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Correction

This is a correction to our last month's newsletter article relating to Microsoft's DPA registration. It would seem that Microsoft did register well in advance of the renewal date, but the Data Protection Agency had failed in their duty to keep up-to-date, correct details of the company. The question that comes to mind is that is DPA going to reprimand itself for not following its own rules?

Inland Revenue's computer losses

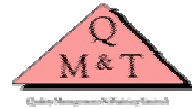
According to a recent report, the Inland Revenue (IR) has not been able to account for more than 500 of its computers. According to government figures, IR staff have lost nine laptops and have had approximately 150 computers stolen over the last five years. Due to its less than perfect asset management, the IR does not know whether those computers have yet been found or not. In January this year, it was also revealed that some individuals within the department had illegally accessed tax records of the rich and famous and IR had sold some tax information to outside agencies, also some staff had passed on information about ex-spouses to the Child Support Agency. For more information please see BBC news.

Credit card threats

It has been recently reported that thousands of Visa and MasterCard customers have been exposed to a hacker who managed to get into the systems of a third party company which provides processing services to retailers. So far none of the credit card numbers have been fraudulently used, although the very fact that a breach of security had occurred will be a cause of great concern for those customers and the companies concerned. No indication has yet been given as to how the attack took place, or how long the breach was or the identity of the third party company whose systems were breached. For more details please see BBC news.

Can targets affect the quality of service?

According to a recent report, targets set for a well-known car breakdown company included the sales of spares. One officer was awarded the organisation's 'ambassador of the year' award for selling 55 batteries to unsuspecting victims of breakdowns. A TV crew investigated the effect this target had on the service being offered. They fitted new batteries to a number of cars, took them out on the road, switched the engines off and ran the batteries flat. They then called out the breakdown company. In each case the breakdown recovery resulted in a battery sale even though this wasn't necessary. In



this case the desire to meet targets had actually led to unscrupulous sales.

On-line services for the blind and partially sighted

The Royal National Institute for the Blind are campaigning to make online goods and services available to the blind and partially sighted. Together with an online forms specialist Mandoforms, they have released guidelines to help companies design appropriate forms for their sites on the Internet. Mandoforms worked with staff from the Technology in Learning and Employment team of the RNIB to develop the guide. The free document should help firms develop more user-friendly online forms and is available from www.mandoforms.co.uk. RNIB have also backed a new mobile phone launched recently. Vodafone have released a specially adapted Nokia 9210i handset that is capable of "audible display". www.vodafone.co.uk

The UK Disability Discrimination Act says that all goods and services should be made available to everyone and this means that the blind and partially sighted should have equal access to online resources. Companies wishing to test their sites for compliance with access laws can reference Accessibility Guidelines www.w3c.org/wai

Illegal music downloads

The International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) have warned businesses that they may take legal action against them if their staff access, download or share illegally copied music or media files. The firms could face fines if they have failed to protect their systems from such activity. As well as stopping illegal downloads such protection can also reduce the potential for virus infection and save bandwidth and staff time. Under current UK law, employers can be held responsible if staff download copyrighted information unlawfully. The IFPI guide suggests that firms should examine their networks and remove any infringing files.

They should also ensure that it is clear in the employee terms and conditions or employment manuals that such online activities are prohibited. For further information visit www.ifpi.org

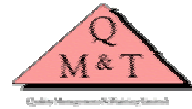
How independent are Certification Bodies?

One of the major issues associated with the Enron scandal was Enron's unhealthy relationship with their financial auditors. The major criticism was that the financial auditors were inadequately independent due to their other services they provided. Consultancy and training were a major source of revenue for the financial auditors and consequently dangerously colouring what should have been their independent judgement and duty of reporting the financial health of the organisation.

