filebrowser-access-files-on/id364738545?mt=8#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[6] http://dialectro.com/Syncellence.html
[7] http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/syncellence/id442974896?mt=8&ls=1
[8] http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/syncellence-free/id443090457?mt=8&ls=1
[9] http://www.estrongs.com/en/products/es-file-explorer.html
[10] http://goo.gl/1uIW6
[11] http://www.xageek.com/en/
[12] https://market.android.com/details?id=xcxin.filexpert&feature=search_result
[13] http://rhmsoft.com/?p=78
[14] https://market.android.com/details?id=com.rhmsoft.fm&feature=search_result
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[16] market://search/?q=pname:com.rhmsoft.fm.hd#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[17] http://appworld.blackberry.com/webstore/content/45977?lang=en
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[19] http://appworld.blackberry.com/webstore/content/444?lang=en
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A logo for IPv6 readiness has now arrived for network hardware and services

28/10/2011 03:34

After all of the PR that has occurred around IPv6, which I have discussed previously on this site, there will be consumer and small-business demand for computer and network hardware and software that supports IPv6. This will be made more real when people subscribe to fibre-based next-generation broadband Internet or sign up with ISPs that offer any form of "cutting-edge" Internet service.

What will typically need to happen for most small networks is for the network equipment, especially the router that sits at the edge of the network, to support IPv6 in a dual-stack form. This may be achieved through a firmware update for most recently-issued existing equipment or will be part of recently-sold equipment.

Of course, a router manufacturer may say that their equipment is ready for the new standard but is it really ready when the ISP enables this technology? This includes interoperability with other IPv6 and IPv4 network equipment, whether the equipment works on one of the standards or is "dual-stacked" to work on both standards.

The IPv6 Forum (http://www.ipv6forum.org/[1]) have established a logo program with a Website called "IPv6 Ready" (http://www.ipv6ready.org/[2]). What you will be looking for is a yellow logo with "IPv6" on the router's box. You can also check your device's readiness on the IPv6 Ready website. At the moment, the logo list mostly points to OEM devices or software stacks rather than finished devices under their marketing names. But this logo will typically be found in the marketing literature for the device or on the device itself or its packaging.

This logo proves that the device conforms to IPv6 standards as a network hub or endpoint and works properly with other IPv6 and IPv4 devices on the Internet. This is facilitated by the device or software having to successfully complete a round of compatibility and interoperability tests in accredited testing laboratories before being authorised to display the logo.

There is also an IPv6-enabled logo for Web pages and ISPs that provide IPv6 access with the program at this site (http://www.ipv6forum.org/ipv6_enabled/[3]). The Web-page program is underway and open to Webmasters who want to be sure their Website is future proof. It covers resolving of the URL to an IPv6 address as well as all-the-way IPv6 http access to that site.

The problem with all these logo programs is that there isn't the customer-facing education that encourages customers to prefer equipment or services that are future-proof with IPv6. The services program could be augmented through promotion of IP services that are ready to provide IPv6 as a standard-issue service than something that you ask for. This also includes the service being enabled by default if a customer connects a dual-stack router to the service.

As the "World IPv6 Day" and similar campaigns gain traction, it will become the time for consumers and small-business owners to consider the benefits of the new IPv6 technology and what it offers.

Links
[1] http://www.ipv6forum.org/
[2] http://www.ipv6ready.org/
[3] http://www.ipv6forum.org/ipv6_enabled/

Hambleton now switched on to fibre

25/10/2011 03:29

Articles – From the horse's mouth

Gigaclear press release[1]

Rutland Telecom press release[2]

My Comments

I have previously covered [3]the Hambleton fibre-to-the-premises broadband network on HomeNetworking01.info in a few articles on rural broadband as well as an interview [4]with Matthew Hare from Gigaclear[5]. Here, I used this network and the Lyddington fibre-to-the-cabinet (FTTC) network as examples of enabling rural communities with this new technology for real broadband Internet.

Now Gigaclear and Rutland Telecom[6] have "switched on" the Hambleton FTTH/FTTP fibre network which currently services two thirds of the properties in this village to full revenue service.

One main driver for this FTTH was Hambleton Hotel & Restaurant[7]. They were wanting a high-grade internet service for their business guests who would be paying a premium to stay at this hotel. So they approached Rutland Telecom about establishing a broadband Internet service that would suit proper business needs and this is how this service came about. This hotel and another hospitality business in Hambleton have cottoned on to this broadband network as a way of providing real broadband as a value-added service to their guests.

In other ways, this has also been seen as a real investment in to this rural village by making it have real next-generation broadband. Who knows what it could lead to for the growth of Hambleton.

Links
[1] http://www.gigaclear.com/hambleton-celebrates-joining-broadband-gigabit-community/
[2] http://www.rutlandtelecom.co.uk/hambleton-ftth/
[3] /tags/hambleton#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[4] /2011/09/telephone-interviewgigaclear-uk-matthew-hare/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[5] http://www.gigaclear.com/
[6] http://www.rutlandtelecom.co.uk/
[7] http://www.hambletonhall.com/

Australian Audio & AV Show 2011

24/10/2011 12:12

I had visited the Australian Audio & AV Show 2011 which was held at the Marriott Hotel in Melbourne over two days. Here I had noticed certain trends being marked out as far as hi-fi and home-theatre technology went.

[1]

The old-school of hi-fi lives on with these valve (tube) amps

There was interest in orthodox hi-fi setups where vinyl records or CDs were the main medium of choice. These still appeal to the music listeners who prefer to make a point out of listening to their favourite recordings. Here, there was a large number of amplifiers that were driven by valve (tube) technology which appealed to audiophiles who placed value on the “valve and vinyl” style of hi-fi enjoyment. It even showed that there was still life in the “old girl” that was the classic vinyl record, This was more so with the arrival of newly-issued recordings on what I call “boutique vinyl” i.e. records that were cut for best dynamic range and pressed on heavier discs that were made of new material; with the ability for the purchaser to download MP3s of the same recordings for free.

[2]

Marantz CR603 CD receiver

Of course, I had seen the return of Luxman to the hi-fi scene, with their efforts on high-grade CD players and stereo amplifiers, with one of their amplifiers being modelled on a 1970s-era classic of theirs.

Network audio

But the main focus of the show was the use of computer equipment and home networks to play out music through hi-fi systems.

Network setups

[3]

A router and DLNA-enabled ReadyNAS is what this show is about

Most manufacturers which were demonstrating network-based hi-fi setups had a small network in their hotel rooms. This typically had a wireless router that was fit for home or small-business use at the “edge” of each of these network and working as the DHCP server; the same as what would be expected for a home network. As well, a lot of the manufacturers hooked a network-attached storage unit like the ReadyNAS to these networks to demonstrate their network-audio equipment.

In some cases, some of the suppliers used computers running DLNA-compliant media server software on the network rather than a NAS. An example of this was NAD who linked a MacBook Pro running Elgato EyeConnect as a media server for their C446 Digital Media Tuner.

Network-audio equipment

[4]

NAD c446 Network Media Tuner

Most of the equipment shown was network-audio adaptors which were known by names as “media tuners”, “Internet tuners”, “network media receivers” and similar names. These were components that were connected to existing amplifiers through a line-level connection and could play content on a DLNA media server, USB memory key or Internet-radio services. Some of the units could connect to and control an iPod attached to their USB port.

Some of these are devices that I have cited in a previous article [5]on this site about top-shelf hi-fi names using DLNA as their preferred network-audio infrastructure. Here, I had mentioned about them using this established technology and the high-grade codecs like FLAC so they can concentrate on high-quality clear sound.

[6]

Linn Majik DS network preamplifier

Linn had a handful of these devices which worked as control amplifiers for use with power amplifiers or active speakers. These Akurate, Majik and Klimax units could also stream line-level signals or, as I have seen, the output of a turntable (Linn Sondek LP12) playing a record to other Linn network media adaptors.

As well, some of the manufacturers were offering receivers and CD-receiver systems that had DLNA media playback and Internet media access as part of their function set. This included the Rotel RCX-1500[7]CD receiver that I have previously reviewed on this site. Speaking of which, Rotel’s Australian distributors, International Dynamics are introducing more network-enabled kit from Pro-ject, in the form of another network media adaptor.

Denon even promoted their network-enabled home-theatre receivers a “everyhing”-ceivers because of the multiple functions that they could offer through the home network.

[8]

Denon’s “everything”-ceiver

All of these setups were based around UPnP AV /DLNA Home Media Networks with Denon, Marantz and B&W demonstrating Apple AirPlay-compliant setups. The sales representatives for most of the various manufacturers had described the UPnP AV /DLNA network setup as an open setup where everyone can “come to the party”. A lot of the setups were controlled using various UPnP AV control points that were running on iPads owned by the various demonstration staff. Some of the control-point apps were branded and optimised for particular manufacturers’ equipment, usually offering control functionality that worked peculiarly with that equipment.

