WEEKLY INSIGHT

The European Union reaches an agreement on privacy
European telecommunications ministers reached a political agreement on privacy in electronic telecommunications. Current EU law generally requires the destruction of any electronic data not required for billing purposes, except in cases where law-enforcement authorities had specifically requested to keep the data. From The Wall Street Journal [Full Story]

Highlights
- European telecommunications ministers voted to ban unsolicited commercial e-mail, or spam, and to empower consumers to prevent unauthorized snooping on their use of the Internet.
- ‘Cookies’, computer files that collect information about users behavior, can not be distributed without the user authorization.
- The decision marked a breakthrough on spam, which had divided EU governments and the European Parliament for months.

Press Review

From Le Monde
"The agreement should satisfy consumers associations, who complain about spam, an English term that means 'watering'. In the future, those who keep on receiving these kind of business communications will have to give their prior permission. It's called opt-in in computer language. (...) European ministers had introduced a correction on November 13th to restrict cookies use. Web sites’ editors thought that this correction disfavored them in comparison to the US web sites. European ministers have agreed on the fact that users' data can be released with users' permission".
[Full Story]

From Los Angeles Times
"The issue is part of a bill that would let police ask telecommunications companies and Internet service providers to retain user data and e-mails for an as yet undetermined period. Businesses oppose it because they fear it could raise their costs".
[Full Story]

From Vnunet.com
"Plans to boost data protection legislation are being delayed because of an internal dispute within the European Union over the governing of spam. EU telecoms ministers arguing yesterday that spam should be banned outright, found themselves at odds with the European Parliament which simply wants to restrict spam to those recipients who give prior permission”.
[Full Story]
Commentary by...
Joaquim Barberà, EBCenter Research Assistant

Solution of a commitment

Although it may seem redundant, negotiation is the main characteristic of the agreement reached by the EU Cabinet of Telecommunications in relation to the Directive on privacy in electronic communications. The community legislator, as well as the consumer organizations intervening in the discussions, has decided to lower the line for data protection issues that used to be kept very high. In this way they have made important concessions to companies and security bodies of the Member States.

If this shouldn't surprise anyone given the present economic circumstances (the general environment of recession, and a sector in crisis since the collapse of the tech bubble) and the political situation (after September 11th security is the leading issue in the political agenda of all countries), neither should it strike us that a regulation created under the influence of so many external elements is subject to multiple amendments in the mid-term.

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EBCENTER ARTICLE

B2B starts to give firsts yields
By Magalí Lamyin, EBCenter Research Assistant
In the near future, B2B will experience a real boom in Spain and will turnover some 1,200 million Euro in business in 2004. [Full Story]

REPORTS

Entangled on the Web
Source: Cyveillance
Date: December, 2001
Abstract: The drive for profitability among Web sites has exacerbated the use of aggressive advertising in an apparent attempt to divert and capture shoppers. A Cyveillance study found that aggressive technology practices are being used by more than 25% of the Internet sites. There are 10 top tactics such as the automatic launch of new browser windows upon entering a site, upon exit, on delay or the opening of hidden "stealth" windows. The latter is used by 20% of the top European domains. Another practice, used by 5.2% of the sites on the Internet, is the manipulation of the browser "back" button to prevent the shopper from leaving the site, or the deactivation of other browser "exit" or "close" capabilities. [Full Story]

Web-based Survey on Electronic Public Services
Source: European Comission
Date: November, 2001
Abstract: This survey is a benchmark exercise for the 15 EU member states, plus Iceland and Norway, which evaluates the percentage of basic public services available online. According to this study, the job search services (81%) is the major service offered by European governments, followed income taxes services (74%). The least offered are health-related services (7%). In almost every country included in the survey, public services for businesses (53%) score significantly higher than public services for citizens (40%). [Full Story]

2001 Salary Survey
Source: Online Learning Magazine
Date: November, 2001

Abstract: In the e-learning market, the average increase reported in 2001 was 5.74%, compared to 6.48% percent last year. That's still better than the nationwide average, which was 4.6% for salaried employees. 14% of e-learning professionals earn less than $40,000 and 22% more than $80,000. The major score (28%) goes to professionals who earn among $60,000 and $80,000. Candidates who are in the most e-learning demand have three attributes in common. First, they're comfortable with technology. Second, they understand instruction and education. Finally they know how to talk the language of business. [Full Story]

Next Silicon Valley: Riding the Waves of Innovation
Source: Joint venture: Silicon Valley Network
Date: December, 2001

Abstract: Silicon Valley experienced a short-term boom that launched a longer wave of innovation around the Internet commercial applications. What future waves of innovation are likely to drive the Next Silicon Valley? Although no one can predict the future, we can look at technology trends and current Silicon Valley strengths and begin to map potential "innovation paths": Internet everywhere, bio-info convergence, nanotechnology, security and creative services. [Full Story]

COMPANIES

Amazon buys Egghead
Jeff Bezos' company has acquired Egghead, a pioneer e-commerce company for computer software, which filed for bankruptcy on August 15. Amazon has paid $6.1 million for Egghead.com URL, intellectual property as well as for all business documentation. From eCommerce News. [Full Story]

Enron's failure
According to the author, it wasn't Enron's New Economy side that triggered the downward spiral. The soft assets at Enron, especially the energy-trading business, were doing just fine. The trouble at Enron started the old-fashioned way, with dumb investments in hard assets like power plants and a fiber-optic network. In short, the Old Economy part of Enron infected the New Economy part, not vice versa. From Europemedia.net. [Full Story]

WE RECOMMEND

Mobile data systems help to cut costs
The success of organizations operating across a broad range of industry sectors depends on their ability to cut costs out of their supply chains. The key to mobile's impact on the supply chain results from a faster flow of relevant information. The quicker that staff have access to critical data, wherever they may be, the faster decisions can be taken. A mobile-powered supply chain can positively impact several key areas including cost control, information accuracy, customer relationships and time to market. [Full Story]

A year of innovation
For this special issue, The Times Magazine has chosen a different lens: ideas. "The Year in Ideas" offers a catalog of 80 notions, inventions, conceptual swerves and philosophical leaps from A to Z that mattered this year. Among these innovations there are cloning of endangered species, hybrid cars, telesurgery or ideas as creative as acquired situational narcissism or the end of shoelaces. [Full Story]
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