

## Now in our 21st Year



### Welcome to our June 2011 newsletter.

Orchard Computer Services celebrates its 21st birthday in July and we are as keen as ever to find ways to enhance the services we provide. This ensures we keep our finger on the (ever changing technical) pulse and provide you with the solutions you require.

Our lead story in this issue features our new Diamond support contract

option, this can become a very important part of your Disaster Recovery plan. We also mention the monitoring software that we implemented towards the end of last year. This identifies and alerts our helpdesk team about potential issues before they become serious. Our maintenance contracts currently support approx 2,500 users working at around 150 different sites as far and wide as Torquay, Sevenoaks and Aberdeen.

As always, I welcome your views, comments, opinions and feedback. Please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Ian Terry**  
Managing Director

## The Diamond Option



**Spring sees the launch of a new upgrade option to our Maintenance Contracts, the Diamond Option. Our standard Silver Contract covers your file servers for hardware and operating system failures but this does not include 'acts of God' such as fire or flood damage. The new option is designed to work in conjunction with your company's disaster recovery plan. Whatever the reason for the file server(s) being unusable, Orchard will supply a loan system(s) and, where appropriate, it will be installed at a pre-agreed alternate site.**

Your business is important and it is almost certainly dependent upon your computer systems. Have you considered the impact on your business if you were to suffer a disaster such as a fire or flood? The loss of production, revenue and customers are all potential consequences of

such a situation. An event such as this must be planned for as part of your company's disaster recovery scenario and should comprehensively cover how you would get your business up and running again in the shortest time possible. Orchard's new Diamond Option can give you the peace of mind that, if your business was to be affected by such an event, you will have the loan equipment and technical expertise you need.

In order for the Diamond Option to be available, you must also have our Gold contract option. This is our off-site backup solution that ensures your data is protected. The safety of your company's data is crucial. How would your organisation be able to function without your critical information such as customer databases, financials, orders etc? Too many businesses overlook the importance of their daily backup routines, let alone the importance of ensuring they have off-site backups for disaster scenarios. Far too often we have calls on our support system where the backup routine has failed because someone has forgotten to put the tape in. Why is this routine thought to be so minor when your business may one day depend upon it?

The data that has been saved off-site will be copied onto loan servers that are pre-loaded with your operating system and key applications. Our Diamond Option will ensure your business is up and running again in the minimum amount of time.

Will your business suffer if you are without emails for even a short period of time? If so, you should also consider Mimecast. See page 4 for further information.

# Passwords

DHiaJ!macintoshlogin

JBfc(2010)

\$m3llycat!!

SusansHond@2008

Anyone who has an email account and browses the internet will be aware of the huge number of scams and fraudulent sites ready to catch the unwary. Most internet users consider themselves unlikely to be fooled into losing their money, information or identity to fraudsters.

One method criminals can use to gain access to your passwords is to install spyware on your system that watches whenever you type in passwords, credit card numbers etc. Orchard supply and maintain a range of software packages to protect our customers from this type of attack. What can't be protected against however is where users have chosen a password that can be easily guessed by the criminals.

However, many of us are exposed to a potential disaster through the use of weak or insecure passwords, as the criminals can easily figure them out using automated 'brute force' or 'dictionary' attacks. Ultimately any password can be cracked this way but while a weak password can be cracked in minutes or hours, a secure password may take many years.

A brute force attack is the most time-consuming method. It uses a program that tries every combination of letters, numbers and keyboard characters to guess your password. It starts with trying every character, then tries two-character combinations and so on.

A dictionary attack is, as you'll probably have guessed, a program that uses a dictionary filled with not only words and names but also number and letter combinations, such as 11111 and abc123. Passwords using names of family members, pets etc are easily cracked with this type of attack.

Microsoft has the following advice on how to choose a secure password,

- Don't use only letters or only numbers.
- Don't use names of spouses, children, girlfriends/boyfriends or pets.
- Don't use phone numbers, Social Security numbers or birthdates.
- Don't use the same word as your log-in, or any variation of it.
- Don't use any word that can be found in the dictionary — even foreign words.
- Don't use passwords with double letters or numbers.

The case of Vaserv, a UK company that was devastated through the use of weak passwords is worth reading.

<http://cyberinsecure.com/vaservcom-webhosting-firm-hack-out-data-for-100000-websites-due-to-vulnerable-application-by-lxlabs/>

A strong password should appear to the hacker as a string of random characters and the more characters the better. Apart from numbers and letters you should include symbols and punctuation marks from around the keyboard. Most people choose the characters accessed by pressing shift and then the row of numbers at the top of the keyboard, try to be different and look at the other symbols on your keyboard.

Don't forget, if you use country specific symbols such as £ these may not be available on keyboards when you are on business abroad and need to log in to your account! Why not test your password strength by using the Microsoft password checker:

<http://www.microsoft.com/protect/yourself/password/checker.msp>

[www.orchard-computers.com](http://www.orchard-computers.com)

# Internet Explorer 9



Have you downloaded IE9 yet? Designed to be more streamlined and more about what you don't see rather than crowding the screen with dialog boxes.

