

# BYTES & PIECES

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## LINDOWSOS 4.5 RELEASED

All registered users of version 4.0 can now download, without charge, version 4.5 of LindowsOS. In addition to further improvements to the hardware recognition ("Plug and Play"), Lindows.com has added SIP phone support, remote desktop sharing, improved hardware recognition, integrated searching and translation, and OpenOffice.org office software to the retail version. LindowsOS 4.5 is also available in an OEM addition which omits the OpenOffice.org.

If you are downloading the new version on a dialup modem, the OEM edition is the one to choose as OpenOffice.org can be added later. Alternatively, you could order the CD and avoid the large download. If you are using ADSL, make sure you have sufficient bandwidth available, as the download is over 400 MB. And, if you need help, see Peter Campbell. He has already downloaded 4.5 and a wide variety of applications and may be able to save you some downloading time. You will, of course, need to be a registered version 4.0 user to activate the applications.

SIP integration lets the user make free worldwide phone calls with their computer. LindowsOS 4.5 offers free worldwide calling with built-in SIP (Session Initiation Protocol) technology. Users can make worldwide phone calls, at no cost, over broadband cables, turning their computers into free global calling machines.

LindowsOS 4.5's SIP integration gives the user a unique number from which to send and receive calls; it also includes sophisticated four-way conferencing abilities, as well as full 800 number access from any location worldwide.

To make a call, simply open the SIP program, which has a virtual keypad similar to a telephone, and enter the SIP phone number of anyone with a SIPphone, Videophone, or SIP-enabled computer. LindowsOS will initiate the voice call – just like a traditional telephone, minus the high cost.

New laptop features include: enhanced support for popular laptop hardware (including built-in wireless cards), support for "net keys," sleep functionality and more.

Integrated search services allow the user to search through the web, through catalogs, glossaries, auctions and more, all with a single click of the mouse button.

The integrated translation tool lets them translate from or into English, Spanish, French, Italian, German, and Portuguese.

Remote desktop sharing allows them to let someone else view or control their desktop from a remote location – excellent for getting assistance from their tech-savvy friends.

Version 4.5 also improves the audio tutorials. You can find the series of LindowsOS 4.0 audio assist tutorials at [www.lindows.com/howto](http://www.lindows.com/howto). If you have already upgraded to LindowsOS 4.5, then you can use the new and improved tutorials by clicking on the life jacket on your taskbar at the bottom of your screen, then clicking "LindowsOS Audio Assist Tutorials."

One area that has not been improved in this new version is installation. You still only have a choice of taking over the whole disk, or "advanced" installation which allows you to select on which partition you wish to install LindowsOS. Either choice wipes everything from the selected drive/partition, so you will have to back up whatever you wish to retain from your existing LindowsOS version and then restore it. A proper upgrade edition would be welcome.

On the Lindows.com support website, there is advice on how to backup your settings and data before installing the new version. However, the process, which involves console commands, does not back up your applications. To do this you need to back up the Repository and, even then, you will have needed to have set CNR to save the files it downloads when installing the applications. All in all, a process crying out for improvement.

Meanwhile Microsoft has extended its legal challenge to Lindows.com's name by taking action in Norway, Sweden and France. Lindows.com has responded by offering a limited number of lifetime packages at \$USD100 each to raise funds. The packages include free copies of every LindowsOS release in the future and free membership of the CNR Warehouse. Lindows.com will even throw in a T-Shirt. At last count, around 1350 of the 1500 on offer had been taken up. If you are looking for a cheap way into LindowsOS, check whether any remain by going to <http://www.MyChoice.com>.

LindowsOS 4.5 offers a number of improvements on earlier versions, but the installation options need work. Recommended, but see the report on Xandros Version 2 before making a decision, if you don't already have LindowsOS.

### **About Lindows.com**

Started by Michael Robertson, founder and former CEO of MP3.com, Lindows.com, Inc. is a consumer-driven company with the mission of bringing choice to computer users through new and extremely affordable computing options.

At the core of Lindows.com is LindowsOS™, a new operating system that delivers the power, stability and cost-savings of Linux® with the ease of windows. LindowsOS is easy to experience because it supports popular Microsoft® Windows file types and because of its revolutionary Click-N-Run Warehouse.

LindowsOS uses Click-N-Run™ technology, allowing users to add software programs to their desktop computer with literally one click of their mouse. The Click-N-Run Warehouse™ is an online library of hundreds of software titles to meet one's business, home and entertainment needs.

