



Running a Home Office(2/2007)

This month I just wanted to mention a few essentials of running a home office as far as IT and computers are concerned, though most of it is also pretty much relevant to all other home users.

First and foremost, please back up your data. I know I am repeating myself, so I won't go into great length on the subject, but many clients I have met over the last few months are doing little backing up, if at all. The essential files are your work documents, emails and contacts, but also photos music etc, and can be easily copied to an external hard drive. The €100 you spend on the drive is nothing compared to the cost of losing client emails and contact information, work documents, accounts, invoices, etc.

Keep your software up to date: this applies mainly to the operating system which can be set on "Automatic Software Update" for both Macs and PCs, but also to your Antivirus software. Most Antivirus packages are subscription based, and thus have automated updates and you are reminded to renew your subscription when it expires. However if you stop subscribing and the virus "Signature" files are not up to date, you will no longer be protected from new viruses, only those covered by your last update.

An important point on Operating systems is that Microsoft is no longer providing security updates for Windows XP **Service Pack 1**, so if you are using this, then it is probably best to update to service Pack 2 sooner rather than later. Before you do this though, it is important to back up all your data, as the move from Service Pack 1 to 2 has, in a limited number of cases, gone terribly wrong – so be prepared and back up first.

If you are reliant on your computer for work, and would be "lost without it", then it is best if that computer remains a work only computer. If your primary work computer is used only: for sending and receiving emails and only opening serious/sensible attachments from business contacts, browsing the internet, editing Word, Excel PowerPoint, etc. files, then you will probably be relatively problem free, unless you are just unlucky. However, if you also play online games, download music and videos, browse websites that require all sorts of Plug-ins, click on web links out of curiosity, allow the kids to install extra software etc., then you will more that likely

run into serious problems before too long. If the computer is essential for work, then it is best to only use it for work.

Pirate software: believe it or not, most pirate software that circulates, such as Microsoft Office etc, is “produced” by criminals, not just to infuriate the chaps at Microsoft, but because they add Spyware, Key Loggers and other nasty programmes to the software, which you then, unknowingly, very kindly install on your own computer for them. Thus if your machine is critical for business I would recommend you only use fully licensed software.

Finally, plug your computer and broadband router into a surge protector as, though the chances of your house being struck by lightning are low, for the €20 odd Euros they now cost, you are better safe than sorry.

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