[9]

Naim Uniti network CD receiver with Naim’s distinct CD-loading tray

Naim and used this show to exhibit their Uniti CD receiver; as well as the UnitiQute network media /FM receiver and the UnitiServer which is their “ripping NAS”. This is a class of NAS which uses an integrated optical drive and software for ripping CDs to the hard disk.

One interesting point that I had noticed was that Loewe had used this event to launch their MediaCenter network-enabled music system. This was equipped with a hard disk and software that allowed you to “rip” the currently-inserted CD to that hard disk, a practice that I had observed with some Philips and other hard-disk-equipped music systems. But this unit was able to

share the contents of its hard disk to other UPnP AV client devices as well as become a UPnP AV client device for devices like those NAS units.

How is this becoming relevant to "real" hi-fi?

[10]

Loewe Mediacenter media server and player

One reason this is happening is that other Websites, fronted by audiophile recording labels, are offering their recordings for purchase and download as high-bitrate FLAC or, in some cases, WMA files. In some cases, these are copies of the studio-master recordings rather than producer-tuned masters for CD and iTunes distribution.

Here, you could load these files on to a NAS and share them through your network with network media clients of this calibre. Or you could use media-management software to transcode to MP3 for use on most portable players and smartphones or prepare CDs of these files for playback on regular CD players.

Conclusion

What I see of this Australian Audio & AV Show this past weekend is that the home network as a system for storing and playing audio content has earned its stripes as far as high-quality sound reproduction is concerned. This is definitely underpinned through the use of the UPnP AV /DLNA standard for discovering and presenting available media content in these networks.

Links
[1] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011-10-22-008-A-stack-pf-valve-amps.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[2] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011-10-22-002-Marantz-CR603-CD-receiver.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[3] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011-10-22-011.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[4] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011-10-22-006.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[5] /2009/10/serious-about-music-with-dlna/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[6] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011-10-22-013-Linn-Majik-DS-network-preamplifier.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
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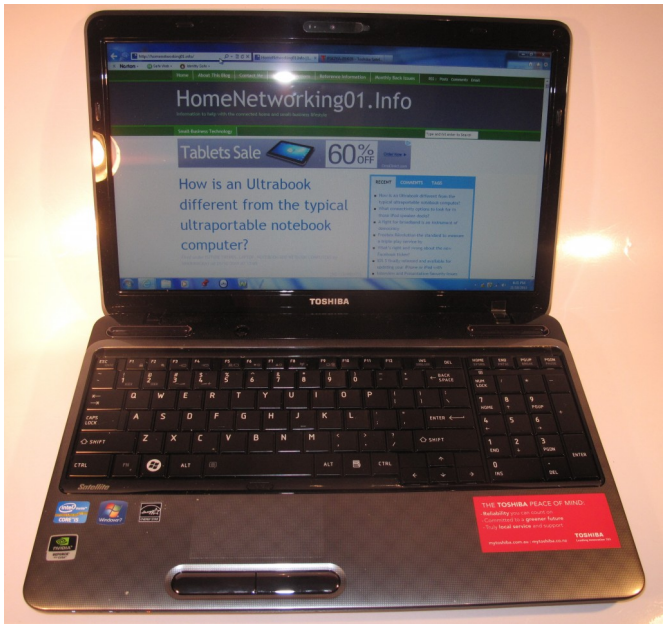
[10] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011-10-22-004.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

Product Review–Toshiba Satellite L750 laptop computer (Part No: PSK2YA-04P028)

21/10/2011 06:28

Introduction

I am reviewing the Toshiba Satellite L750 Series laptop computer which Toshiba are positioning as a value-priced laptop computer for most households. This is compared to the previously-reviewed Satellite P750[1]multimedia model which is positioned as the premium multimedia laptop of the range.



[2]

Price
– this configuration AUD$999 Processor **Intel Sandy Bridge i5-2410M** cheaper option: Intel Sandy Bridge i3 RAM 4Gb shared with graphics Secondary Storage **750Gb hard disk** cheaper option
500Gb or 640Gb hard disk DVD burner, SDHC card reader Display Subsystem NVIDIA GeForce GT525M 1Gb dedicated display memory Screen 15” widescreen (1366×768) LED-backlit LCD Network Wi-Fi 802.11g/n Ethernet **Gigabit Ethernet** cheaper option
Standard Ethernet Bluetooth **3.0 with HS**
omited from cheaper models Modem V.92-compliant data /fax modem Connectors USB **2 x USB 2.0**
1 x USB 3.0 with Sleep And Charge
cheaper option
3 x USB 2.0 Video **VGA, HDMI**
(HDMI omitted from cheaper models) Audio 3.5mm input jack, 3.5mm output jack
Digital audio via HDMI
(HDMI omitted from cheaper models) Operating System on supplied unit Microsoft Windows 7 Home Edition Windows Experience Index – this configuration Overall: 5.5 Graphics: 5.7 Advanced Graphics: 6.5

The computer itself

Aesthetics and Build quality

[3]

Grey patterned finish on lid and palmrest

This Toshiba Satellite L750 is finished in a glossy grey patterned finish on the lid and palm-rest with a black escutcheon on the screen and keyboard. This pattern reminds me of a classic pattern that was used on some gray-coloured mens’ suits and pants. There is a variation which offers an all-white finish which may please the “minimalist” look or those who have moved from the earlier Apple MacBook computers.

The limitation with the glossy finish is that fingermarks can show up more easily, thus becoming a high-maintenance finish.

The L750 has the same size and thickness as the other laptops in its class thus being able to fit in drawers or old-fashioned writing desks, which would fit in well with the “New Computing Environment”.

For the price range, the computer shows very good build quality. It also hasn’t shown a tendency to run too hot which will benefit those who use high-performance applications. As well, I haven’t noticed any intense heat build-up when it was in use for extended periods.

User interface

[4]The keyboard is a full-width keyboard with a regular numeric keypad. This works well for touch-typing yet has a “level” feel. An improvement that could be of use would be a textured feel so you know where you are rather than the slippery feel that it has.

There is a trackpad which is highlighted by a rough surface on the palmrest as well as two large glossy buttons that work as the equivalent of the mouse buttons. It still has the same likelihood of the cursor jumping around and you may have to lock it out using the button under the spacebar when you are typing.

Audio and Video

The Toshiba Satellite L750 has a pair of small speakers located above the keyboard but the sound reproduction is the typical quality for most mainstream laptops. If you want to get the best sound out of this one, you would have to connect it to good headphones or speakers or a nice sound system.

Due to the use of the NVIDIA discrete graphics subsystem and dedicated graphics memory, this computer would work well for proper graphics performance on most games and multimedia applications.

One feature that may annoy some users is the use of a glossy screen. This would cause distracting reflections in well-lit environments like outdoors or most household family rooms. I have seen other laptops that don’t use this glossy screen but they are typically the business computers like the Tecra R850 [5]that I previously reviewed.

Expansion and Connectivity

[6]

Left-hand-side connectors — Gigabit Ethernet, VGA, USB 3.0, HDMI, audio input and output

I am reviewing the top-end model of this series which is equipped with the 750Gb hard disk, a USB 3.0 port, Bluetooth, Gigabit Ethernet and HDMI. Cheaper models in this series omit these connectivity options and offer 3 USB 2.0 ports, regular Ethernet as well as smaller hard disks.

In this day and age, the Gigabit Ethernet, HDMI, Bluetooth and USB 3.0 or eSATA options are considered important connectivity options for laptops. This is to allow for connectivity with wireless peripherals, extra secondary storage and wired networks such as next-generation broadband.

[7]

Right-hand-side connections and DVD burner — 2 x USB 2.0 ports, RJ11 telephone line port, power connector

All computers in this series are equipped with an integrated V92 dial-up data /fax modem but this would be useful for sending faxes directly from the computer or people who don't have access to real broadband.

Battery life

The Toshiba Satellite L750 doesn't implement the dual-graphics functionality that allows for battery economy during basic text-editing or Web-browsing tasks. This has caused it to run out of power too quickly on text-based or mixed-task work including Web browsing.

But I had let this laptop run through a DVD movie on batteries and it was able to work for 175 minutes continuously before it gave out.

Limitations And Points Of Improvenemt

[8]One point of improvement that I would like to see for the series would be current connectivity options across the whole lineup rather than just the top-end models. Here, the machines could be differed by processor type, RAM and hard-disk capacity and any aesthetic variations like system colour.

Conclusion

The Toshiba Satellite L750 laptop computer, especially this configuration that I reviewed, is one of many laptop computers that I would recommend for use as a "family computer" for most households where it will get a lot of use. It is more so if the household is intending to head towards the laptop-based "new computing environment".

As well, the computer would also work well for small-business laptop users who just want to get started with a "work-home" laptop computer and have to choose this kind of computer from larger retail stores. The integrated dial-up modem would be a bonuse for most rural dwellers who are stuck with this technology until governments and companies "get off their backsides" and provide real broadband to the country.

[9]

You may get away with specifying the cheaper models of the series if you are willing to forego the current connectivity expectations like USB 3.0, Bluetooth and HDMI as well as opting for a smaller hard disk.