## THE CEO CHALLENGE

Michael Robertson of Lindows.com writes of a recent experience where he had the opportunity to discuss the advantages (and disadvantages) of switching to LindowsOS and StarOffice:

*We recently had the CEO of a large enterprise visit our offices here in San Diego to look at LindowsOS. This company has over \$1 Billion in annual revenues. The CEO told us that they've had enough of Microsoft's expensive, cumbersome and restrictive licensing, as well as the costs they have incurred dealing with viruses, bugs, crashes, and security patches. The interesting thing, however, was that this CEO didn't have any experience or knowledge of Linux whatsoever. The only thing he knew was that Linux was "supposed to be" much more stable, secure and affordable than Microsoft's products. Armed with only these scant (although very important) data points, he traveled several states to meet with us, wanting to see for himself if Linux really was a viable option for his company.*

*I also found it interesting that this CEO came to meet with us personally, rather than just dispatching someone from his IT department. "I have found that IT departments often don't like change," he said. "That's why I'm here. I have had enough with the status quo treatment we get from Microsoft, and I want to see first hand if it's time for a change. Our company prides itself on early adoption of any innovation which can give us an edge over our competition--we're known for that. I'm starting to hear more and more that Linux could very well be such an innovation, so I want to see for myself if it is."*

*Thrilled at the opportunity to demonstrate the advantages of Linux to one so open-minded, we sat down in our conference room and proceeded to demonstrate LindowsOS.*

*He was "blown away" (his words, not mine).*

*I let him perform the installation, and he was completely amazed when he was able to do it in under 10 minutes with absolutely no help or assistance from us. This wasn't an exceptionally technical CEO, but he knew enough to realize that this was much simpler and easier than Microsoft XP.*

### **LindowsOS editing popular document file types in StarOffice 7**

*After he had installed and started LindowsOS, he was next pleasantly surprised to find out how easy it was to check his email, instant message with his employees, and surf the web. He was particularly impressed with how beautiful the rendered fonts appeared, and with the myriad of files types and audio/video streams that LindowsOS handled. He had no idea at the level of compatibility we have achieved with Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint documents, as well as Flash, Java, MP3, QuickTime, AVI, and other popular content.*

*He had his notebook computer with him, running XP. From that machine, he emailed himself two documents, a business plan written in Word for Windows and a forecast in Excel. I had him retrieve these documents from his email on the LindowsOS machine. One click and they loaded. He made changes, saved them, then emailed them back to himself. He then returned to his XP machine, only to find that both documents opened without problem and contained the changes he had made to both.*

### **CNR Aisles**

*I demonstrated how CNR (click and run) "Aisles" can be used by enterprises to deploy and manage all the applications throughout even the largest companies. It was obvious to the CEO that our CNR technology far outpaced what they were currently doing with XP and all of its CDs, activation codes, and restrictive licensing.*

### **\*[Disadvantages]**

*After the demonstration, he told me that migrating away from Microsoft not only appeared to be a real possibility, but something they should do right away. He then went on to ask me if it would be as easy to migrate as it appeared, based on what he had just witnessed. I told him, "Not entirely." I honestly explained that there would be some challenges ahead, and outlined for him what he could expect:*

*I told him to expect possible resistance from his IT department, for just as he had pointed out when we first met, change isn't always welcome there. I did, however, explain that there was also a good chance that there would be many in this department who will dance with glee when they hear of his desire to change to Linux.*

*I told him that resistance will not only come from his IT department, but from all those who were used to using Microsoft products. As easy-to-use as these new products are, and as comfortable as they will feel to those who are used to Microsoft's products, even the slightest change can be a hurdle for some people. I said to him that he'd need to take the lead in convincing his employees to be open-minded to the change.*

*I explained to him that his company may have had some applications that were developed exclusively for them, that may or may not run on LindowsOS, and that some work could be involved with migrating such software or finding adequate replacements.*

*However, along with these challenges that I shared with him, I made him a promise. I promised him that if their company would "bite the bullet" and go through a few weeks of "transitional pain," they would never regret it. I promised him that they would come to love their new system, and would never want to go back. I promised him that he would save literally hundreds of thousands of dollars in maintenance, down-time from viruses and patches, and software costs as well. The reason I could give him such assurances, is that MY company has been through the transition. I know other companies who have done it, and all say it was well worth the journey.*

