



Case Communications September / October Newsletter

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Welcome,

Welcome to the Case Communications October newsletter.

Another Flaw in Cisco's Security Equipment

Network managers have no defence against problem in Cisco's security equipment, according to tester Roy Hills who works for Kent firm NTA Monitor.

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EC Storage Law could lead to another 50,000 terabytes of extra storage.

The new EEC Directive 2006/24/EC states that providers of publicly available electronic communications services or networks will have to retain 'certain' data which is generated or processed by them.

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Microsoft Delay XP Upgrade to early 2008

Microsoft has pushed back the introduction of Windows XP service pack 3 to the first half of 2008

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Oracle is thinking of releasing Linux

Rumours are circulating that Oracle wants to get into bed with Linux, and at least one financial analyst says customers can expect a tighter Linux based appliance from the database application vendor.

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Fake Network equipment causes havoc

Counterfeit goods appear in the channel and could be in your organisation, do you know how genuine your Network equipment is?

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The global inter-operability of the internet needs to be preserved,

The global inter-operability of the internet needs to be preserved, Vint Cerf, one of the founders of the net, has told a global gathering in Athens

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White knuckle ride at Tate Modern.

The Carsten Holler exhibition at the Tate Modern is an exhibition with a difference. Consisting of a series of slides visitors can both ride the slide and watch others sliding down.

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Ofcom announce plans to stop users losing their broadband connection

Ofcom has announced plans to stop users losing their broadband connection if they change supplier. Currently many users suffer "serious and disruptive" problems according to the comms regulator, and are often cut off for several days before their new supplier connects them.

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Rumours of 3-Com being up for sale

Rumours that 3-Com might be bought by private investors caused the network company's stock to jump this week

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Ofcom say iTrip will be legal for Christmas

The regulator has confirmed it is ready to legalise use of the add-on that turns your iPod into a radio station

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T Mobile changes its mind on VoIP Ban

T-Mobile has reversed its ban on voice over IP — but only for customers on premium contracts.

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Is Accenture abandoning its NPfIT contract?

The NHS dismissed as 'rumour and speculation' the report that Accenture is abandoning its £2bn NPfIT contract, but all parties suggest that changes are imminent

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Another Flaw in Ciscos Security Equipment

Network managers have no defence against a problem in Cisco's security equipment, according to tester Roy Hills who works for Kent firm NTA Monitor.

Cisco has also admitted it could not offer a patch for the vulnerability in its VPN Concentrators.

The IKE-based vulnerability could lead to 'Denial of Service' attacks (DOS) on the concentrators, meaning remote staff would be unable to access their corporate network.

The flaw was identified a year ago by Hill. He revealed the vulnerability because Cisco had made no progress towards eliminating the problem. When Hills was asked whether businesses could protect themselves from the vulnerability he said "It is a bit difficult – you would need IKE for people to connect! It's a matter of waiting for Cisco to come up with a fix"

He added that Cisco had not made any progress with addressing the vulnerability. Hills went on "We had to move forward with this, otherwise someone (malicious) would have come across it. We needed to put this out to make people aware. IKE is also used in PIX Firewalls and Cisco Operating system IOS, so the vulnerability may be more widespread: potentially firewalls could be brought down with the same attack. Cisco said no patch or workaround was possible because the flaw brought about a weakness in the IKE protocol and was not therefore specific to Cisco.

The vulnerability allows an attacker without authentication to exhaust the IKE resources on a device by bombarding it with requests. The device will fail after as little as a few hundred requests.

It is similar to the TCP SYN flood attack, which caused so much concern in the early 1990's. Just days after Hills revelation, Cisco's firewall products were again in the firing line as a researcher at one of the top security conferences revealed the existence of another vulnerability.



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EC Storage Law could lead to another 50,000 terabytes of extra storage.

The new EEC Directive 2006/24/EC states that providers of publicly available electronic communications services or networks will have to retain 'certain' data which is generated or processed by them.

This will create massive amounts of extra data that will not contribute to business and could cost UK companies around £30m to implement.

That's the warning from experts who says that network managers need to prepare themselves for the increased storage burden the Directive will impose. It is estimated that UK based Internet Service Providers could have to spend over £25m a year to implement the required infrastructure and a further £9m to service the requests from law enforcements agencies for information.

The long-term storage requirements demand that once written, the data must not change but must also be time bounded (so after a specified time it can be deleted). Most critical however is that no data loss can be tolerated.