Links
[1] /2011/09/product-reviewtoshiba-satellite-p750-multimedia-laptop-computer-part-no-psay3a-05f001/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[2] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011-10-21-001-Toshiba-Satellite-L750-laptop-computer.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[3] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011-10-21-009.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
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[6] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011-10-21-004-Toshiba-Satellite-L750-LHS-detail.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
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[8] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011-10-21-003-Toshiba-Satellite-L750-LHS.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[9] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011-10-21-007-Lid-shot.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

How is an Ultrabook different from the typical ultraportable notebook computer?

21/10/2011 06:09

There is a new class of ultraportable notebook computer that is being defined through this year and next year by Intel in response to the success of the Apple MacBook Air. You may think that it is no different from ultraportables like the Toshiba Portege R830 that I reviewed on this site.

But these computers, known as “Ultrabooks”, will be intended to put the idea of a “portable-typewriter” size of laptop in the laps of most public-transport and air travellers rather than business executives.

What is the Ultrabook

Like the typical ultraportable of the same ilk as the Toshiba R830, these computers have the 13” screen and the same footprint that makes them useable on that bus or economy-class airline tray table. Yet they will be usable for creating content like typing up those documents and blog posts on the move.

But what makes them an Ultrabook is that they will have an ultra-slim chassis which has to be less than 1.8cm thick when closed and weigh in at 1.4kg or less. The battery runtime has to be longer than five hours which would cater for useable time on a long-distance air trip or a day of hotspot surfing.

The required maximum price for these units is around US$1000 which would put them in to the hands of most users. This price would be applicable to the base model in an “Ultrabook” lineup, with increases in price for extras like increased RAM, faster processors or increased secondary storage.

Functionality requirements

The goal of the functionality requirements it for an Ultrabook not to be an underpowered ultraportable computer just for document creation and basic Internet activity, but to be on a par with a typical 15” laptop that can excel at multimedia or basic gaming.

The main drivers in the design are the use of Intel Core i3,i5 or i7 processors providing the horsepower with the images on the screen painted by Intel HD integrated graphics. These units will have to use solid-state storage technology rather than the orthodox mechanical hard disk for their main secondary-storage system. They will also forego the optical drive as an integrated removable-storage option, so you will have to use a USB DVD drive if you want to view rented DVDs or turn out DVD copies of your photos. Of course there will be an SD card slot so you can download your digital-camera pictures to your Ultrabook for reviewing and editing.

Most such computers wont have the Ethernet or VGA connectivity. Here this will mean that you will need to use Wi-Fi to connect to your home or small-business network

As well, you will have to connect the Ultrabook to the economy-priced data projector using a DisplayLink USB-VGA adaptor. Of course these units would use either a DisplayPort or HDMI external display connector, usually of the mini form factor.

These connectivity issues will typically be mitigated through the availability of multifunction docking stations that connect to the Ultrabook via a DisplayPort or USB connection.

The typical Ultrabook will be housed in a sealed case that precludes easy upgrades. But this will typically support the "push-down and replace" practice when users want better functionality or performance. Here, the computer would be disposed of to a user with lesser needs while the user purchases a machine with the specifications that suit their current needs.

Purchasing notes

If you maintain a desktop or larger laptop computer as your main computer, it may be OK to skimp on the secondary-storage capacity if you only intend to use it as a "travel computer". Then you use the home or small-business network, cloud-services like SkyDrive or USB-attached external storage to keep the data you are working with in step with your main machine.

Other comments

I would like to see AMD and others define a similar name and standard for ultraportables that make this goal so that the computers don't have to be all Intel-driven. This could then lower the price bar for computers of this class.

Similarly what Windows 8 will offer with touchscreen operation may open up paths towards convertible "Ultrabooks" that are a feasible alternative to a tablet computer.

As well, I would like to see manufacturers avoid making this class of computer become a class of "MacBook Air copycats". This could be achieved through the use of different colours and finishes or even different materials and textures.

Conclusion

What I like more about the Ultrabook concept is that it puts the idea of a lightweight travel-friendly notebook computer that works well for content creation as a credible alternative to netbooks or tablets.

What connectivity options to look for in those iPod speaker-docks?

21/10/2011 05:14

The market is flooded with so many iPod /iPhone speaker-dock systems that you don't know which ones to consider or what to get. A few of these units that are built by hi-fi names can yield a very good room-filling sound with the deep bass whereas other cheap units just don't cut it with sound quality.

But you need to be sure that you can use them with devices beyond the Apple iPod or iPhone. Some cheaper speaker-docks have just the slot for an iPod or iPhone and they become useless for those of you who use tablet computers, laptops or Android /WP7 phones.

A line-level input

The speaker dock must be equipped with a line-level audio input of some form. Here, it will be a 3.5mm phone jack or a pair of RCA sockets located on the front or back of the device and this connector may be labelled AUX IN, AUDIO IN, LINE IN or something similar. A few devices use a flylead with an 3.5mm stereo phone plug at one end for quickly plugging your phone or other source in to the speaker dock.

A variety of these speaker docks have a volume control of their own so you can connect an audio-playback device with a fixed output level like a CD player to them yet be able to adjust the volume. On the other hand, this connection would require you to adjust the volume at the source device.

Other connections nice to have

I have raised these other options that may exist in addition to broadcast-radio reception or access to the home network for Internet radio and DLNA-compliant content playback, that may exist in some speaker docks.

USB connectivity

A standard USB socket can be nice to have for charging and powering devices like tablet computers or mobile phones on the end of a USB cable. Some setups may also allow playback of content held on a phone or USB memory key through the use of the speaker-dock's control surface.

Bluetooth A2DP connectivity

This connectivity option works with a large range of mobile devices ranging from some MP3 players through phones and tablets based on the common operating platforms to laptops running Windows, MacOS X and Linux. Here, you have a wireless link from the device to the speaker dock using this standard. This would work well with tablet computers that work as your personal jukebox.

Some speakers like the Bose SoundDock series may offer this as a manufacturer-supplied optional accessory. On the other hand, you can use a third-party Bluetooth audio link that connects to the speaker's line-level input.

Conclusion

If you looking for that iPod speaker-dock, make sure that, even if you are primarily using it with your iPod or iPhone, it is future proof for use with tablet computers and other devices so you can get more out of the speaker dock.

A fight for broadband is an instrument of democracy

21/10/2011 02:32

Article

What a fight for broadband tells us about democracy | GigaOM[1]

My Comments

A situation that is repeating itself in many US towns and communities that don't have proper broadband is the desire for these towns to benefit from the broadband service. They will typically use tactics like a wired or wireless broadband Internet service funded by the local government, perhaps in partnership with a telecommunications firm. It can even encompass the provision of full infrastructure by local interests for annexation by a local telecommunications carrier in order to hasten the provision of real Internet service.

But established telecommunications and cable-TV firms like Comcast who have wireline monopoly over these areas fear the arrival of these competitive elements. They have established requirements on towns who want to set up such services to run referenda about such services and run highly-funded campaigns against these services when they come to the vote.

This situation creates a breeding ground for redlining and an anticompetitive trade environment for Internet and other advanced telecommunications services. The redlining can occur based on perceived "lack of profitability" for communities even though the community will benefit economically through access to advanced telecommunications.

At the moment, the Federal Communications Commission are in the throes of reforming the Universal Service Fund which financially offsets universal-service obligations for basic telephony service through the USA. Here, they want to encompass broadband Internet and cable-TV services in this mix and local communities should also lobby the FCC on this issue.

The FCC could also work better by allowing European-style competition regimes like local-loop unbundling for ADSL or mandated access to pits, ducts and poles for cable and fibre-optic service. This ends up favouring the customers through what I have observed in France and the UK.

As well, the Federal Trade Commission could be allowed to be involved in issues concerning anticompetitive behaviour in telecommunications-service provisioning. This can allow for antitrust aspects to be investigated as well as other standards concerning telecommunications service.

But I would see this more likely occurring under a Democrat administration rather than a Republican administration which favours the big corporations and anticompetitive trading. As well, where there is lively competition, there is a greater chance for people to take up the technology and a greater chance for innovation.

Links
[1] http://gigaom.com/broadband/what-a-fight-for-broadband-tells-us-about-democracy/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+OmMalik+%28GigaOM%3A+Tech%29

Freebox Révolution–the standard to measure a triple-play service by

19/10/2011 10:10

Articles (French language – best resources)

Dossier –Test du Freebox Server | DegroupNews[1]

Freebox Revolution – Test du Freebox Player | DegroupNews[2]

From the horse's mouth

Freebox Home Page[3] – Free (France – French language)

My comments

Typically, the kind of equipment supplied to consumers by telecommunications carriers and Internet service providers for "triple-play"or similar Internet services has typically been drab in design and functionality. This is typically to work to the lowest-common denominator with both price, functionality and style.

The situation is very different in France where there is a lively competitive market for "triple-play"Internet service. Most urban or regional centres in this country are "dégroupée" for multiple competing ADSL-service operators. Here, these operators have access to the customers' telephone lines as cable without paying France Télécom for a dial-tone service. There is also a steady rollout of fibre-optic service by the competing service providers for next-generation broadband Internet, with an overlaying requirement to provide competitive access to the ducts and poles for the fibre-optic service.