#### **\*[The Challenge]**

*I challenged this CEO to return to his company with a mandate for his IT department to commit to having their company Microsoft free by this time next year.*

*I would encourage ALL CEOs to accept the same challenge: if you want your company to start enjoying all the competitive advantages that Desktop Linux can bring, it will take a challenge from you, the CEO, to your company to become Microsoft-free by the end of next year. Such a challenge would not have been possible a year or two ago, but today, and throughout 2004, this is VERY real and doable.*

*My challenge to CEOs everywhere is to become Microsoft-free by this time next year. You won't regret it. I promise.*

*\*(Editor's note: Square brackets indicate an inserted heading, or other insertion, put in by me and are not part of the original text.)*

As you can see, Linux for the desktop – whether the business or home user desktop – has made great strides in the last couple of years. I have largely switched to a *Linux/Win4Lin/Windows 98SE* setup and am finding it is stable and fast, with just the occasional challenge to add a little zest to computing. It is certainly an alternative to upgrading to Windows XP that would suit many home users.

<http://www.lindows.com>

## **XANDROS GOES GLOBAL**

The “pizza box” (the packing slip's description) containing Xandros 2.0 arrived just after Christmas and I made haste to install it. Here are my impressions:

Installation was quick and easy, producing a working system with a good selection of applications in around 15 minutes. The result looked a lot like Windows®, but with some useful differences. Most noticeable were the four virtual desktops. These allow you to switch to another desktop and run other software while a lengthy process, such as installation of software, is taking place.

While I was waiting for the pizza box to arrive, I read up on the new version and what the company was trying to achieve. Here's what I learned:

With the release of version 2 of the Xandros Inc. distribution of Linux, the company has appointed additional

distributors covering a wide swathe of Europe including Germany and Scandinavia, plus Australia and New Zealand. In turn, the Australian distributors have appointed a number of resellers. They can be found in all states, except Tasmania.

"At Xandros we realize that Europe, Australia and New Zealand are leading the way in desktop Linux initiatives and we are actively looking to increase our local representation," said Andreas Typaldos, CEO of Xandros, Inc. "Partnering with these Linux distribution leaders will help Xandros Linux get the attention it deserves as the best Linux desktop in the world."

"We think Xandros has the easy installation and familiar user interface that will allow many more people to switch from Windows to Linux," commented Bernd Hentig of Germany's Ixsoft, an Internet-based Linux reseller which targets end users, academic, and smaller business customers. "Xandros users benefit from the security of Debian GNU/Linux and its advanced software packaging technology. The German localized version of Xandros Desktop 2 is the Windows alternative that our customers have been waiting for."

Werner Dobbeck of LxPN, another German Xandros partner that delivers Linux products to around 80 vendors and 5,000 resellers in Germany and Europe, eagerly awaits the arrival of the latest version of the Xandros Desktop OS. "Xandros Desktop 2 with its new kernel, KDE, disc burning, and many other features will set a new standard for open desktop computing that makes for a truly liberating experience. Xandros is one hot new product."

Likewise, Bjarke Alling, CEO of Liga LinDist, the Danish-based Linux distributor, sees a major role for the Xandros Desktop in the IT strategies of many businesses and organizations. "I am looking forward to introducing the Xandros Linux desktop into the Nordic Countries. A change in the desktop scene is absolutely needed, and with Xandros there finally exists a user-friendly replacement to software from Apple and Microsoft."

Xandros has also teamed up with AKA Technology, a leading IT distribution group in Australia and New Zealand with offices and distribution centers in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney and Auckland. More than 70 retailers of Xandros Desktop OS have already been signed up in Australia alone, and AKA Tech is rolling out version 2 of the Xandros Desktop OS with a large ad campaign and the distribution of around 100,000 trial version CDs.

Xandros, Inc., who describe themselves as "the leading developer of innovative Linux solutions for the desktop market", released Version 2 of its Xandros Desktop OS on 16 December 2003. Xandros Desktop 2 offers an intuitive, elegant, graphical environment that's easy to use and installs with 4 clicks of a mouse. Based on Debian Linux 4.0 (Sarge) and a Xandros-enhanced KDE 3.1.4, Xandros Desktop 2 provides seamless compatibility with Microsoft Windows networks and programs, including MS Office. Linux-based Xandros Desktop assures stability and security, along with the freedom that an open environment provides. This is achieved through MS-compatible applications and the inclusion (in the Deluxe edition) of Codeweavers' Crossover products, which can run many Windows applications as if they were native Linux ones.