It has been brought to our attention that there is also a parallel situation in the quality field. Recently, concerned and respected Quality Engineers have seriously questioned the integrity and independence of certain large certification bodies. Some of the larger accreditation bodies seem more interested in selling their products and services, rather than ensuring and reporting on the quality health of their client organisations. Certain accreditation bodies happily criticise the smaller certification bodies when they sell products, which it is felt jeopardises their independence, but seem less willing to find fault with the bigger organisations. If you have any examples highlighting the lack of independence of certification bodies then we would be interested to hear from you.

Guidelines on the use of modern workplace equipment

The Health and Safety Executive have released new guidelines on the use of workplace equipment including laptops, mice and VDUs. The guidelines have been developed to help firms reduce problem such as repetitive strain injury (RSI) and musculoskeletal disorders. They cover simple suggestions on



workplace set-ups, positioning of screens and mice. The guidance documents are available from the HSE or visit www.hse.gov.uk

BSI standards

A range of standards and guides published by the British Standard Institute can now be ordered online from Quality Management & Training. Please visit the website www.qmt.co.uk to see the complete range of products and services.

ISO/IEC Guide aims to improve efficiency of international trade

The new guide *Arrangements for the recognition and acceptance of conformity assessment results* has been released by International Standards Organisation (ISO) and aims to reduce redundant, costly and time-consuming aspects of “conformity assessment” activities. When goods and services pass through borders some organisations may require verification that they meet standards or other requirements. This verification is called “conformity assessment” and it may have to be repeated many times. The costs would be reduced if a product could be tested once and the results accepted in all markets. The new guide has procedures for setting up and maintaining co-operation among conformity assessment bodies so that a recognition arrangement can be established so that the results of each other’s inspections, testing etc can be accepted internationally. For more information please visit www.iso.ch

Slow take up of ISO 9001:2000

There are 68,000 companies in the UK that currently hold certificates on the old ISO 9000 standard, but according to BSI Management System, only 19% have currently made the transfer to the new version. This is in-line with the current global estimates, although in the Far East more than 31% have transferred. If you would like any help or support on the transition process then information is

available from your assessment body and also on www.qmt.co.uk.

Health and Safety unveil disappointing statistics

The HSE statistics for 2001/2 safety at work are disappointing as there is little change from the previous year and the number of working days lost has risen. This is not good news in the light of the targets in the government’s ‘Revitalising Health and Safety Initiative’ launched in 2000 which calls for major improvements over the next five and ten years. It is too early to tell whether these figures show that the government’s strategy is not working, but the HSE have said that they need to change their mindset in meeting targets and achieving the changes required. They will be looking for more effective methods of getting compliance, obtaining board level commitment and encouraging employee involvement in reducing the number of fatalities and accidents at work.

New British Standard evolves from Project Acorn

Project Acorn was a scheme to assist SMEs develop environmental awareness and take companies through to ISO14001. The new Standard BS 8555 has evolved from the Project and helps companies carry out a staged implementation of an environmental management system. The six stages to Certification are:

- Commitment and establishing the baseline
- Identifying and ensuring compliance with legal and other requirements
- Developing objectives, targets and programmes
- Implementation and operation of the environmental management system
- Checking, audit and review
- Environmental management system acknowledgement

For further information please visit www.bsi-global.com

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Baldrige criteria for business excellence

The new 2003 Baldrige Criteria For Business Excellence has been placed in service on The Benchmarking Exchange (a.k.a. BenchNet) for public access. You can use this application to obtain a report card on how your department, division or entire organization measures up using the 2003 Baldrige Criteria. The report will also show how you scored compared with others in your industry and across all industries combined. Many organizations also use this application to compare like departments within their own organization, anywhere in the world. By comparing report cards for each department, organizations can learn which departments need assistance in certain processes and which department is the best choice to learn from (this is what benchmarking is all about!). Access to TBE's Online Baldrige 2003 Self-Assessment is available to anyone. To begin your report card visit: http://66.124.245.170/TBE_Members2/selfassess/baldrige03/index.htm and select "Generate Profile". After you complete the online form you will be sent an email containing a link to your report card.