

The Bottom Line

TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS FOR SMALL AND MID-SIZED COMPANIES

Volume 3, Issue 2

2nd/3rd Quarter 2006

USB Sticks—A Security Risk?



Jody Jankovsky, managing partner and owner of Black | Line Consulting in Naperville, IL.

Recently, the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs disclosed a massive data breach jeopardizing the social security numbers of over 26.5 million veterans. Almost weekly, another government agency or business reveals that they have allowed confidential data to get into the wrong hands.

One reason data is so vulnerable is how that data is stored. Computers have evolved from the large mainframes of yesterday into the portable laptops found on many desktops today. Since 1998, most PC manufacturers have also incorporated USB (Universal Serial Bus) ports on their machines. These standardized ports allow users to connect their PCs to printers, mice, I-Pods and a wide variety of other devices.

One device—the USB flash drive—is receiving

more scrutiny in light of recent security leaks. The USB flash drive (also known as “jump drives”, “pen drives,” etc.) is a cheap memory storage device that quickly plugs into a USB port and can copy stored data. A high capacity USB drive can store up to 8 million documents (or 64 GB) on a device so small that it easily fits in a pocket or onto a key chain.



A high capacity USB drive can store up to 8 million documents or 64 GB and can easily fit in a pocket or onto a key chain.

Companies should be aware of how easy it is for employees to use the devices, lose them, or take competitive information away on them. If the storage device is lost or stolen, vast amounts of valuable company information could impact customer data security and seriously damage the company’s reputation with those customers.

While these storage devices have legitimate business purposes, once sensitive information is

downloaded, you can’t control where that data goes. The devices can also introduce viruses to the network—viruses that can delete company records, slow system response time, and cause downtime.

Each business should have strict workplace policies on how data is collected, stored, and accessed. Those policies should be explained to every employee. Obviously, the risk does not go away with policies alone and business owners may want to investigate the use of security software that is available to control USB devices on their networks.

Don’t ignore the growing security threat that USB sticks can introduce into your workplace. Take the steps necessary to protect your data and the reputation of your business. Talk to your IT consultant for further information.



Jody Jankovsky is the managing partner and owner of Black | Line Consulting. He can be reached through his website at www.blacklineconsulting.com or by calling (630) 388-1700

What’s New:

Jankovsky to be guest columnist

Jody Jankovsky, managing partner and chief systems engineer of Black | Line Consulting is now a rotating guest columnist for the Beacon News and Naperville Sun newspapers. Jody offers insight into technology issues that impact business owners.

Black | Line Consulting’s Darren Hughes Promoted to Operations Manager

Darren Hughes of Black | Line Consulting was promoted to Operations Manager the company recently announced. Hughes is a three year veteran with Black | Line previously serving as lead developer and project manager for the company.

Hughes’ new responsibilities will include planning, assembling and managing the team of Black | Line engineers to provide information technology support to clients and complete network, systems and database projects across a broad client base.

“I have always felt a strong sense of duty to our clients and I understand that the smooth operation of their businesses often depends on the service and availability that we provide,” said Jody Jankovsky, managing partner and owner of Black | Line Consulting. “Darren shares those same principles and will be an integral part of the growth of our company going forward,” continued Jankovsky.

The Bottom Line

TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS FOR SMALL AND MID-SIZED COMPANIES

Black | Line Consulting
1560 Wall Street
Suite 105
Naperville, IL 60563
Phone: 630-388-1700
Fax: 630-388-1697
E-mail: sales@blacklineconsulting.com

Insight on Vista USB Sticks - A Security Risk?

Ask the Experts

Black Line Consulting's Engineers Answer Readers Questions



Microsoft will be releasing its Vista program to consumers in January of 2007.

Q: I have been reading about Microsoft's new Vista operating system. As a business owner what will it do for me and should I be planning for Vista in my 2007 software and hardware budget?

A: Microsoft has been working on Windows Vista

as an answer to ever changing needs of business. From a business owner's perspective - it is a tool that merits close review as it claims to solve three problems businesses encounter.

Enabling Mobile Workforce - With the ever-growing need for mobility Vista allows for a more seamless exchange of information while maintaining a high level of security.

Find and Use Information - Vista's goal is to make finding information more effective and easier. Vista includes new search technology to significantly improve access to files, data and

information to maximize worker productivity.

Improve Security - As highlighted in this publication security breaches make every business vulnerable (See *USB Sticks - A Security Risk?*). Vista enables a business to more effectively reduce risk by protecting information and services in a more controlled, secure environment.

Vista is scheduled for release to the business community by November of this year with a consumer release in January of 2007. However, Bill Gates, Microsoft chairman, gave Vista only an 80 percent chance of releasing on time.

My recommendation to clients is to wait and see if Vista meets its promises. PC's purchased after the release date will automatically come with Vista loaded instead of XP. But there is no rush to update your current hardware running the XP operating system. Only after review of the actual released operating system versus the requirements of each individual business can it be determined when migrating to Vista is right for your business. For most companies any planned expense for Vista updates will occur late in 2007 but mostly likely will occur in 2008 and beyond.