"Let's face it, most users are fed up with viruses, worms and the installation of patches. For the first time there is a real alternative, a new desktop for the masses. You work with Xandros just like the 'other' desktop, only better," commented Mr Typaldos. "Whether you're at home, school, or at work you'll find that Xandros Desktop OS is just what you need to share files, write a report, surf the Internet, listen to music, play games, or do almost anything else.

Xandros Desktop 2 has, according to Xandros.com "unmatched" compatibility with Windows. "Even PC users who never heard of Linux before can easily install and use this desktop. It is simple, secure and invites users to migrate from Windows to Linux in a heartbeat." For more experienced users, a touch of the Shift key when booting from the CD gives access to many alternative installation options, including a Xandros Restore to help sort out an installation that isn't running quite right. Other options help you tailor your installation to the hardware you are using. However, the minimum recommended hardware is a Pentium 2 or above, AMD Duron or Athlon. Late model Celerons are also suitable, but I found that Xandros would not install (using the default install, which was the only option I tried) on a machine running a 400 Mhz Celeron MMX (an Ipex machine from Gowans auctions last year – many members will know the ones I mean).

Key features include a four-click install with automatic disk partitioning and drag-and-drop CD burning within Xandros File Manager. Users of the Deluxe Edition also have the option to run Microsoft Office and other

key Windows programs. This is done using the included Codeweavers Crossover Office and Crossover Plugin.

Instead of Codeweavers, I chose the more expensive route of using Win4Lin. This allows Windows 95/98/ME to run as a Linux application. In turn Windows applications run under this. Win4Lin therefore supports far more Windows applications than Crossover. However, applications that address the hard drive directly, such as defragmentation tools and CD burner software, will not run under this hybrid form of Windows. Those jobs have to be done from Xandros itself.

Both Standard and Deluxe editions seamlessly share files and resources on Windows networks and offer single-click access to a huge inventory of free Linux software.

If Xandros.com's own archives of software don't contain what you want, you can access Debian's huge archives almost as easily. What this distribution doesn't do, but LindowsOS does, is give you one-click access to commercial Linux software. However, it does handle the normal .tar.gz distribution files with nothing more than its Xandros File Manager. Most users, however, will find the free software and the ability to run selected Windows applications covers their needs more than adequately.

To illustrate the versatility of Xandros and its ability to co-exist with Windows, I worked on this newsletter with StarOffice 7.0 under LindowsOS, OpenOffice 1.1 under Xandros, OpenOffice 1.1 (Windows version) under Windows XP, and OpenOffice 1.1 (Windows) under Xandros plus Win4Lin/Windows 98SE. The SXW file easily loaded into any these versions and looked the same, despite minor differences in the interfaces.

The one application that I haven't been able to run, either under Xandros, or Win4Lin/Windows 98SE, is RealOne Player. There is a RealOne Player for Linux, but it lags a couple of generations behind the Windows one. However, because the Windows one includes CD burning, it will only operate partially under Win4Lin/Windows 98SE. Most of its functions, however, can be matched by Xandros.

For example, the built-in Xandros Disc Burner lets users write music or data CDs directly from Xandros File Manager. It's simple to copy CD's, perform drag-and-drop backups, or convert audio CD tracks to WAV, Ogg, or MP3s. Xandros Desktop 2 easily connects to hundreds of digital cameras and records sounds from any microphone or stereo. The ability to play MPEG movies, Macromedia Flash movies and streaming video, streaming audio, MP3, WAV, MIDI and other audio files completes this multimedia extravaganza.

I put the Digital Camera software to the test and, while it didn't recognise my particular camera model, I had no trouble getting it to read the memory card (as a removable drive) and download the photos from it.

Instead of using the supplied Mozilla web browser, I installed the standalone Firebird browser (also from Mozilla.org). This is faster and allows more viewing space. Firebird is not available (yet) in a .DEB package and I had to install it from a .TAR.GZ file. This did not prove difficult as the contents of the file were already compiled. I placed the "unzipped" file in the folder where I wanted it and created a desktop shortcut and away it went.