One of these major players is Free who have established a triple-play service for many years. Their latest iteration of the "Freebox" is now a benchmark for anyone offering a similar setup, whether in France or anywhere else.

I have previously covered the Freebox Révolution in HomeNetworking01.info when a recent firmware update was released[4] that integrated it with Apple's ecosystem. As well, I have researched many French and English-language resources to learn more about this system.

The Freebox Révolution system

This system, like other triple-play setups offered in France, comprises of an Internet-gateway device, known as a "box", and a set-top-box, known as a "décodeur". These units have typically been interlinked by an Ethernet cable or user-supplied HomePlug kit, but is connected through a pair of "Freeplugs" which combine a power supply and a HomePlug-AV-Ethernet bridge in one box.

The units are a statement of industrial design in a similar way that Bang & Olufsen equipment are still a statement in this

regard for consumer audio-video equipment. Both the Internet-gateway device and the set-top box have been designed by Phillippe Starck, known for extraordinary designs like the Parrot Zikmu network-enabled speakers or some of the LaCie external hard drives or network-attached storage systems.

Internet Gateway Device (Freebox Server)

This device consists of a broadband router, network-attached storage, VoIP ATA with DECT base station and audio player in one box.

It has a dual-WAN interface for either an ADSL2 service or an FTTH fibre-optic service. But the LAN functionality is one of the hallmarks of a cutting-edge device. It has 4 Gigabit Ethernet switched ports for Ethernet client devices as well as an access point for an 802,11n three-stream 450Mbps Wi-Fi segment. I mentioned previously that this unit also supports a HomePlug AV segment through the use of the supplied Freeplug adaptors. The Wi-Fi access point can also work as a separate "hotspot segment" for other Free subscribers.

The VoIP functionality works with an integrated analog-telephony adaptor and a DECT base station that you can associate 8 DECT cordless handsets with. These will provide full functionality with CAT-iQ DECT handsets.

The 250Gb NAS can work with the regular file-protocol suspects (CIFS, FTP, HTTP) but can work as a DLNA media server. It also works as a "staging post" for FTP, HTTP and BitTorrent downloads, the latter function being described as a "seedbox". The recent firmware upgrades also implemented Apple TimeMachine support for incremental MacOS data backups. Of course, there is USB connectivity for 2 devices as well as eSATA connectivity for an external hard disk.

There are integrated speakers for playing media held on the hard disk, the Internet or an Apple AirPlay network but you can use it as an elementary amplified-speakers setup by connecting a Discman or iPod to its AUDIO IN jack. Of course you can play the music through better powered speakers or an amplifier using the AUDIO OUT jack.

This router is totally UPnP to the hilt with UPnP Internet-Gateway-Device for hands-free setup with Skype, games, MSN Messenger and the like; as well as being a UPnP AV /DLNA media server. Free could do better by integrating something like TwonkyMedia which can allow content discovery on metadata other than the file-system tree.

Let's not forget that the Freebox Server is IPv6-ready as expected for a future-proof device. This is being augmented by the fact that ADSL Free subscribers in zone dégroupée aras or FTTH Free subscribers can have an IPv6 connection now.

Set-Top Box (Freebox Player)

This unit has an integrated Blu-Ray player with Blu-Ray 3D support (after new firmware added) as well as a digital-TV /IPTV set-top box /PVR. It connects to the TV via an HDMI connector or a SCART cable, both offering that "single-pipe" connectivity between the Freebox and the TV. Of course, there are connectivity options for other audio-video setups like SPDIF optical; and you can connect USB peripherals like SD card readers to this unit for direct viewing.

It is controlled via a gyroscopic remote control but has a supplied game controller as an alternate input device. Of course, you can connect a USB keyboard and mouse to it as extra input devices or control it from your iPad using the Freebox Connect app.

One drawcard in my opinion is that it is a fully-fledged Internet terminal with access to an app store, namely the FreeStore app store. This allows you to download games and similar "lean-back" apps; as well as view the Web or check email from your couch. Just of late, this set-top box has had YouTube support baked in to its latest firmware update.

You can now use the Freebox Player and its associated sound system or television's speaker to play material from your iTunes software or iOS device using AirPlay. This at the moment applies to audio content only.As well, you can discover and play content held on DLNA-compliant media servers on your network including the Freebox Server's hard disk.

Plans and Pricing

You can equip that French home or apartment with this device for € 29.90 per month. This gives you inclusive unlimited telephone telephone calls to standard phone services in most countries (Europe, Francophone countries, US, Australia, NZ, etc); and mobiles in France.

The Internet service would be up to 28Mbps while you have access to most basic TV service. Pay €1.99/month extra for 185 additional TV channels while you can service another room with Free's TV service for €4.99/month extra with a simple set-top box or another of this Freebox Player for €9.99/month extra.

Existing Free subscribers can upgrade for €199.99 less €30 for each year they have been with Free.

The prices are obtained from Free's latest tariff charts available on their site and would appear to be ridiculously low for people who live in a country that doesn't have a lively competitive broadband-Internet market.

Conclusion

What I see of the Freebox Révolution is a system of equipment for a home network that is all about an Internet service provider offering a future-proof attractive cutting-edge piece of equipment rather than offering second-rate equipment to their customers.

This is primarily driven by a country who is behind a really competitive Internet service market for consumers and that the competition is driven on value rather than the cheapest price possible.

Links

[1] http://www.degroupnews.com/actualite/n6419-dossier-test-du-freebox-server.html
[2] a77-freebox-revolution-test-du-freebox-player#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[3] http://free.fr/
[4] /2011/08/freebox-rvolutionthe-first-to-be-compatible-with-the-full-apple-ecosystem/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

What’s right and wrong about the new Facebook ticker?

18/10/2011 08:31

Any of you who have used Facebook’s regular desktop interface lately will have noticed key changes to this user interface.This interface revamp has been the subject of a lot of negative and positive press about this user interface change in the blogosphere and the consumer IT press. Of course, you won’t notice this if you are using Facebook from a client program like a mobile app.

When you notice the interface changes, you will see a column on the right which highlights who of your friends are online at the moment as well as a constantly-updated ticker of friends’ activity. The list of who is online is segmented by whom you have interacted with lately as well as those of your Friends who are currently online. Both these windows are separately scrollable but you have to look for a black vertical bar on the right.

This has been augmented by an “improved” news feed with groups for “top stories” and delineated “Recent Events” and “From Earlier Today” clusters. This delineates what you saw in your last view of Facebook and your current view on the same computer.

At the moment, the ticker only shows your Friends’ activity, with the ability to link to the posts, Pages, other Friends or other items referenced in the activity. This is different from the News Feed which covers all Page and Group activity as well as your Friends’ activity. Some Pages may appear in your Ticker but this may not be consistent across all Pages.

You will have the item “detailed on” with a larger view if you hover over it with your mouse. This will give you the contextual options of what you can do with this item such as to add the person to your Friend list or comment on the post.

This ticker well be dimmed if you are “paging through” a Photo Album or viewing a Photo in detail. It will only be visible if you are using Facebook and won’t appear if you head off to a link outside Facebook.

I would improve on this by allowing the user to determine the view of the ticker, such as through classes of events and use of filtering or formatting of events important to the user. As well, the Ticker, along with the presence window could be made available as a desktop utility in a similar vein to ICQ or MSN Messenger so you can keep tabs on this whenever you visit different sites.

Of course, it would take some time to get used to any new interface change for an online service and social networking is no exception.

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iOS 5 finally released and available for updating your iPhone or iPad with

14/10/2011 04:45

Article

Apple iOS 5 review: Modest, but definitely worthwhile | iPhone Atlas – CNET Reviews[1]

From the horse’s mouth

Apple – iOS 5[2]

Previous coverage in HomeNetworking01.info

Apple iOS 5 to be updated without the need to tether your device [3]

My Comments

Now the iOS 5 has been released, it will offer some major benefits for your iPhone or iPad. You will have to tether your iPhone, iPod Touch or iPad to your computer to update it to the new version but this will be the last time you need to tether the device according to Apple.

Here, you will have the operating-system updates able to be downloaded over the air using the same method as what is used for delivering and updating the apps for your device. Newly-deployed iOS devices will not need a computer to be present as part of their setup process anymore.

As well, if your iDevice is charging and the computer that hosts your device’s parent iTunes collection is on, the device will be synced over the home network. This is something that has been offered by competing mobile platforms with their desktop software.

There are some benefits like improved operation for some of the integrated apps. This also includes a “notifications” screen similar to what Android users have had; as well as an integrated Twitter client. Of course it supports an iP messaging service that works between Apple iOS devices and I am not sure if there are clients for the desktop operating systems.

As well, I detailed on a speech-driven agent app called Siri which interacts with the iOS 5 devices by responding to your spoken requests. This function has been promoted in relation to the iPhone 4S smartphone.