There are many new features, some of which are listed below:

**Pinned Sites** – your favourites tab in a different format. It allows you to pin your favourite websites directly to the taskbar on your Windows 7 desktop.

**Download Manager** - a new feature that keeps a list of the files you download from the internet and informs you when a file may be malicious. You remain in control, with the ability to pause and restart downloads.

**Tracking Protection** - when we surf the net the content on some websites is used to track our activity, which sites we visit, what we buy and the videos we watch. IE9's tracking protection gives the user control. We can limit the browser's communication with some websites, enabling us to keep our information private.

If you don't like the new design, you can restore the command, favourite and status bars of your previous version of IE.

## Windows SBS 2011

The replacement to Windows SBS 2008 was released in December 2010, Windows SBS 2011, a software package that has been designed and priced specifically for small businesses.

**SBS 2011 Standard** - has been designed for businesses with up to 75 Users and delivers enterprise class server technology in an all in one solution. What are some of the new features that Standard give us?

- It helps protect your business critical information from loss by performing automatic daily backups with simple, easy restoration of your data.
- There is Microsoft Exchange Server 2010; users have more creativity with features such as e-mail, Internet connectivity, internal website and remote access. The ability to share documents and files from a central location as well as printer sharing.
- Automatic detection and repair of corrupted mailboxes and databases.
- As your business develops and changes, Windows SBS 2011 grows with you and is able to meet those new demands with a highly scalable platform. You can add new users, servers and applications with ease.

**SBS 2011 Essentials** - will be released at some point this year and is designed for small businesses of up to 25 users and will not require CALs. Essentials has many of the features that standard has, and also offers cloud technology.

- An online service – where you can access a remote server and work on documents from anywhere with a single sign-on experience.
- Use a personalised web address and access your computer and documents from any common web browser.

**SBS 2011 Premium Add-ons** - is available to use with either standard or essential and gives you the ability to run a vast number of applications on an additional server or virtual servers that run in a Hyper-V environment.

- It has in-depth analysis and reporting technologies.
- It also includes an additional license for Windows Server 2008 R2 Standard, allowing you to put another server on your Windows SBS 2011 network.

For more information on these products e-mail [Sales@orchard-computers.com](mailto:Sales@orchard-computers.com)

# Gulliver's Truck Hire

Founded in the 1960s, in the West Country, this family run business celebrated its 50th Anniversary last year. Still at its helm is the founder, Gabe Harding, who has taken the business from strength to strength. No longer just a West Country business but a national one with 8 depots across the UK and with more to follow. Their Fleet of 3000 vehicles consists of the general van hire to a specialist municipal division, everything from sweepers to cranes.



## The Situation

In 2010 Gulliver's suffered a catastrophic failure with their Microsoft Exchange Server. The raid 5 disk subsystem was faulty and, as a result, the Exchange database became corrupted.

Numerous attempts were made to repair the database or restore recent backups but each effort was delayed and further complicated by the ageing hardware being used. The server needed to be rebooted many times, each taking over 30 minutes.

The system was eventually recovered using an old uncorrupted backup but, by that time, Gulliver's had suffered disruption and loss of email for four days. And despite being back in business, how long would it be before the old hardware failed again?

## The Resolution

These issues were a wakeup call for Gulliver's, they realised how crucial their computer infrastructure was and how their business was at serious risk. Gulliver's asked Orchard to propose and implement a new system that could provide the resilience and redundancy needed to ensure their business would not suffer a similar catastrophe. The key components of the new configuration are:

- Six Dell File Servers with Intel Xeon Quad Core Processors.
- Microsoft Windows 2008 Operating Systems and Microsoft Exchange 2010

Two of these servers provide redundancy, they mirror the critical functions of the live servers and are ready to take over if a failure occurs. This minimises downtime and ensures business continuity. Gulliver's also created a plan to ensure that, with Orchard's technical assistance, they are ready to recover from any disasters that may face them in the future.

## Summary

Utilising Dell hardware and Microsoft operating systems, our engineers were able to plan and implement a complete overhaul of Gulliver's IT infrastructure. An IT configuration that gives them the peace of mind that their business is safe and secure.

# Mclennan Servo Supplies



## The Customer

Mclennan Servo Supplies is a company based in Surrey but have distributors all over the world. Founded over 35 years ago they specialise in advanced motion control and have the ability and experience to manufacture and distribute precision motion products such as, brushless motors, drives and controls etc. The establishment of their own design, development and manufacturing process, makes them stand out from the competition.



## The Situation

When Mclennan came to us they had already been experiencing major problems with their server. Orchard agreed to take on this problem and find a resolution. After an in depth investigation by our technical team, the problem was identified to be the setup of the operating system on the

server. Various options to rectify the problem were put forward for consideration:

- 1 Reload the server from scratch – a time consuming process with a lot of downtime for the customer.
- 2 To purchase a new server and load with the old operating system – while this would have updated the hardware the customer would not have moved forward with current software technology.
- 3 The one strongly recommended by Orchard was to replace the ageing server and update the software, starting afresh with a modern system.