To maximise the viewing space, I downloaded and installed an alternative theme with narrower toolbars and then I combined two toolbars into one and turned off the Bookmarks bar. The result can be seen below.



The OpenOffice.org 1.1 suite handles Microsoft Office documents, spreadsheets and presentations. The word processor comes with a full set of tools including a spell-checker, thesaurus, auto correct, document review

and direct PDF export. The spreadsheet program is compatible with Microsoft Excel. The Powerpoint-compatible presentations program can export dynamic web shows to Macromedia Flash. The suite also includes a powerful drawing program, capable of producing 3D objects.

Xandros Desktop 2 offers speedy, stable, standards-compliant browsing with the ability to surf multiple web sites in one tabbed window. The easy-to-use mail reader comes with automatic spam filtering and the ability to turn off annoying pop-up ads and banners. The versatile instant messenger lets users chat with others on MSN, Yahoo, AOL, ICQ, and IRC. The weather, news, and dictionary definition lookup can be added to the user's desktop panel. The Deluxe edition of this sleek desktop solution also lets users run Microsoft Office, Adobe Photoshop, and Macromedia Dreamweaver and other key Windows programs, as well as providing a full-featured MS Office-compatible suite. As a package, it offers both an alternative to Windows and a bridge to ease the transition. Recommended.

### **About Xandros**

Founded in 2001 with headquarters in New York and research and development facilities in Ottawa, Xandros, Inc. is the leading developer of easy-to-use desktop Linux solutions targeting home and enterprise markets. Developed from Corel OpenLinux, Xandros Desktop OS is a low-cost alternative operating system that is simple to install and use. It also provides seamless compatibility with Microsoft Windows programs and networks. For more information please visit <http://www.xandros.com>.

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## **CINDY CAMPBELL STEPPING DOWN**

Thanks to Cindy agreeing to a short extension of her term at the AGM last August, we have been able to continue without finding a new President. Now comes the crunch. That temporary extension is coming to an end and we urgently need someone who is prepared to put in a couple of hours a month as President and someone else to support them in the role of Vice-President.

Don't be complacent about it.

Don't leave it to someone else.

It's your User Group and it needs **your** help to survive.

Put your name forward or nominate someone else and, whatever else you do, be at the Special General Meeting on 10 February 2004, when the Group's future may well be decided.

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## **LINKING TASMANIAN SENIORS**

Despite Ron Clarke's enforced retirement due to prostate cancer, LTS is now confident that it can survive for at least another year. As a result they have reopened their membership lists and are accepting subscriptions. They had planned an increase in the subscription rate, but this has been put on hold. The Help Desk and newsletter will continue, but there will be no seminars for the time being.

THCUGI could help. If we had some volunteers to assist, we could stage seminars and invite LTS members to them. This could give us new members as well as providing a service which LTS is currently not in a position to do. Of course, we need to sort out our own administration first, but the opportunity is there and, with your help, we could move forward.

Give it some thought.

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## **SUN AND AMD TEAM UP**

Sun Microsystems has announced that it will partner with chipmaker AMD to sell servers and workstations using AMD's 64-bit Opteron processors. Sun plans to use Opteron 64-bit technology only in its bottom of the

line products, with its own Sparc technology used in the rest of the range. Hewlett Packard has also announced recently that it will use Athlon 64 processors in some of its range and a major manufacturer of laptops is producing laptops using the mobile version of the Athlon 64. Take into account IBM's decision to use Opteron processors, and it all gives new hope to struggling AMD. However, there is still a long way to go before AMD can carve off a substantial share of Intel's market.

The reason 64-bit technology matters is simply that it is the future. As applications get more complex and the data organisations need to process gets more and more unwieldy, today's mainstream microprocessors from Intel will increasingly be incapable of doing the job. That's not only because they process data in chunks of 32-bits at a time rather than 64, but also because they cannot digest more than four gigabytes of memory at a time. This doesn't matter much for desktop computing, but for servers and workstations that deal with large amounts of data it will be crucial.

Intel has its Itanium 2 64-bit processors, but these are not designed to run today's 32-bit software. AMD, on the other hand, has designed a 64-bit processor that can also run existing 32-bit software every bit as well as the fastest 32-bit processors currently available. This so-called "backward compatibility" may well turn out to be a major advantage in the market and force Intel to reconsider its approach to 64-bit processor design.