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Microsoft Delay XP Upgrade to early 2008

The next big upgrade to Windows XP had been expected in the second half of next year, but delays in the introduction of Windows Vista are believed to have had an impact on the Windows XP upgrade.

Windows CE 6 (for embedded devices) is due for release on 1st November 2006.



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Oracle is thinking of releasing Linux

Rumours are circulating that Oracle wants to get into bed with Linux, and at least one financial analyst says customers can expect a tighter Linux based appliance from the database application vendor.

Industry experts say such a move would be good news for small and mid-sized customers, who would be the likely target of pre-configured Linux based packages from Oracle.

Ubuntu, a European based Linux distribution based firm has gained widespread popularity on the desktop and released a server earlier this year and is rumoured to be working with Oracle.

This is at the same time a story emerged that Oracle's Larry Ellison was reported to be considering the release of Oracles own version of Linux, after realising the purchase of the two major Linux vendors was not cost effective according to a story in the Financial times.

According to the article, Ellison said Oracle examined purchasing Red Hat or Novell, but did not want to spend billions of dollars for open-source software because it can be developed by anyone.

Since Oracles largest customers are looking for one supplier to provide them with an entire stack of software, from an OS up to applications--- Oracle could benefit by offering Linux, Ellison said in the article.

Then the company would be able to offer a complete stack of infrastructure software and give customers what they want, he said.

With a Linux OS under its belt, Oracle would resemble its competitor Microsoft more than it would another chief rival, SAP. Currently Oracle competes against Microsoft in the middleware, applications and data base markets, though Oracle Java-based middleware offerings are not considered considered to be 'best-of-breed'.



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Fake Network equipment causes havoc

Subnets began dropping off an American banks network one after another, and entire bank branches went offline for days at a time, as their network manager watched the system collapse around him.

At first, the network manager thought he some of the new WAN interface cards (WIC's) he had recently installed to upgrade 50 Cisco 2811 routers during expansion were faulty. But as the routers failed and dropped off the network he realised he was dealing with fakes.

Thirty cards turned out to be counterfeit. Despite repeated calls and e-mail to the supplier, the issue was not resolved.

Nor did he get an answer to the most important question: How did a registered Cisco reseller (also a platinum Network appliance partner and Microsoft Gold partner) acquire the counterfeit WICs in the first place.

What he did not know was that the phony equipment had been quietly creeping into sales and distribution channels since the early 2004, when manufacturers began seeing more returns, faster mean time between failures and higher failure rates.

According to says Sharon Mills, director of IT procurement organization Caucus. "Counterfeit gear has become a big problem that could put networks - and health and safety - at risk. "Nobody wants to say they've got counterfeit gear inside their enterprises that can all of a sudden stop working. But it's all over the place, just like pirated software is everywhere,"

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The global inter-operability of the internet needs to be preserved,

The global inter-operability of the internet needs to be preserved, Vint Cerf, one of the founders of the net, has told a global gathering in Athens

Mr Cerf was speaking at the first-ever Internet Governance Forum (IGF), a United Nations' creation to bring all the decision makers involved in the internet together.

He said the ability for everyone and every device to connect to the net using a simple protocol was the backbone of the internet.

But changes to the way the net works, to accommodate a multi-lingual internet, raised concerns, he said.

Language list

Work is ongoing to allow people around the world to access the net using their own languages and scripts, such as Arabic, Cyrillic and Chinese ideograms.

Mr Cerf said creating a multi-lingual internet, using what are known as internationalised domain names (IDN), was "a huge technical challenge".

Currently all internet users must type in website addresses, called domain names, using the Latin alphabet. Some countries and organisations feel that the drive to a multi-lingual net was proceeding too slowly.

Tarek Kamel, Egypt's minister of communications, said there was an "absence of truly diverse, multi-lingual internet".

The language barrier comes as a "major hindrance to using the internet," he said.

Viviane Reding, the EC's information society commissioner, said: "Bridging the digital divide is not just a matter of screens and cables.

"It is equally important to recognise the extent and value of cultural diversity within global village of the internet. That is why multilingualism is important."

She said that IDN was "sometimes wrongly seen as technical issue".

"There is legitimate political imperative," she said. "Users want to be able to use Chinese ideograms and Arabic scripts.

"There is a real danger that a prolonged delay in the introduction of IDN could lead to fragmentation of the internet name space."

Broken link

But Mr Cerf, chairman of Icann, the body which oversees the use and development of domain names, said IDN was very much a technical issue.