## Resolution

It now became the job of our technical team to take over the project. Darren Quan one of our Senior Technical Support Engineers ascertained what other hardware and software applications the customer had and what impacts the new equipment and software may have on the install and migration. Darren then went through with Mclennan what the best option for their migration would be. This needed to ensure the minimum impact on the users and reduce downtime to a negligible level.

The server was pre-loaded with software to minimise issues prior to going to site.

The next step was to create a new domain and configure the new servers to run in parallel without disrupting the current system. This then gave us the ability to transfer and check software in the new environment, at a pace that allowed Orchard and Mclennan to thoroughly test things before deploying live to users.

After all the machines were switched over to the new domain and everything was confirmed working, Orchard Computer Services simplified things and eliminated the compatibility problems with current software.

"Orchard were able to accurately diagnose and resolve a long-standing problem we had with our server in an efficient and cost-effective way, and they caused minimal disruption to our organisation. We are very satisfied with all of the day-to-day support they provide too. If only Ian would let me have a go on his Ducati!"

*Jon Bentley, Business Manager, Mclennan Servo Supplies*

# Microsoft's TS Session (RDP) /Citrix



**More and more businesses today are embracing the technology that is ultimately giving their employees the freedom to work from home or from anywhere in the world. Studies show that employees who enjoy this flexibility are easier for companies to retain and can have greater productivity. It also reduces overheads for the business.**

We use many different types of device, Laptops, PC's, The Tablet, etc. and to the greater degree, most of us connect via Microsoft's Terminal Server Sessions or via one of the other leading alternatives Citrix.

Both sessions are designed to give the remote user a desktop experience that is as if they were actually at their desks. A Terminal Server and the usual TS CALS are required for both Microsoft and the Citrix connections but Citrix also requires its own licence.

What is the difference between the two? Until recently Citrix had a slight advantage in that the connection was much quicker due to the smaller packet sizes of data used. Therefore enabling a faster, smoother transfer of information from the server to the user. The Microsoft Session was taking up to around 30K of Bandwidth, twice that of the Citrix system which could also maintain good sessions even on very poor broadband lines or modems.

Microsoft have fought back with a SP1 update called RemoteFX which includes a feature called DirectAccess, this gives users a seamless connection to their network. It enables a media-rich user environment for remote applications. Another advantage that Citrix had was its ability to handle PDFs, pictures and other graphics. RemoteFX has dealt with this issue too and is able to give the user local-like desktop access to graphics-intensive applications such as Silverlight and Adobe Flash.

*If you are considering upgrading your Microsoft Server or considering a change, call Sales on 0117 30 300 32 for more information.*

## Monitoring Software

**As those of you with silver and gold contracts will know – your contract entitles you to monthly server checks. As you may be aware, in 2010 we had been trialling some new software that provides computer systems with an even greater depth of analysis and protection. We are pleased to announce that your silver or gold contract now provides you with this 24/7 proactive monitoring of your systems.**

Our remote monitoring service provides an analysis of your network infrastructure, alerting our helpdesk staff when there is an issue. The dashboard identifies the type of problem, allowing the team here to quickly and precisely manage the issue. In many cases the fault is repaired before you are even aware there was one, resulting in you experiencing minimal, if any, downtime.

*If you would like your system covered by remote monitoring but do not have a silver/gold contract, why not call us for more information on 0117 30 300 30 or e-mail [sales@orchard-computers.com](mailto:sales@orchard-computers.com).*

## Damindra and Nelka

Many of you will have spoken to Damindra (Noshi) over the years, as he gives you technical assistance.



Damindra's family are from Sri Lanka and each year they holiday there for a few weeks, a welcome chance to catch up with family and friends. For Damindra it has been valuable time spent with Nelka, his girlfriend.

In November 2010 on their visit to Sri Lanka, Damindra and Nelka were married in a civil ceremony - the full ceremony will take place later this year, in July, when Damindra will be returning home with his bride.

## Mimecast



**In today's business world email is the most critical form of communication. Imagine now what would happen if your email system falls over or if you have down time due to maintenance of your system. Wouldn't it also be useful to be able to access your emails from any location, at home, the office or on a customer site? As with the Diamond option to our contract, access to email should be part of your disaster recovery plan.**

Mimecast Email Continuity is a service that will keep your emails running seamlessly. How? By using Cloud Technology – servers are located around the country in secure data centres. A Mimecast agent connects to your exchange server and replicates the calendar and mailbox folders. An application for Microsoft Outlook is then deployed to each user, this constantly monitors to see if Microsoft exchange is available. When it detects a problem it automatically takes over, your users never realising there has been a problem.

Webmail is the application that allows a user to log into their emails at a secure data centre, from any location and also view their calendars.

Mimecast is fully integrated with Microsoft Outlook, Webmail and Blackberry Smartphones.

*For more information, please contact [sales@orchard-computers.com](mailto:sales@orchard-computers.com)*