It is one matter to have developed such a processor and another to convince major players to choose AMD over Intel. That's why this deal is important. For more information, see the link below:

[http://www.infoworld.com/article/03/11/20/46NNcomdex\\_1.html](http://www.infoworld.com/article/03/11/20/46NNcomdex_1.html)

## **US SENATE MOVES AGAINST SPAM**

With the California's anti-spam bill looming, email marketers breathed a sigh of relief as the US Congress passed anti-spam legislation that overrides state laws.

The CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 creates a single national US standard regulating commercial email to replace the patchwork of state laws. It bans common spamming practices, such as false headers and harvesting email addresses, while imposing regulations on all commercial email. The President is expected to sign the measure into law before the end of the year.

However, the bill does not ban spam. Instead, it requires that marketers remove customers from their lists when requested. Marketers are required to include a physical address and valid opt-out mechanism in messages along with an honest subject line and notice that the messages are ads. The law holds advertisers responsible for commercial email sent on their behalf.

Marketers roundly praised the bill, particularly its pre-emption of more onerous anti-spam legislation in more than 35 states. California's toughened spam law was due to take effect Jan. 1. Direct marketers feared an avalanche of lawsuits under the California law's provision for private lawsuits. Under the federal law, consumers cannot sue.

Critics of the bill claim the opt-out provision is tantamount to legalizing spam. "The real damage that will be done is consumers are likely to receive more unsolicited commercial email, not less," said Ray Everett-Church, co-founder of the Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial email. I suspect he's right and the honorable senators may be in for another all-night session when they find their carefully crafted Bill hasn't stopped the flood of offers of dubious pills, mortgage refinancing, and pornography.

### **Key CAN-SPAM Requirements**

The CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 regulates all commercial email, both requested and unsolicited. Beginning Jan. 1, federal law requires that all commercial emailers:

- Include truthful email header information, including the 'from' line.
- Use accurate subject lines.
- Provide an opt-out tool, either through an email address or Internet-based form, that works for 30 days after the mailing.

- Process opt-out requests within 10 business days of receiving them.
- Put a physical postal address in all messages.
- Label messages as advertisements.\*\*
- Display warning labels on commercial email with sexually oriented material.\*\*

\*\* These do not apply to commercial email with opt-in consent.

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## HELLO MEAN GREEN MACHINE

As mentioned last time, the Presidential Sunbird has been replaced. The replacement is a green 1988 Mitsubishi Colt sedan. Despite its smaller overall size, it is possible to put the screen and other equipment in it, thanks to the fold down rear seats. However, as Cindy is resigning from the Committee, new storage and transport arrangements will be necessary and anyone who can help is asked to contact the Committee as soon as possible.

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## NEW FLAW DISCOVERED IN INTERNET EXPLORER

Millions of Internet Explorer users have been warned of a security vulnerability within the browser that poses a "significant risk".

According to analysts from the X-Force division of security firm ISS, the flaw can allow website addresses or URLs to display incorrectly in the browser's navigation bar, thereby allowing scams that trick users into trusting a bogus website.

The flaw, which ISS says is trivial to exploit, may be triggered when individuals navigate to URLs from within emails or hostile web pages. Similar vulnerabilities have been used extensively in mass emails, or fake websites designed to replicate the original in an effort to steal personal information from the victim.

"This type of attack has commonly been referred to as 'phishing'. Whereas past phishing attacks used URLs similar to the original, this new vulnerability allows URLs that are identical to the original website," said the X-Force Security Alert. This makes it almost impossible for individuals to differentiate between fraudulent sites and legitimate sites."

Phishing attacks are not new, but they have become more common and more advanced in recent months. The most common avenue for attack is to mass-email legitimate looking email messages to thousands or millions of individuals that are designed to look identical to a legitimate, and popular Web site. The most effective of these scams borrow graphics, look-and-feel characteristics and formatting from the legitimate site in order to encourage victims to provide some sort of personal information. These scams have been used to harvest login and password pairs, PIN numbers, account numbers, credit card numbers and social security numbers.

One common thread for all past phishing scams, was that the link provided in the fake email or Web site was redirected to a separate and completely unrelated site where the hostile Web site was hosted. These scams rely on the fact that most Web users will not notice the redirection, and continue entering personal information. Savvy Web users might notice that they were redirected by recognizing that the URL they have navigated to isn't what they expected. The vulnerability described in this X-Force Alert makes detection of the redirection by the user much more difficult.

