

## Spring 2007 newsletter

1. **Service developments**
2. **Current promotions**
3. **Regulatory developments**
4. **Security developments**
5. **Tip-of-the-newsletter**
6. **Contacting us**

### Service developments

Welcome to the Spring '07 edition of our newsletter. As always, we've spent the winter months improving our wares:

- ◆ Our new **PayPal support scripts** can turn your website into an automated, online accounts department. Let your customers pay their invoices over the web, by credit card! Collect payment almost instantly, in multiple currencies, from Visa, Mastercard, Delta, Amex, Switch and Solo cardholders, amongst others. Our scripts can also be used to sell products online.
- ◆ We installed the PayPal support scripts on our own website and are pleased to announce **we now accept payment by credit card** on all invoices, both online and over the telephone. In addition, selected services, including webhosting, can be purchased directly from our website. To pay an invoice online, simply click the link provided on the invoice itself.
- ◆ Our marketing team has produced a stunning **gift certificate**, which is now available for purchase. These certificates are available in denominations of **£20 and £50** and entitle the bearer to the purchase of any of our products or services (excepting domainnames). Perfect for that hard-to-buy-for moment! For more information: <http://www.blazingfibre.net/gift.htm>
- ◆ Onsite support customers can now take advantage of our **3-tier pricing model**, which caters for businesses of all sizes. Our small business rates are just £20/hour! Meanwhile, businesses owning 4 to 19 computers qualify for our **new "midrange" rate** of £35/hour. Larger business rates are unchanged at £50/hour. That's right, unchanged, again!
- ◆ Webhosting customers will be pleased to note that we just **doubled the size of your disk space allocation**, on all accounts, at no charge! Combined with the **unlimited bandwidth** available on all our hosting accounts, and our lightning-quick connection to the net, you can host some fat sites, folks!
- ◆ Don't forget, our **feedback form** awaits your entries, it's at <http://www.blazingfibre.net/feedback.htm>. Fill it out and help us improve the quality of our service.
- ◆ Are you battling with legacy servers? Make your life simple, migrate to unix! We recently moved two customers – one from Novell 3 and the other from Windows NT 4 – to FreeBSD 6. Their issues evaporated, while the flexibility and reliability of their new FreeBSD server made a solid foundation, upon which both customers have deployed additional services. And all was rosy.

For more information: <http://www.freebsd.org/>

## Current promotions

The latest devastating deals.

- ◆ **SOHO servers:** You can get the latest FreeBSD installed and configured on your server for just **£399!** Or the latest Windows installed and configured for just £599, you choose! We can also build, install and configure the hardware, on either a new or existing system. With a **fixed price install**, you can rest easy. And, we'll give you a **free survey and quote**. For more information: <http://www.blazingfibre.net/prodserv/networks.htm>
- ◆ **Remote access:** Reduce your carbon footprint with point-and-click telecommuting. All you need is a computer, a broadband connection and some simple client software, and you can, for example, **read your office email, edit spreadsheets, connect to corporate databases**, even print on office printers, all without leaving your home, or indeed your hotel room. We can build remote access servers from just **£99**, and add new users for a crazy, one-off fee of just **£50**. Best of all, our unix-based remote access servers have no artificial user limits! For more information: <http://www.blazingfibre.net/prodserv/vpn.htm>
- ◆ **Online invoice payment:** Let your customers settle their invoices online with our PayPal support script. Priced at **£199**, you can **accept payments 24x7x365**, with near-instant authorisation, and no trips to the bank! For more information: <http://www.blazingfibre.net/prodserv/ecommerce.htm>
- ◆ **Webhosting:** Remember, you can get **10% off** if you subscribe or renew for a two year period!

## Regulatory developments

(Please note: We are not a law firm, this is not legal advice, and if you have any doubts concerning your position, you should contact a solicitor.)

- ◆ Our last newsletter highlighted the **Data Protection Act (DPA)**. This Act is part of a wider task of "information stewardship" which each business must undertake. This stewardship not only concerns keeping your data safe, but also keeping it securely, and finally, deleting it securely as well. Failure to manage data in this way could leave your company vulnerable. For more information: [http://www.theregister.co.uk/2006/12/01/data\\_protection/](http://www.theregister.co.uk/2006/12/01/data_protection/)
- ◆ Businesses should also be aware of new requirements concerning the inclusion of identification information on "business letters", including emails, websites and electronic documents such as PDFs. Failure to comply with the regulation, which became UK law on January 1, 2007, may result in a fine. For more information: [http://www.theregister.co.uk/2006/12/21/new\\_web\\_email\\_regulation/](http://www.theregister.co.uk/2006/12/21/new_web_email_regulation/)

## Security developments

We're reprinting this from the last newsletter, since it's still pertinent:

- ◆ Everyone we know is reporting more spam than ever, you can get yourself a **free spam filter** for Windows here: <http://www.spampal.org/>

Spampal can protect multiple email accounts, and works with all popular email software, including Evolution, Eudora, and Outlook. Spampal can even be used to protect a whole network of machines – see <http://www.blazingfibre.net/prodserv/filtering.htm> for more information about that.