"One of the most important aspects is for the user to make unambiguous references to every registered domain name.

Historically this has been through a small subset of Latin characters."

Each domain name for a website is unique - so that each and every user who types "bbc.co.uk", for example, is sent to the BBC page.

Mr Cerf said that in order for other scripts to be introduced into the domain name system, there needed to be rigorous testing to ensure that users could be certain they will reach their online destination no matter which script they used.

"Domain names are not general natural language expressions. They are simply identifiers," he said. "They must be unique. Names registered today must be able to work into their distant future no matter what characters are added."

He warned: "A miss-step could easily and permanently break the internet into non-interoperable components."

Icann was currently testing the introduction of different scripts into the domain name system, he said.

This article has been provided by courtesy of the BBC.



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White knuckle ride at Tate Modern.

For Carsten Höller, the experience of sliding is best summed up in a phrase by the French writer Roger Caillois as a 'voluptuous panic upon an otherwise lucid mind'. The slides are impressive sculptures in their own right, and you don't have to hurtle down them to appreciate this artwork. What interests Höller, however, is both the visual spectacle of watching people sliding and the 'inner spectacle' experienced by the sliders themselves, the state of simultaneous delight and anxiety that you enter as you descend.

To date Höller has installed six smaller slides in other galleries and museums, but the cavernous space of the Turbine Hall offers a unique setting in which to extend his vision. Yet, as the title implies, he sees it as a prototype for an even larger enterprise, in which slides could be introduced across London, or indeed, in any city. How might a daily dose of sliding affect the way we perceive the world? Can slides become part of our experiential and architectural life?

Höller has undertaken many projects that invite visitor interaction, such as *Flying Machine* (1996) that hoists the user through the air, *Upside-Down Goggles* (1994/2001) that modify vision, and *Frisbee House* (2000) - a room full of Frisbees. The slides, like these earlier works, question human behaviour, perception and logic, offering the possibility for self-exploration in the process.

Story courtesy of Tate Modern



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Ofcom announce plans to stop users losing their broadband connection

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To address the problem, Ofcom intends to make a current coluntary code observed by some ISP.s, mandatory.

Under Ofcoms proposal ISP's will have to issue users with a migration authorisation code, or MAC if they wish to leave.The user would then quote the code to their new ISP, which should make for a seamless handover.



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Rumours of 3-Com being up for sale

It was reported yesterday that an unnamed private equity group is targeting the network company, and is willing to pay as much as US\$7 per share. 3-Com stock which has traded between US\$3.47 and US\$5.70 for the past year, closed at US\$5.02, after heavy trading, according to the report.

The increase in share price was triggered by a report from UBS stock analyst Long Jiang that indicated 3-Coms recent efforts to shore up majority ownership in its joint venture with Chinese equipment maker Huawei, could make the company more valuable. 3Com has a 51% stake in the Chinese company.

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Ofcom say iTrip will be legal for Christmas

After years of illegality, the iTrip and related devices are about to get the UK's stamp of approval.

The communications regulator Ofcom announced on Thursday that it is giving the stamp of approval to the small FM transmitters that connect to the iPod and broadcasts a signal that can heard on a car radio or home stereo receiver.

Many people have been happily using them illegally for years. In fact, Ofcom has estimated the number of iTrips being used illegally in the UK at around 87,500, or 10 percent of the potential market of 875,000.

The iTrip, which costs around £40 with similar devices available from £10 and up, can be set to a free FM channel so you can listen to your iPod using any radio receiver. Tune your household radios to the same frequency and you can have tunes from your collection of iPod music, playing in every room in the house.

The issue in the past has been that, while they're perfectly legal in the US, using them here contravenes the Wireless Telegraphy Regulations in the UK. This didn't put off UK users, as witnessed by US retailers reporting that the UK was one of the most popular markets for these devices.

The Griffin iTrip is currently legal to sell in Europe, since it has a CE mark, but in the UK its illegal to use because it broadcasts an FM signal. The law in question was drawn up to restrict pirate radio stations, rather than micro FM transmitters.

Derrick Stembridge, marketing director of Griffin Technology, welcomed the news from Ofcom. "It's great that Griffin will be able to support legally sold and used iTrips," he said.

Steve Hawkins, managing director of distributor AM Micro, has been a keen proponent for the change in law. "It's ridiculous to consider such harmless technology as illegal. Thankfully with the help of MPs like Don Foster [Lib Dem MP for Bath] and the staff at Ofcom that looks certain to change very soon."