This newly discovered flaw in Internet Explorer lets attackers construct hostile URLs that are designed to redirect to another Web site without exposing that redirection to the end-user. If a victim clicks on a URL designed to exploit this vulnerability, the victim could be sent to any URL on the Internet, while his or her URL field in Internet Explorer may display "www.trustedwebsite.com", or any other trusted location. This vulnerability may be used by scammers on the Internet to build more convincing fake emails or Web sites in an effort to harvest sensitive personal information.

## Recommendations:

This vulnerability was disclosed on December 9th on a public mailing list. Microsoft is aware of this issue has not yet released a patch to correct the vulnerability. Internet Security Systems has developed a tool that will plug-in to Internet Explorer and filter hostile URLs that attempt to exploit this vulnerability. This tool is designed to strip hostile redirection from URLs and send users to the legitimate URL, instead of a rogue Web server.

This tool is based upon "hostile URL filtering" technology created by X-Force for inclusion in future product releases. Users should be aware that this is beta, unsupported software.

A similar open source tool has been released to provide protection. X-Force does not recommend the installation of this tool because it has been shown to contain significant security vulnerabilities. Several reports have indicated that the previously released tool has either a memory-leak and or a buffer overflow vulnerability. In particular, the published tool redirects end-users to the creator's Web site. It is noteworthy that the tool provided by X-Force will direct people to the intended Web site instead.

The free X-Force tool is available at the following address:

[http://www.iss.net/support/product\\_utilities](http://www.iss.net/support/product_utilities)

Affected versions of the browser include Internet Explorer 6.0, 5.5 and 5.01.

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## SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING 10 FEBRUARY 2004

The Committee has called a Special General Meeting for 10 February 2004. I am told that Luke Solak has taken up the position of Vice President until then and, as you know, our President will be resigning in February and will absolutely **not** accept an extension beyond then. This leaves the Group with some important positions to fill and the need to address the difficulty in filling Committee positions. I believe that the Committee will also report on their investigations into a more central venue. Formal notice later, but circle the date in your diary now. It is important that as many members as possible attend.

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## BEWARE THE PHISHER-MEN

Phishing—email and Web-based efforts by online scammers to hijack personal information from unsuspecting users—hit home at PC Magazine this week. A number of magazine staffers, who are a members at eBay, received highly official looking emails, purportedly from eBay's accounts management department, asking for credit card information, a social security number, and more. The magazine staffers caught the ruse and notified eBay, but users should be warned that a fake eBay mail scam is making the rounds.

The trick message arrived with a very official looking header featuring eBay's logo. It was signed "Thank you, Accounts Management." The text read: "Dear eBay Member, We at eBay are sorry to inform you that we are having problems with the billing information of your account. We would appreciate it if you would visit our website, eBay Billing Center, and fill out the proper information that we are needing to keep you as an eBay member." The "eBay Billing Center" referenced was a link to a Web page asking for a credit card number, a social security number, and more. The message also contained an "ebay.com" suffix, just as a real message from an eBay employee might.

As is often true in spoof messages and phishing efforts, the trick email contained telltale signs that it did not come from eBay. The subject line of the message read "eBay Member Billing Information Uptade" with the word "update" misspelled. The text string "fill out the proper information that we are needing" also had suspicious syntax.

The PC Magazine staffers who received the solicitation contacted eBay about the email in question and received a lengthy response back, saying that the message was not generated by eBay. The response included

the following text: "Thank you for contacting eBay's Trust and Safety Department about email solicitations that are falsely made to appear to have come from eBay. These emails, commonly referred to as "spoof" messages, are sent in an attempt to collect sensitive personal information from recipients who reply to the message or click on a link to a Web page requesting this information. The email you reported did not originate from, nor is it endorsed by, eBay. We are very concerned about this problem and are working diligently to address the situation. We have investigated the source of this email and have taken appropriate action."

The message from eBay's Trust and Safety Department also warns against supplying personal information in any email and says that eBay will never ask, via email, for information such as a credit card number or an email password. It says that users who are suspicious of any message appearing to come from eBay should not click on any links supplied within the email and that users can mail a question to [spoof@ebay.com](mailto:spoof@ebay.com).