There are a few functions that the competing mobile platforms still have an advantage over the Apple iOS platform. One is the provision of always-displayed screen items that programmatically change or act as a user interface to a program. These are in the form of “widgets” and “live wallpaper” in the Android platform and “tiles” in the Windows Phone 7 platform; and could show running data like time, weather or stock-market data. The Apple platform only allows apps to attach a “bubble” to their screen icon that can show a number or a “traffic-light” colour to show certain events; and this has severe limitations. For example, you can’t control or monitor multiple devices or functions using

a single monitor app. This could be something that could be rolled out in a subsequent major update for the iOS platform.

At least this operating system will be a major break for your iOS device by offering it a lot more.

Links
[1] http://reviews.cnet.com/8301-19512_7-20118920–233/apple-ios-5-review-modest-but-definitely-worthwhile/?tag=nl.e404
[2] http://www.apple.com/ios/
[3] /2011/06/apple-ios-5to-be-updated-without-the-need-to-tether-your-device/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

Interview and Presentation–Security Issues associated with cloud-based computing

14/10/2011 00:53

Introduction

[1]

Alastair MacGibbon — Centre For Internet Safety (University of Camberra)

I have been invited to do an interview with Alastair MacGibbon of Centre For Internet Safety (University Of Canberra) and Brahman Thiyagalingham of SAI Global [2]who is involved in auditing computing service providers for data security compliance.

This interview and the presentation delivered by Alastair which I attended subsequently is about the issue of data security in the cloud-driven “computing-as-a-service” world of information technology.

Cloud based computing

We often hear the term “cloud computing” being used to describe newer outsourced computing setups, especially those which use multiple data centers and servers. But, for the context of this interview, we use this term to cover all “computing-as-a-service” models that are in place.

[3]

Brahman Thyagalingham — SAI Global

These “cloud-based computing” setups are in use by every consumer and business owner or manager as they go through their online and offline lives. Examples of these include client-based and Web-based email services, the Social Web (Facebook, Twitter, etc), photo-sharing services and online-gaming services. But it also encompasses systems that are part of our everyday lives like payment for goods and services; the use of public transport including air travel; as well as private and public medical services.

This is an increasing trend as an increasing number of companies offer information solutions for our work or play life that are dependent on some form of “computing-as-a-service” backend. It also encompasses building control, security and energy management; as well as telehealth with these services offered through the use of outsourced backend servers.

Factors concerning cloud-based computing and data security

Risks to data

There are many risks that can affect data in cloud-based computing and other “computing-as-a-service” setups.

Data theft

The most obvious and highly-publicised risk is threats to data security. This can come in the form of the computing infrastructure being hacked including malware attacks on client or other computers in the infrastructure to social-engineering attacks on the service’s participants.

A clear example of this were the recent attacks on Sony’s online gaming systems like the PlayStation Network. Here, there was a successful break-in in April which caused Sony to shut down

the PlayStation Network and Qriocity for a month. Then, a break-in attempt on many of the PlayStation Network accounts had taken place this week ending 13 October 2011.

The attack on data isn't just by lonely script kiddies anymore. It is being performed by organised crime; competitors engaging in industrial espionage and nation states engaging in economic or political espionage. The data that is being stolen is identities of end-users; personal and business financial data; and business intellectual property like customer information, the "secret sauce" and details about the brand and image.

Other risks

Other situations can occur that compromise the integrity of the data, For example, a computing service provider could become insolvent or change ownership. This can affect the continuity of the computing service and the availability of the data on the systems. It also can affect who owns the actual data held in these systems.

Another situation can occur if there is a system or network breakdown or drop in performance. This may be caused by a security breach; but can be caused by ageing hardware and software or, as I have seen more recently, an oversubscribed service where there is more demand than the service can handle. I have mentioned this latest scenario in HomeNetworking01.info in relation to Web-based email providers like Gmail becoming oversubscribed and performing too slowly for their users.

Common rhetoric delivered to end-users of computing services

The industry focuses the responsibility of data security for these services on to the end-users of the services.

Typically the mantra is to keep software on end computers (including firmware on dedicated devices) up-to-date; develop good password habits by using strong passwords that are regularly changed and not visible to others; and make backup copies of the data.

New trends brought on by the Social Web

But there are factors that are being undone by the use of the Social Web. One is the use of password-reset questions and procedures that are based on factors known to the end user. Here, the factors can be disclosed by crawling data left available on social-networking sites, blogs and similar services.

Similarly, consumer sites like forums, and comment trees are implementing single-sign-on setups that use credential pools hosted by other services popular to consumers; namely Google, Facebook and Windows Live. This also extends to "account-tying" by popular services so that you are logged on to one service if you are logged on to another. These can create a weaker security environment and aren't valued by companies like banks which hold high-stakes data.

The new direction

As well, it has been previously very easy for a service provider to absolve themselves of the responsibility they have to their users and the data they create. This has been through the use of complex legalese in their service agreements that users have to assent to before they sign up to the service.

Now the weight for data security is now being placed primarily on the service providers who offer these services to the end users rather than the end users themselves. Even if the service provider is providing technology to facilitate another organisation's operations, they will have to be responsible for that organisation's data and the data stream created by the organisation's customers.

Handling a data break-in or similar incident

Common procedures taken by service providers

A typical procedure in handling a compromised user account is that the account is locked down by the service provider. The user is then forced to set a new password for that account. In the case of banking and other cards that are compromised, the compromised account cards would be voided sot that retailers or ATMs seize them and the customer would be issued with a new card and have to determine a new PIN.

The question that was raised in the interview and presentation today is what was placed at risk during the recent Sony break-ins. The typical report was that the customers' login credentials were compromised, with some doubtful talk about the customers' credit-card and stored-value-wallet data being at risk.

Inconsistent data-protection laws

One issue that was raised today was inconsistent data-protection laws that were in place across the globe. An example of this is Australia – the "She'll Be Right" nation. Compared to the USA and the UK, Australians don't benefit from data-protection laws that require data-compromise disclosure.

What is needed in a robust data-compromise-disclosure law or regulation is for data-security incidents to the disclosed properly and promptly to the law-enforcement authorities and the end-users.

This should cover what data was affected, which end-users were placed at risk by the security breach, when the incident took place and where it took place

International issues

We also raised the issue of what happens if the situation crosses national borders. Here nations would have to set out practices in handling these incidents.

It may be an issue that has to evolved in the similar way that other factors of international law like extradition, international child-custody/access, and money-laundering have evolved.

Use of industry standards

Customers place trust in brands associated with products and services. The example that we were talking about with the Sony data breach was the Sony name has been well-respected for audio-visual electronics since the 1960s. As well, the PlayStation name was a brand of respect associated with a highly-innovative electronic gaming experience. But these names were compromised in the recent security incidents.

There is a demand for standards that prove the ability for a computing service provider to provide a stable proper secure computing service. Analogies that we raised were those standards that were in place to assure the provision of safe goods like those concerning vehicle parts like windscreens or those affecting the fire-safety rating of the upholstered furniture and soft-furnishings in the hotel that we were in during the afternoon.

Examples of these are the nationally-recognised standards bodies like Standards Australia, British Standards Institute and Underwriters Laboratories. As well there have been internationally-recognised standards bodies like the International Standards Organisation; and industry-driven standards groups like DLNA.

The standards we were focusing on today were the ISO 27001 which covers information security and the ISO 20000 which covers IT service management.

Regulation of standards

Here, the government regulators need to "have teeth" when it comes to assuring proper compliance. This includes the ability to issue severe fines against companies who aren't handling the data breaches responsibly as well as mitigation of these fines for companies who had an incident but had audited compliance to the standards. This would be demonstrated with evidence of compliant workflow through their procedures, especially through the data incident.

As well, Brahmin had underscored the need for regular auditing of "computing as a service" providers so they can prove to customers and end users that they have procedures in place to deal with data incidents.

I would augment this with the use of a customer-recognisable distinct "Trusted Computing Service Provider" logo that can only be used if the company is compliant the the standards in their processes. The logo would be promoted with a customer-facing advertising campaign that promotes the virtues of buying serviced computing from a compliant provider. This would be the "computing-as-a-service" equivalent of the classic "Good Housekeeping Seal" that was used for food and kitchen equipment in the USA,

Conclusion

What I have taken from this event is that the effort for maintaining a secure computing service is now moving away from the customer who *uses* the service towards the provider who *provides* the service. As well, there is a requirement to establish and enforce industry-recognised standards concerning the provision of these services.

Links
[1] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Alastair-MacGibbon.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[2] http://www.saiglobal.com
[3] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Brahman-Thyagalingham.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

Product Review–Brother VM-100 visitor management software

12/10/2011 01:07

Introduction

I have seen the Brother VM-100 visitor-management software in action for myself when I visited Brother's headquarters in Sydney for the interview that I did with Stephen Bennett and Heidi Webster last year[1]. Now I have the chance to put this same software through its paces as an entry-level visitor management setup for that small office.

Price:

Software package: AUD$399

System kit with QL-570 printer[2]: AUD$499

In some areas, the system kit with the label printer would be known as the VM-100VP whereas in other areas it would be known as the QL-570VP. This will be of importance when you want to track down the visitor management system as a full kit.