Spam filtering doesn't just protect you from spam – viruses and "phishbait" are also delivered via email, as are a number of trojan horses. Often, your spamfilter will flag these mails as spam, and thus reduce the chances of you being affected by them. See also: <http://www.blazingfibre.net/tech/spampal.htm>

## Tip-of-the-newsletter

by Dr C. P. Yu

If you have a query you'd like to see as tip-of-the-newsletter, send it in! Contact details are at the end.

### Tip #4: Windows Vista

With all the fuss, we think it'd be wrong if we didn't chip in our 2p on the subject of Windows Vista, the latest version of Microsoft's Windows operating system which recently went on sale. Our findings in a nutshell: **hold off, if you can.**

Our first real-world experience with the product came to us via a customer, who had found a need to replace an old, failing machine with a new computer. We went with them to PC World to buy it. What we found is that it's almost impossible, already, to buy a system without Vista on it. We asked if we could have our new Compaq system supplied with XP on it instead, and the salesperson laughed and said, to paraphrase, "not likely, even if you did use your old XP CD on this new system, you'd have problems finding drivers..."

This seemed to remind him of what is, apparently a sales script delivered from Redmond itself, and he continued, "when you connect your scanner or printer to your new system, you may be prompted for drivers, and if so, you need to download these from the manufacturer's website, and then install them, and this is something you need to do yourself..."

As it happened, Vista did not only fail to recognise the customer's 2-year-old HP printer, it also failed to recognise the customer's USB ADSL modem, which prevented us from downloading drivers for it. So, the new system went back in the box, much to the customer's chagrin, while we reconnected the old system so we could download drivers for the modem....

Then we got to the manufacturer's website, where we found, after some searching, that no Vista drivers for our device were scheduled to be made. The device had been "end-of-lifed", as had our hopes and dreams of a working Vista system, deployed under the table that evening.

After a call to the customer's ISP, during which we explained that we were forced to buy Vista, and the device, which they supplied, was no longer compatible with our computer, and that we would consider moving ISP, if we also had to buy a new router just because they had supplied us with a non-Vista-compatible modem in the first place, and yes, we suppose we would consider moving to the 8Mbit triple-play plan (just to smooth things over of course), we then secured shipment of a new ethernet router. As this router was ethernet-based, rather than USB it would not need drivers and thus work perfectly with Vista.

Unfortunately when the router arrived a few days later, the courier had smashed it, and it now awaits return-and-replace with the ISP, who has agreed to pay for the additional courier fees. And that is the current state of play with this customer. They are currently waiting for their replacement router, to replace a smashed router to replace the USB modem that worked perfectly with Windows XP. Their printer is printing happily, since they are using their old XP system and their new Vista system is still in the box, unusable without an internet connection. We haven't even tried to get Vista drivers for the printer yet – if it too is end-of-lifed, the customer will need to buy a new printer as well!

The moral of this story? We'll try and keep this brief.

The first wire that tripped this customer was the compulsion to buy Vista. There was almost no option, short of a "few old showroom systems" that permitted the customer to buy XP. This wire is a consequence of Microsoft's licensing arrangements, which restrict the ability of OEMs such as HP/Compaq from supplying systems the customer actually wants.

The second tripwire was the lack of "legacy" device support in Vista. We use this legacy word guardedly here since the unsupported devices were only a few years old. Traditionally, new systems support old devices. We haven't yet decided whether this failing is due to a technical problem, possibly with the USB support, or whether it's due to Microsoft's desire to have everyone buy new hardware (for what reason, if so, remains unclear, and we kindly refrain from speculating further).

The consequences: because the customer's new Vista computer didn't support their USB modem, they could not use the internet and thus could not use their new Vista computer. And so it remains in the box, on the floor two weeks later while the old XP system kicks on.

The moral of this story is thus, try and avoid Vista until drivers for your hardware are available. In this customer's case, they had no idea their USB modem would not work, and it is very unfortunate PC World didn't mention it. However the sales script from Redmond didn't include USB ADSL modems, apparently.

## Contacting us

We'd love to hear your suggestions and comments. Our contact details are as follows. And yes, **we do** pick up the phone on weekends!

- web: <http://www.blazingfibre.net/>
- email: [support@blazingfibre.net](mailto:support@blazingfibre.net)
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- snailmail: blazingfibre.net / PO Box 2855 / London W1A 6LW
- GPG key: <http://www.blazingfibre.net/fibre.key>

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