This latest ruse falls in line with growing amounts of data showing that online identity theft is an out-of-control problem. According to a recent FTC survey, 27.3 million Americans have been victims of identity theft in the last five years, and a whopping 9.9 million people joined this unfortunate list in just the last 12 months. "For several years we have been seeing anecdotal evidence that identity theft is a significant problem that is on the rise," said Howard Beales, Director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection, in announcing the survey results. "Now we know."

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## MICROSOFT PHASE-OUT

In response to its loss to Sun over Microsoft's breaching its Java licence, Microsoft proposed to phase-out most of its older products which used the offending Java Virtual Machine (JVM). The phase-out included support for Windows 98 and ME.

However, it has now extended Windows 98 support for a further eighteen months. In the meantime, I suggest you replace the JVM as suggested in the next item and download all the patches in case you have to do a reinstall once support ends.

Either that, upgrade to XP, or change to Linux.

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## UPDATE YOUR JAVA

Java is a platform-independent, object-oriented, compiled programming language created by Sun Microsystems. It is an important component of many websites. Programmers write Java programs—called "applets" – that automatically download from the web and run on your computer. In fact, if the Java applets are written well, they'll run on almost **every** computer: Windows PCs, Apple Macs, Unix systems, Linux computers, Solaris workstations, cell phones, refrigerators...

Think about that for a minute. Considering the number of viruses and Trojan horses out there, do we **really** want downloaded Java programs auto-executing on our computers?

Well, it depends on how the computer is set up.

Java applets run in a Java RunTime Environment, sometimes called a "sandbox", because this is where the Java applets are allowed to "play". The sandbox is a special zone on your computer fenced off from your operating system and other applications. In theory, Java applets can't get outside of the sandbox and damage your computer.

The problem is that there are two major "flavors" of Java:

1. Microsoft's (which you already have if you own a PC) and
2. Sun's (which you may not have).

In Microsoft's version of Java there are some pretty significant security holes in the wall between the sandbox and the OS. In addition, applets written for the Microsoft implementation won't necessarily run on everything

out there. And that, as they say, is what is at the heart of the Sun/Microsoft dispute, which the courts have recently decided in Sun's favour.

In the opinion of "Tourbus", Microsoft's Java Virtual Machine (the software on PCs that actually runs Java applets) is

- Buggy,
- Proprietary, and
- Not long for this world.

By way of comparison, Tourbus claims that Sun's version of Java is

- Newer,
- Safer (because it has a much better sandbox), and
- Official (because, after all, Sun invented Java.)

Why is Microsoft's Java Virtual Machine not long for this world? Well, Microsoft will stop supporting their JVM version on September 30th, 2004. And, because of Microsoft's recent court settlement with Sun, there will be no replacement. Microsoft recommends that, after September, you lock down Microsoft Internet Explorer security zones so that the MSJVM works only with trusted sites.

This is rather akin to Microsoft's security solution for Outlook Express 6.0, where, by default, most kinds of attachments cannot be downloaded. It stops viruses, as intended, but also stops many attachments that you may want. Good antivirus software scanning incoming attachments is, of course, a much better solution.

Last month Microsoft, as mentioned in a previous item, discontinued a number of products, including versions of Windows, that contain their implementation of the Java Virtual Machine.

Microsoft has even created a page that talks about transitioning from the Microsoft Java Virtual Machine [you can find the page at <http://www.microsoft.com/mscorp/java/>] but a **much** better solution for folks like you and me is to hop on over to

<http://www.java.com/en/index.jsp>

and get Sun's official Java software. The process couldn't be simpler: Just click on the "Get It Now" button and Sun automatically downloads and installs the official Java software your computer. And Sun's free Java software is available for the PC, Mac, Linux, and (obviously) Sun Solaris.

You'll [probably] be asked to reboot once the new Java software is installed. Once you reboot, though, you'll have the latest, greatest version of Java. And, if you are a PC user, you won't have to worry about what's going to happen when Microsoft's JVM officially dies in September.

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## GOOD BUY

If you are running short of hard drive space, now would be a good time to add a bigger hard drive. 120 GB drives are selling for around \$165, 80 GB at \$125 and 40 GB at \$95. You could also replace that decrepit old 14 inch monitor with a shiny new 17 inch for around \$170. And instead of that CD burner you have been promising yourself, how about a DVD player/CD burner for around \$100! Contact Peter Campbell on 62344691 for any computer components you may want.

And don't forget <http://www.intelligentink.com> for quality ink cartridges for Epson and Canon inkjets at excellent prices.

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