These also include a roll of thermal paper for the label printer as well as a starter-pack of 12 badge holders and clips.

The software works on the Windows desktop computing platform with an operating system from Windows XP onwards. This would cover most computers deployed in the small-business world over the last ten years.

Functions

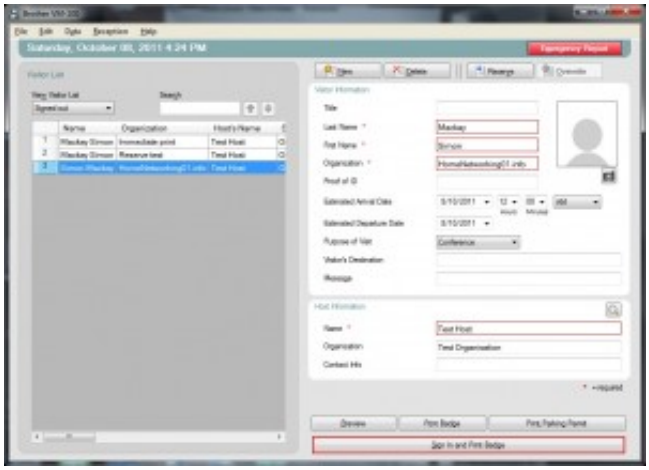
[3]

Login screen

The software is able to work as a receptionist-aided mode for the typical reception desk or as a self-check-in mode for conferences and trade events.The data in this software is password-protected and when administrators log in, they either can log in as a user with no administrator privileges available or as an administrator that only can work the higher-level functions.

It is also feasible to set inactive visitor data to be automatically purged after a certain time period ranging from a week to a year; which keeps with different individual-privacy and data-protection requirements.

The standard receptionist-aided mode allows the creation of a visitor badge and a parking permit, with the latter supporting a loosely-described vehicle for the parking permit. It also supports the creation of a “reserve list” which is populated with visitors who have been pre-registered and are intending to be checked in. This works well if you have the staff inform the receptionist of expected visitors, are handling large visitor groups or you want to use this software for managing an “invitation-only” event with the list full of RSVP’d invitees. Parents, take note here when it comes to managing that 16th birthday and you want to make sure that the party isn’t overrun by gatecrashers.



[4]

Receptionist’s data-entry screen

The Brother VM-100 software has the ability to turn out an “emergency list” of visitors who are currently checked using the regular printer for whenever you need to reconcile whoever is in the building during emergency situations. As well, the data can be exported as CSV (comma-separated) text files for use with other programs. This same data form is also used to import potential hosts in to the “hosts” table. This supports hosts coming from different departments or organisations, thus able to work with larger multi-department organisations or buildings that have many tenants but one common reception desk.

Experience with the software

When you install the software, you have to restart the computer after the installation process is completed. Otherwise the program won’t work properly. As well, there are error messages that are simply “generic error” stub messages appearing if things go wrong through the installation.

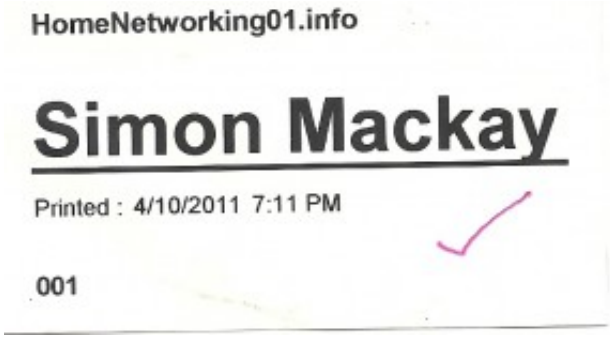
[5]

Self-checkin screen for conference registration

The username and password setup allows suitably-privileged users to operate either as regular users or administratiors. The only limitation is that the password string only handles basic alphanumeric characters – it doesn’t allow the use of punctuation in the passwords, which could allow for stronger passwords.

The administrator user can choose various badge layouts for use as the standard layout for both the badge and the parking permit, but there isn’t the ability to custom-design a layout for one’s own needs.

The process of checking in and checking out visitors works incredibly smoothly and the user interface does a good job in making this easier for untrained operators. There is the support to take images of visitors as they are checked in using your computer’s webcam.



[6]

Default visitor label

If you use the self-checkin setup, the check-in process is totally wizard-driven where your visitors work through two screens to sign in and obtain their conference pass or badge.

There is the ability to load visitor details for reserving or signing in and out from the “Reserved”, “Signed In” and “Signed Out” lists. As well, visitor data can be imported in to the system from such services as contact management systems.

Limitations and points of improvement

The parking permit function could support the ability to keep vehicle data in a separate table indexed by the vehicle’s number-plate (license plate) and containing make, model and colour data. This could improve the workflow process for creating parking permits for regular visitors’ vehicles.

There is the ability to sign in accompanying visitors, but the label printer will turn out a badge as you sign in the visitor. This can be OK for two or three people checking in at once but would be a problem if you had to do something like check in a busload of school students who are visiting as part of a field trip. In this case, the receptionist would have to “reserve” all of the group members, then select the group members from this list using either Shift+click (for contiguous entries) or Ctrl+click (for non-contiguous entries), then click “Sign in and print badge” to check the group in and turn out the badges.

This function could be improved by supporting a “group mode” which allows the receptionist to enter details for the group members, then click a “Sign group in” button when the last member is entered. Here, all the group is entered and the badge printer spits out the badges. As well, this could support the turning out of any parking permits in that same run so these are handed out to the drivers.

As well, I would like to see the program support the ability to work with ODBC-compliant databases or other database-hooks that are standards compliant. It could make such data collections as the host list work with data sources like human-resources databases.

Other points of improvement could also include the ability to allow the receptionist to choose the printer that they send the emergency report to rather than the default printer that is assigned for the system; and the ability to determine other visit reasons in the “Purpose of Visit” field.

These limitations and the lack of “polish” in the user interface may be typical for a version-1 (first release) program but I would like to see the program being improved continuously through its lifecycle rather than appear as a half-baked effort to work with Brother’s label printers.

Conclusion

As it stands, the Brother VM-100 visitor management system works as a capable entry-level visitor management setup for the typical small office, factory or warehouse. It may be stumped as far as integration with other back-end systems for growing organisations is concerned but, being a program in its early stages, it is something that would be expected.

Links
[1] /2010/11/interview-seriesbrother-international/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[2] /2011/10/product-reviewbrother-ql-570-label-printer/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[3] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Login-screen.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[4] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Reception-screen.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[5] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Self-check-in-screen.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[6] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Visitor-label.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

Product Review–Brother QL-570 Label Printer

12/10/2011 01:03

Introduction

I am reviewing the Brother QL-570 thermal label printer which works with a host computer as a simple label-printing system but can suit other tape-printing application.

[1]

Price

RRP: AUD$129.00

This label printer is also available as part of a visitor-management package which costs AUD$499 that has the software, a brace of thermal-paper rolls for the printer as well as 12 plastic badges and accompanying clips.The software, which I will be reviewing next[2], is also available as an add-on package for AUD$399.

The unit itself

The Brother QL-570 is a very compact label that is as wide as the typical receipt printer or two desktop sticky-tape dispensers. So it wouldn't take up much room on one's desk and could even perch on the top ledge of a reception desk without getting in the way of the view of the receptionist.

Connections

The label printer connects directly to the host computer using a standard USB cable. It doesn't support any RS232C connectivity which would hamper its useability as a receipt printer for most POS systems and hotspot-management systems that use this connection. Brother offers a network-connectable variant of this unit as the QL-580N which connects to an existing Ethernet network segment.

There is one thing that I am pleased about this unit in the way it is powered. It is a self-powered device rather than being powered from the host computer's USB cable. But the way it is connected to AC power is refreshingly different for this class of device. Here, the power supply is built in to the unit and it is connected to the power outlet using a standard AC cord of the kind you use to connect a boom-box to the mains. Here, you benefit from an easily-replaceable power cord and you don't have to worry about losing powerboard space to awkwardly-sized "wall-wart" power supplies.

Printing

[3]

Tape compartment with tape roll in place

The Brother QL-570 prints on to the labels or tape using direct-thermal printing, like the typical receipt printer or the older fax machine. Here, these units used a special thermal paper that has its top surface burnt off whenever the paper needs to be marked and this printing technique is known for printouts that fade over time.

This is although Brother uses a special layer to protect the labels from fading. As well, this unit uses a built-in guillotine to cut the paper labels or tape. It can work with Brother-supplied adhesive or non-adhesive label-tape reels that are up to 90mm wide.

You install a tape reel by dropping it in to the tape well, making sure that a square black clip is outside the tape rest on the right. Then you have to thread the tape through a slot so it comes out the label printer's front. You have to make sure the cover is closed before you use the printer. This includes using the form-feed or paper-cut buttons to feed the tape through properly.

