

# Digital Business

**A new approach that gets to the heart of business's technology needs. More space is devoted to our 'definitive' articles on the use, management, and investment in today's technology, plus thought leadership on best practice and IT that will shape tomorrow's organisations. Featured in this issue:**

- **How low can you go? The minimalist business.**
- **Cybercriminals – their motives, methods and effects**
- **Augmented reality – a fast-growing business tool**
- **Can You Believe IT? A look ahead to technology that will change business**
- **Does IT work?: social media monitoring**
- **First Ade: Demystification and practical advice on topics including security, green IT and mobility from Ade McCormack – plus readers' contributions**
- **What's New: Latest products and services from the vendors**
- **My Ideas: a senior business figure's thoughts on IT**
- **Perspectives: Alan Cane puts IT in the wider context**
- **View from the Valley: Chris Nuttall on the latest thinking**

The Financial Times proposes to publish the following FT Report on January 20 2010. Deadline for completion of articles: January 6 2010.

*We plan to include the following features (please note that this list is provisional):*

**To receive news of updates to our schedule, send your e-mail address to [digitalbusiness@ft.com](mailto:digitalbusiness@ft.com), with "UPDATE REQUEST" in the subject field.**

## **Big Page Feature**

### **How low can you go? The minimalist business**

What should be on the small business shopping list when it comes to IT? A PC or two, software – and licences, phone connections, internet connection, website design, security, storage, a messaging or e-mail system, database provision, the list goes on. But just how much of this is necessary for a small business starting up today? It is

now feasible to buy a laptop and an internet connection and pipe in a range of services to get a business started. So just how little IT can a business actually survive on? And how far can this approach go?

This feature will look at the changing nature of small business technology and the pros and cons of reducing IT spend to a minimum. Of course, there many different considerations for different types of business and for organisations as they grow. This feature will look at a few examples to highlight the factors that need to be considered.

**1,400 words, Stephen Pritchard**

## **Big Page Feature**

### **Cybercriminals**

Thieves have done a great job in keeping up with – or even getting slightly ahead of – technology as more and more aspects of life have been shifted into the digital world, making security the biggest headache for anyone working in IT or using IT.

Individuals' personal information and passwords are valuable and can easily be lost or stolen; business information needs constant protection against theft; organisations are vulnerable to attacks which can swamp and bring down their IT systems; and any company or public body that is embarrassed by an IT security breach can suffer serious damage to reputation, in addition to the loss itself.

So who is behind these crimes? Where are they based, what motivates them (is it purely money?), what skills do they need, where do they learn them, and how successful are they? What happens to the information that is harvested – who uses it and is it tradeable and valuable in its own right?

This feature will look at the targets: who are they, what makes them vulnerable and how they are chosen. It will look at the different scams and how they work; and it will describe the impact and effects that each type of attack can have on both individuals and organisations.

With all this in mind, it will then examine the defences that can be put in place, from simple good practice through to heavyweight systems that do more than just provide security. It will assess the appropriate level of spending and resources that might be needed to deal with different types of threats facing individual users and organisations.

**1,300 words, Jessica Twentyman**

## **Big Page Feature**

### **Augmented Reality – are we seeing things?**

Take a piece of paper with a logo printed on it and hold it in front of a camera connected to a PC – and strange things happen. Welcome to the world of augmented reality.

AR is already familiar to viewers of sport on television – sponsors' logos no longer need to be painted on pitches as they can be added digitally to the broadcast pictures; in athletics, lines showing the distances achieved by long jumpers can be drawn across the sandpit, and so on.

What augmented reality does is to merge the real physical world with virtual, digital images. It relies on a camera pointing at a recognisable image or shape to trigger the virtual display, which can appear on a screen, often with a 3-D effect. As with many fast-growing IT concepts, its boundaries are poorly defined and so it can mean different things to different people. Neither is it a new technology – but it is one that

is finding new and exciting uses, including a rapidly expanding array of mobile applications.

AR can be used, for example, as a manual for car mechanics – wearing a head-mounted display (that looks like a pair of glasses), the mechanic sees a digital display overlaying the engine he is working on that shows him each step of the work to be done. It can be used in advertising and marketing, where a logo shape, perhaps on a piece of product packaging, can be placed in front of a camera and a hologram-effect image created on the screen. For example, a camera and screen in a toy store can be used to conjure up a “3-D” image of what a box contains. In design, it allows a product prototype to be viewed and rotated etc on screen. And a host of mobile uses are emerging, some based around GPS providing masses of detail about points of interest. Some of the effects are extraordinary.

This feature will look at AR’s growing use by businesses.

**1,200 words, Alan Cane**

### **Issues for Business**

#### **NEW REGULAR FEATURE – Can You Believe IT?**

A new series focusing on a new piece of surprising technology that could one day change the way businesses operate – or even the world. **Joia Shillingford, 600 words**

#### **Does IT work? Social media monitoring**

Reputations are at stake as the use of social networks becomes mainstream, giving communities of consumers and customers etc a voice. Picking up on what is being said about your business is vital – criticisms of poor products or services can spread rapidly and do serious damage. What is even more important is assessing the sentiment behind what is being said: a handful of high-profile negative comments can sometimes mask a far more positive body of opinion and lead a company to make a false – and costly – move. We look at how social media monitoring technology works and ask what value it is bringing to businesses that use it.

**950 words, Stephen Pritchard**

#### **NEW REGULAR FEATURE – First Ade (working title)**

What can your business do to be better at IT? **Ade McCormack** begins a new regular feature that demystifies technology and offers easily digestible and practical guidance on how it can best be used. His rolling list of topics will include security, being green, mobility, and web strategy.

**Plus - tips from readers. We’ll be inviting readers to share their experience by sending us their own ideas, which will be posted at [www.ft.com/digitalbusiness](http://www.ft.com/digitalbusiness), with the best being used in the print edition.**

#### **What’s New: Launches and Updates Digest**

Keeping general business abreast of the most interesting products and services. A selection of highlights to keep opinion-formers informed about the technology industry’s output. **Geoff Nairn**

**NB: A new edition of Geoff Nairn’s What’s New round-up appears every Tuesday at [www.ft.com/digitalbusiness](http://www.ft.com/digitalbusiness)**

### **Interviews / Ideas**

### **My Ideas**

Either: A senior executive or industry expert is interviewed about their relationship with technology; the importance they attach to IT in their business and their sector; how it can differentiate their company or provide it with competitive advantage; and whether their business sees IT as strategic or simply a cost.

Or they put forward their own ideas in their own words. **1,200 words**

### **Perspectives**

**Alan Cane**, our regular columnist, places today's technology in context.

### **Valley View**

**Chris Nuttall**'s column that captures the colour and flavour of life in Silicon Valley.

### **Editorial Information for FT Digital Business**

Background information for articles or themes that have not yet been assigned to individual writers should be sent, by e-mail only please, to [digitalbusiness@ft.com](mailto:digitalbusiness@ft.com) where they will be considered by Peter Whitehead, FT Digital Business editor. Please do not use individual e-mail addresses, fax numbers or post.

Once articles have been assigned (the synopses on the Digital Business pages of FT.com – accessible via 'Looking Ahead' link – will be updated), please send information directly to the writers concerned. Information on writers, and their email addresses, is available via the "Writers and Contacts" link at [www.ft.com/digitalbusiness](http://www.ft.com/digitalbusiness).

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