



HOW SAFE IS ONLINE SHOPPING?

A common question people have is how safe and secure am I if transact over the Internet? Can I safely purchase products, do my banking or give my credit card or personal details? I would suggest that if you go to the right sites and look for the right things, shopping over the Internet is almost as safe in an actual store. The reason why most new businesses and many well established businesses like Myer and the banks have reverted to the Internet lies primarily in the relative low overheads and the ability to offer a 24 hour service with an almost full range of goods.

The things to look for when transacting over the Internet or submitting confidential information are security certificates, secure website portals and addresses as well a company that displays legal identification points like an ABN and registered contact points.

SSL, (short for secure sockets later), which was developed by Netscape is a method of transmitting communication is an encrypted and secure from. In more practical terms this means when you are doing transactions over the Internet in an online shop for example, this means any information like credit card information going from you over the Internet is in a very secure format. So if you see a site, which has an SSL Certificate, and/or when you get to the shop's transaction area and you see the browser address "https.." (or "shttp" which is a similar standard), you'll know that any communication is secure.

Basically online shopping will only become more prevalent and the truth is goods services bought via the Internet are often at a fair discount to recommended retail and other in store prices. This is highlighted well by the discounts Virgin and Qantas give if your purchase tickets via the web. Doing things over the Internet also gives you more flexibility in that you can do things at your leisure at a time that best suits you.

However the best online shops and web services will always still offer a phone and/or face-to-face customer service to complement their web division.

NETWORKS

To continue our recent theme of improving business I.T. and computing we will focus on networks. A lot of businesses may think I am too small to have a network of computers or do not see the need for such a setup. A network can be setup very easily these days without having to but server computers or expensive software. For example you can set things up so you can print from any computer to the one printer. You can access and user emails, databases, financial records, documents, etc. from any computer to both read and update them. You can setup controls to limit what certain users can and can't do and access. You can share one Internet connection across multiple computers. All of these things can be done at low cost but the benefit to the productivity and operation of business will be hugely positive.

Product of the Month

Voice Over IP (VoIP) – Is a new technology that may in time revolutionise the way we communicate. VoIP allows the human voice, as well as faxes, to travel over the same network cables that data currently travels through. In simple terms it does not cost much for you now to communicate with people all over the world via the Internet. If the human voice could travel the same way then large call costs for national and international phone calls would be eliminated. Of course as a computer is involved in this process, other features like video and future technologies could also be implemented at very little cost.

Did You Know?

While most people in their respective industries love making acronyms for various aspects of their job and equipment, there are some people in the IT industry, and outside it, that take common acronyms and twist them. Again it is the bigger fish that always seem to cop it. Eg. BASIC to some is "Bill's Attempt to Seize Industry Control". IBM is "I Blame Microsoft". WWW is "World Wide Wait". Microsoft is "Most intelligent Customers Realise Our Software Only Fools Teens". Amiga is "A Merely Insignificant Game Addiction". Probably the harshest I think is Apple – "Arrogance Produces Profit Losing Entity". I guess you know you are a success when you are the topic other's jokes.

Chris Jacob is a director of Computer Troubleshooters Bayside (www.ctsbayside.com.au)