Brother furnishes the same P-Touch Editor label-creation software as they have provided for their PT-2730 label writer to create custom labels. This also supports the creation of merged labels and work with supplied plug-in modules for Microsoft Word, Excel and Outlook. There is also a P-Touch address book to "get you going" with printed labels for your envelopes.

Programmers and software developers have access to a software-development kit available for download from Brother's Website. This works tightly with Microsoft's Visual Basic, Visual C and Access development environments.

Points of improvement

[4]

Tape path shiown — marked side isn't used for printing

As far as connectivity goes, a label printer like the Brother QL-570 could be designed for USB bus-powered operation, thus avoiding the need for extra cables to run to the printer as well as working properly with laptop computers. On the other hand, this label printer could benefit from an integrated self-powered USB hub thus creating more USB ports to connect devices to the host computer.

I would also like to see this printer support any and all USB device classes that relate to label or receipt printing for point-of-sale or gaming applications. This could also allow the printer to work with devices like point-of-sale terminals, TV set-top boxes, gaming /amusement systems and the like as a label or receipt /voucher printer.

It could also be able to work with the typical thermal-paper rolls used for receipt printing, which would be commonly available around most businesses. This would benefit the QL-570 being used in visitor-management or similar applications where you use "one-shot" badges or tickets.

As I have said before, the Brother P-Touch label-creation software could benefit from a measuring-tape creation program so one can create measuring tapes.

Conclusion

[5]The Brother P-Touch QL-570 label printer is a very capable unit for turning out labels or name tags on an ad-hoc basis and I would still consider it as being of use for these applications.

Links
[1] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011–09-30–019-Brother-QL-570.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[2] /2011/10/product-reviewbrother-vm-100-visitor-management-software/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[3] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011–09-30–021-Brother-QL-570-tape-compartment-with-tape.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[4] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011–09-30–022-Brother-QL-570-tape-path-shown.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[5] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/2011–09-30–020-Brother-QL-570.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

Printing from your smartphone or tablet

11/10/2011 04:10

Introduction

[1]

HP Envy 100 all-in-one printer — you can print to these printers from your smartphone or tablet

Most smartphone or tablet users would like to obtain hard copy of documents or pictures on paper. But at the moment, there is no open and common platform for printing from these devices.

There isn't even the ability to connect a printer directly to any of these devices and this issue will become more real as more households use these devices. It will extend to other Internet-ended devices like Internet-ended TVs and set-top boxes that are part of interactive TV setups.

There are a few solutions being established by most of the printer manufacturers and all of these solutions require that you use a newer network-enabled printer that is connected to your home network.

Manufacturer-supplied print app

[2]

Brother iPrint&Scan — one of the mobile print apps offered by the manufacturers

The most common solution is to download a printing app from the mobile device's app store. This method can work if your preferred printer brand is other than Hewlett-Packard because this brand offers different print options that don't rely on these apps. As well I have installed these apps on to my Android smartphone so I can assess different network printers' abilities with printing from a smartphone.

These are written by the vendors themselves, usually for all of their recent-issue network-enabled printers and they can print known file types like image files, PDFs or, in some cases, common office file formats. It is also worth knowing that most of these apps allow you to scan photos or documents to your mobile device using your multifunction printer's scanning facility.

Typically these programs register with the device's operating system as a file-handler for the file types that they can print. Then, when you open one of these files in the operating system, you have the option to open the file with the printer app; which will list the printers on your network that it has discovered and knows it can work with. Subsequently you select the options that suit your needs, such as paper size or duplex printing, and start the print run.

Apple AirPrint

This works with all Apple iOS devices that are up-to-date with a version of iOS 4.2 or newer. At the moment, it only works with HP ePrint-enabled printers and provides a similar print-job experience as what would be expected for desktop printing.

Apple has yet to release this feature to other printer manufacturers so that people can have a choice of printer to work from.

Google Cloud Print

Google is offering a smartphone printing solution known as Google Cloud Print[3]. This solution, which is immature at the time of writing, requires the use of an HP ePrint-capable printer or certain network-enabled Kodak printers for PC-free network printing. Other printers will require a desktop computer to be running a helper application to collect and forward print jobs to that printer.

At the moment, it works in a similar manner to the printer-manufacturer-supplied app setups where the user has to use the app to print out documents. There is a larger choice of applications as shown on this page[4] for mostly the Android and iOS platforms.

Email-to-print

I have covered[5] HP's ePrint[6] "print-by-email" setup through the review of a handful of ePrint-enabled HP printers. Here, the printer and the smartphone or tablet must see an Internet service for this to work.

As well the printer has to be registered with the HP ePrint service by its owner. Users would have to then send the image, PDF or document file to a special email address that has been determined as part of the printer setup routine. There is the ability to set up a white-list of approved email addresses that can send print jobs to the printer and recently HP enabled the ability for users to determine an easy-to-remember email-to-print address for their printer.

Kodak offers a similar function for some of their network-enabled printers at the moment. But none of the other popular printer manufacturers have established an email-to-print infrastructure that can work with any smartphone or tablet device.

Achieving best results from your mobile-device print setup

An issue that may plague smartphone or tablet users when they print using one of the mobile print solutions, especially the manufacturer-supplied print apps or the Apple AirPrint setup is that the job may be interrupted midway or take an inordinate time to print. It may not be of concern for Google Cloud Print or email-to-print setups because the job would be lodged with an Internet-based server which would resubmit it to the printer.

This can happen if the mobile device isn't communicating properly with the Wi-Fi network such as through low batteries or

being used in an area where there is poor reception. In most cases, it would be a good idea to make sure the battery is charged up or the device is plugged in to its charger; and you are seeing at least three or four bars on the Wi-Fi signal-strength indicator when you are running the print job. This may require you to avoid moving the device around until the print job is complete, which will be indicated on the software.

What can be done

What I would like to see for on-site printing from mobile devices is the use of the UPnP print device [7]classes which I have touched on previously. As well, more printer manufacturers could license or exploit the email-to-print setups that HP and Kodak have established.

As I have said previously, the network printers should also have a larger memory so that print jobs can be transferred from the client device and held in the printer's memory until the last page is turned out.

Conclusion

At the moment there isn't a clear path for setting up a printing solution for your smartphone, tablet computer or similar device that doesn't need a desktop computer to be available at all times. It all depends on which make and model of printer you are using on your network and, in some cases, what platform you are using for your device.

Links
[1] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/2011-03-19-007.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[2] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Brother-iPrint-Scan-mobile-app.png#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[3] http://www.google.com/cloudprint/
[4] http://www.google.com/cloudprint/learn/apps.html
[5] /tags/hp-eprint/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[6] http://www.hpeprint.com/
[7] /2011/03/encouraging-the-use-of-the-upnp-printer-device-class/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

Sports scoreboard apps–a very useful mobile app class

11/10/2011 03:19

[1]

ScoreMobile scoreboard app

If you look in your mobile platform's app store, there are quite a few sports apps which turn your smartphone or tablet in to a scoreboard or leaderboard for your favourite sporting events. Some of the scoreboard apps allow you to monitor a particular team's games, view league ladders or see on-demand video of game highlights. Examples of these include the ScoreMobile[2] apps; and the "Footy Now"[3] /"League Now"[4] apps for the AFL and NRL football leagues respectively; all of which are available on most of the main mobile platforms like iOS and Android.

Most of these apps are free or advertiser-funded and are written in conjunction with companies and other interests associated with the particular leagues or codes that these apps work with As well, they work via whatever Internet connection your device is using at the moment, whether it's the Wi-Fi home network, the Wi-Fi hotspot at your favourite bar or the wireless broadband service that you device is associated with. But are they a useful download for your phone or tablet?

I would say that they provide a useful role for any sports followers, whether they watch the game on TV at home or their favourite bar or café; or go to the stadium to watch the game.

[5]

Footy Now AFL scoreboard app

One key use for people who watch the game in a public place such as the stadium, a large outdoor screen in a square or a packed-out bar, is to have a “handheld scoreboard” that they can glance at Here, they may not see the scoreboard easily due to them being in the wrong seating position or being further back from the venue’s TV screen.

At home, you could be outside listening to the radio commentary yet be able to check the scores at a glance. This may then be useful for knowing whether to head inside to see the action on TV. For Australian readers, this could extend to you having a tablet computer showing the scores for the AFL or NRL Grand Final near the barbecue while you are cooking the meat for the Grand Final lunch.

These apps would also appeal to travellers and expats who like to follow their favourite matches while they are travelling. An example of this was a friend I know who had used one of these apps on his iPhone to follow a baseball game that was taking place in the US while he was over here in Australia. Similarly a Manchester United[6] fan could follow that soccer team’s performance anywhere around the world even if there isn’t a TV broadcast of the games where they are.

[7]

League Now NRL scoreboard app

For these apps to work properly, they need to have proper support for push notification but without placing too much strain on the device’s battery runtime. As well, these apps need to be able to work in a manner that doesn’t take over the processor power of these devices when they are just showing scores. As well, the data backend has to be synchronous to the scoreboard at the actual game in the same manner as what is expected for the TV scoreboard – a football goal appears on the mobile scoreboard app as soon as the pitch umpire declares that goal.