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T Mobile changes its mind on VoIP Ban

The mobile operator banned VoIP in May this year "for commercial reasons" and said it would kick VoIP users off the network if they were caught. But a few weeks ago it changed its data tariffs — and in the process partly overturned the ban.

T-Mobile has now introduced two datacard tariffs, one of which allows the use of VoIP, and one which doesn't. For £29 per month users can consume "unlimited" data through a combined 3G and Wi-Fi datacard, but aren't allowed to use VoIP.

Customers who ignore the ban will be warned, and could then see their connection speed slashed. "Network protection controls may be applied which will result in a reduced speed of transmission," warned T-Mobile on its web site.

Only users who pay T-Mobile an additional £15 per month for the web 'n' walk Max product can legitimately use VoIP.

The new policy applies whether the subscriber is connecting over T-Mobile's cellular or Wi-Fi networks.

One catch is that "unlimited" doesn't mean unlimited. Users on the £29 web 'n' walk Plus tariff are limited to 3GB of data per month, while the web 'n' walk Max package gives a maximum of 10GB.

"When we didn't allow VoIP, there were two things. It was a pretty immature technology, and we had concerns over the user experience. It was potentially using up bandwidth, and we wanted to make sure that was done equitably," explained Robin O'Kelly, head of corporate affairs at T-Mobile.

O'Kelly confirmed that T-Mobile would now allow VoIP on the £44-per-month Max tariff, but warned that the quality might not be very good.

"I don't think it is a great user experience, but we [now] take the view that we don't want to stand in their [customers'] way. We haven't had a great demand for it, but some customers want to use it," said O'Kelly.

Margaret Hopkins, an industry consultant at Analysys, suggested back in May that T-Mobile had banned VoIP for commercial reasons.

"I'm not saying you can be sure of perfect quality on a VoIP network, but it seems to me that's not the main motivation for T-Mobile's decision," said Hopkins. "This looks to me like they don't want VoIP to affect their voice revenues."

T-Mobile's VoIP ban proved unpopular with a majority of ZDNet UK readers. In a Web poll of 452 readers, 74 percent said the mobile operator was wrong to ban VoIP.

Every other UK mobile operator allows VoIP over their networks, and 3 even actively promotes a partnership with Skype.

T-Mobile has also completely reversed its ban on instant messaging, which it introduced at the same time as the ban on VoIP. The mobile

operator now ships PDAs with an IM client installed.

Many users install VoIP clients on their laptops and PDAs for convenience and to try to save on calling costs.

Calls over IP, particularly when abroad, can cost a fraction of standard voice charges



Case Communications September / October Newsletter

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Is Accenture abandoning its NPfIT contract?

NHS Connecting for Health has refused to confirm press reports on Thursday morning which have suggested that Accenture — the largest contractor in massive NHS IT overhaul — is pulling out of the project.

According to reports in the Guardian and Financial Times the technology services and consultancy firm is set to abandon its £2bn contract in the National Programme for IT (NPfIT).

But a spokesperson for Connecting for Health, the NHS department that manages NPfIT, told ZDNet UK on Thursday morning that the reports were "rumour and speculation which we're not going to comment on".

However, the spokesperson indicated that a statement could be forthcoming later in the day, as did Accenture's spokesperson, who refused to comment immediately on "what currently is media speculation".

Accenture, which has blamed its subcontractor iSoft for delays in the delivery of key NPfIT components such as the Lorenzo software package, is understood to have been unhappy with the contract for some time. Press reports have speculated that its NHS work will be transferred to Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC), which also subcontracts iSoft.

A spokesperson for iSoft also refused to comment at this stage, calling the reports "pure speculation".

Analysts believe that Accenture's reputation could be badly damaged if it abandons its NPfIT contract.

"Accenture's reputation in the UK public sector is bound to take a battering if it does have to walk away from two such high profile contracts, whatever the reasoning," said Tola Sergeant, an Ovum analyst, on Thursday morning.

Sergeant added that Connecting for Health would not be as damaged by the debacle, as it "will be able to claim justification for its procurement approach, which divided the local implementation contracts into five regions with four different prime contractors in order to maintain competition between suppliers and provide a safety net should one or more suppliers fail to deliver".

James Hall, the Accenture executive responsible for its NHS contracts, left the company recently to become head of the Identity and Passport Service, with responsibility for overseeing the proposed introduction of ID cards.