So whether you are an avid sports follower or just casually watch some sporting events like football finals or Grand-Prix car races, the mobile scoreboard apps do have a place on the smartphone and tablet devices.

Links

[1] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/ScoreMobile-cricket-matchup.png#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[2] http://www.scoremobile.com/
[3] http://www.footynow.com.au/
[4] http://www.leaguenow.com.au/
[5] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Footy-Now-AFL-Grand-Final-view.png#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[6] http://www.manutd.com/
[7] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/League-Now-NRL-Grand-Final-view.png#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

At last the iPad has a Facebook client app

11/10/2011 02:51

Articles

The iPad gets a Facebook app, finally | Engadget[1]

The Official Facebook App for iPad Is Finally Here | Gizmodo[2]

Facebook Finally Launches Its Own IPad Application | AllFacebook.com[3]

Facebook unveils iPad app, new mobile platform for developers | SmartCompany (Australia)[4]

From the horse's mouth

Introducing Facebook For iPad[5]

Download link

iTunes App Store[6]

My Comments

Previously, I posted an article[7] on the idea of creating and implementing desktop and tablet-computer client programs for popular social-network services. Here I raised issues of optimisation for the host's user interface, integration with local hardware and software resources as well as system performance issues; compared to software-maintenance and interlinking with service-based advertising as drawbacks.

Now Facebook have released an official client for the Apple iPad tablet computer. This client demonstrates the advantages of a client-side app for the iPad; with functionality like an always-visible presence list, proper response to the touch gestures, "to-the-edge" full-screen photo viewing as well as a multi-column view.

They have also answered a call from people who play FarmVille and similar games by offering the ability to play these games on the iPad using this platform's Facebook client.

Of course time would tell when a port for this client is made available for the other popular tablet platforms like Android Honeycomb or Blackberry Playbook. But I often wonder whether Facebook will even issue a client application for the Windows or Macintosh desktop-computing platforms.

Links
[1] http://www.engadget.com/2011/10/10/the-ipad-gets-a-facebook-app-finally/
[2] http://gizmodo.com/5848399/facebook-for-ipad-is-finally-here/gallery/1
[3] http://www.allfacebook.com/facebook-finally-launches-its-own-ipad-application-2011–10
[4] http://www.smartcompany.com.au/information-technology/20111011-facebook-unveils-ipad-app-new-mobile-platform-for-developers.html?utm_source=SmartCompany&utm_campaign=8e9fba5e18-Tuesday_11_October_2011&utm_medium=email
[5] http://blog.facebook.com/blog.php?post=10150311269432131
[6] http://itunes.apple.com/app/facebook/id284882215
[7] /2011/07/do-we-need-to-create-all-round-social-network-clients-for-regular-computers-and-tablets/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

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Podcast–DLNA Media Sharing

07/10/2011 14:46

Podcast

Seeing DLNA. Cool media sharing.[1] by scobleizer[2]

Podcast link[3]

My Comments

This on-demand broadcast is a DLNA-hosted interview that I heard about what the DLNA home media network is all about with its heterogenous benefits.

One key factor that was mentioned many times was the heterogenous nature of the DLNA ecosystem. Here, they illustrated practices like bringing content up from a network-attached storage unit to Samsung TV or a TV hooked up to a network media adaptor from a different vendor using one of Samsung's Android tablets.

They even cited the ability to use different software like TwonkyMobile[4] or Samsung's AllShare on the same Android device to do the same task. Even devices like Sony's PS3 were mentioned due to the ability to discover content hosted on DLNA servers. Other applications that were even raised include delivering pictures to the printer when you want hard copies of them.

Of course, there was a direct comparison to the Apple AirPlay ecosystem which required the use of iOS devices, the Apple TV (or selected AirPlay-compliant devices) as well as content hosted on computers running iTunes for it to work.

Apple users should know that there is software for their platforms in the form of TwonkyMobile[5] or PlugPlayer for their iOS devices and NullRiver[6] MediaLink or similar applications for their Macintosh computers.

Links
[1] http://soundcloud.com/scobleizer/seeing-dlna-cool-media-sharing
[2] http://soundcloud.com/scobleizer
[3] http://soundcloud.com/scobleizer/seeing-dlna-cool-media-sharing?utm_source=soundcloud&utm_campaign=mshare&utm_medium=facebook&utm_content=http%3A%2F%2Fsoundcloud.com%2Fscobleizer%2Fseeing-dlna-cool-media-sharing#play
[4] http://www.twonkymedia.com/products/twonkymobile/
[5] http://www.twonkymedia.com/products/twonkymobile/iphone.asp

x
[6] http://www.nullriver.com

25th Anniversary of Bang & Olufsen's Form 2 headphones

07/10/2011 14:00

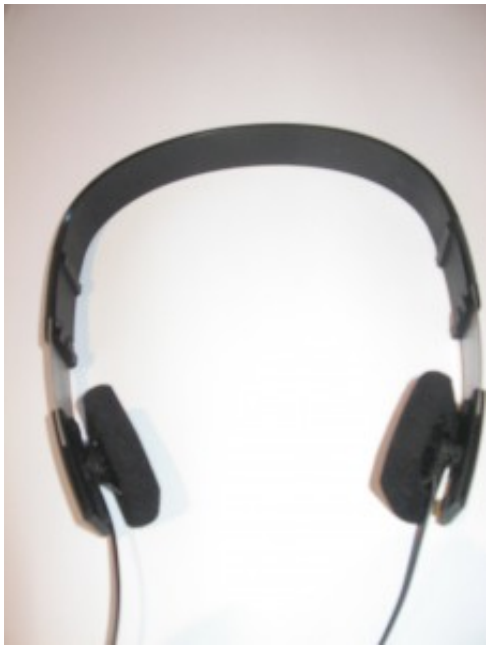
Article – From the horse's mouth

Form 2 – new colours – Bang & Olufsen[1]

Product Review – HomeNetworking01.info

Bang & Olufsen Form 2 headphones[2]

My Comments



[3]

Bang & Olufsen Form 2 headphones

Now Bang & Olufsen are celebrating the 25th anniversary of their Form 2 lightweight headphone design which I have reviewed [4]on this site. These had the earpieces anchored to the headphone using a connection that wouldn't look out of place on a nice watch; and were known for very good quality sound.

They have now been released in different colours rather than just the black finish that was associated with them. Here you can choose to have them in red, orange, yellow or white as well as black. The press photos on the B&O site also have images of them having the classic B&O logo on them, which would be similar to the trend that I have seen with other desirable brands where the logo is clearly visible.

It is also worth noting that I heard from B&O sales staff that these headphones are one of the few premium-priced headphones that are optimised for use on portable devices as well as home or professional audio equipment. This is compared to a practice associated with some other premium headphones where the impedance is suited for the headphone jack of a hi-fi amplifier, CD player, tape/MiniDIsc deck or mixing desk; and wouldn't have the full volume from an MP3 player, smartphone or laptop computer.

This is definitely one of Bang & Olufsen's classic designs that makes me think of their products being like the Jaguar cars. Here, these products aren't about a label that only represents a status symbol, but are about something you enjoy using because they deliver the performance. You expect the clear treble notes and vocals while you hear a tight bass line when you hear music through them.

Links
[1] http://www.bang-olufsen.com/form2-colours
[2] /2011/02/product-reviewbang-olufsen-form-2-headphones/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[3] http://homenetworking01.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/2011–02-21–002.jpg#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed
[4] /2011/02/product-reviewbang-olufsen-form-2-headphones/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

Farewell Steve Jobs–one of the pillars of the personal computer

07/10/2011 13:17

Initially when I heard that Steve Jobs was to permanently resign [1]from Apple due to ill-health, I thought it was simply retirement from one of the pillar companies of the personal-computing age.

Now, the man responsible for the Macintosh computing platform which commercialised and legitimised the "WIMP" (windows, icons, mouse, pointer) user-interface style and the iPhone and iPad devices which also did the same for touchscreen computing, has now passed away.

Many will remember his style of commercialising these technologies through a vertically-integrated method which requires the use of Apple products and services for full benefit, but this let the competitors implement systems that implemented these usage metaphors on their own platforms.

This was all from him and Steve Wozniak turning the proceeds from selling that VW Bus (Kombi-van) into capital for the Apple company. Here, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak worked on the development of the Apple II which became one of the beacons of the personal-computing age in the late 1970s.

A lot of commentators had said that Steve Jobs, through his efforts at Apple with the Apple II, the Macintosh and the iPhone and iPad devices had personalised computing. I have observed this through the demonstration software that came with Apple II computers in the 1980s, the boot sequence that was used in all the incarnations of the Macintosh platform and the design of computing products from the iMac onwards.

Whether its through the evolution of a computing technology or the passing of one of the people who influenced the direction of personal computing and communications; I would see this simply as a milestone to the connected lifestyle.

Links
[1] /2011/08/now-its-firm-steve-jobs-to-resign-from-chief-executive-at-apple/#utm_source=feed&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=feed

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