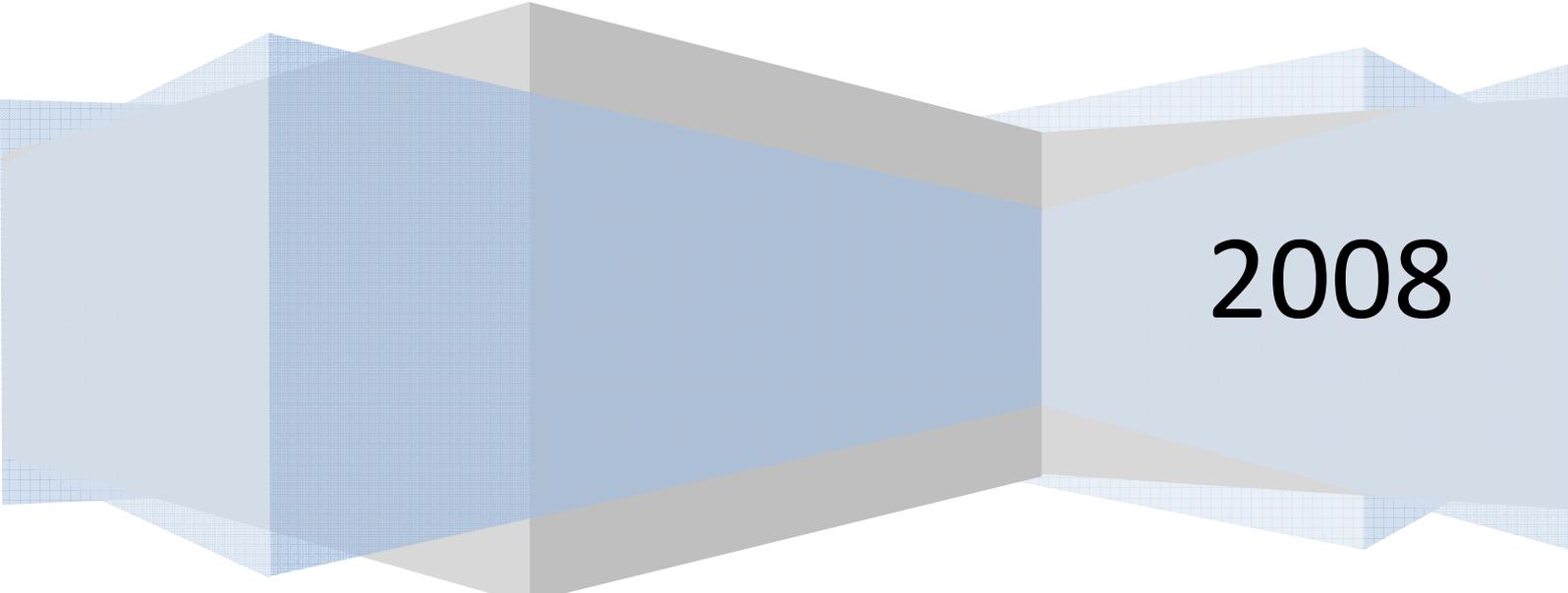


# David Lloyds Business Club

IT, what's it all about?

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2008

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*IT, what's it all about?*

## Who am I?

### Cosma Papouis.

- I have worked with computers for approx 20 year, 1<sup>st</sup> as a Wang engineer, then worked for Dell, then became a network manager moved on to become a SQL Server consultant then worked for a Large law firm as an infrastructure specialist with emphasis on Citrix.
- Now, operating as an Independent Consultant.

## What do I do?

- Anything I feel I can in connection with IT systems (or anything else).
- I call myself a "Technology Consultant"

## The talk of the day – *IT, what's it all about?*

IT is a vast subject, and I cannot pretend that I can cover everything today, not without boring you all to tears (much though I like the sound of my own voice). I will, therefore, attempt to address some questions I have been asked and then open the floor to you to grill me as you like.... At this point I would like to say that in IT there are always at least 3 answers to every question and they are probably all right. The only real answer to any question is "*It depends, what did you want to achieve?*"

In no particular order:

- How do I backup my data?
- Essential DIY maintenance
- Are there any tools useful to small businesses on XP and Vista
- What's the easiest way (other than having proper networking) to ensure file access between a home/office computer and a laptop
- How can I create myself some 'digital stationery'? For example a styled email template with logo & contact details.
- What is "Web 2.0"?
- For people wanting a very basic website, are there any of the template 'build your own' sites you'd recommend?
- What I can do (preferably without spending too much money!) to raise the profile of my website and get more hits?



## How do I backup my data?

This question is not as simple as it 1<sup>st</sup> appears. Or is it?

The easiest answer to this is “Copy the data to a different location”. The problem is, a, What data are we talking about? b, Where is this data? c, Where can I put it? And d, How do I get it there?

### A, What data are we talking about?

When I am referring to data I am typically talking about *your* information. That can be emails, names and addresses, spreadsheets, word processed documents, accounts information or any number of other forms of valuable stuff that you have either entered, copied, bought or acquired.

Typically programs, and the Operating System, are not thought of as data, but they are data and do need to be considered. You can have all the backups in the world, but if you do not have a program that can use the data, or a working computer, you are wasting your time.

### B, Where is this data?

Most programs store their data where ever they feel is appropriate. In the case of tools, such as Word, Excel and many other MS Office tools, this will be “My Documents”. So where exactly is that? In my case it is...

C:\Documents and Settings\CosmaP\My Documents

Great, but (there is always a but), “My Documents” can also contain all sorts of other stuff that you may, or may not want to backup.

Other programs, such as Sage Accounts, or Adobe Photoshop will put their data anywhere they feel like. Even Microsoft Outlook “hides” its data.

### What Can I do about it?

1. Move your data to a different location. I always create a folder under C:\ called (not surprisingly) “Documents”. Every time I install a new program I go the process of changing the setup to make sure ALL my data ends up in this folder (in sub folders). This takes time and is not always possible, but it does make life easier when it comes to backups or rebuilds.
2. Don't worry about it. Just back the whole machine up. Today disk storage is cheap so just back the whole machine up. This is OK if your machine breaks and you need to restore the whole machine to another one of exactly the same spec, but it can be a pain if you need to move to a new machine.

The real answer is both 1 and 2. Move the data that you can, and then back the whole machine up. Programs such as Sage will typically let you run their own backup, which can be put in c:\documents.



## C, Where can I put it?

Thank goodness, a question with a relatively simple answer. Your choices are.

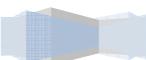
Device	Pros	Cons
Tape	Great for backing the whole machine up quickly and keeping multiple backups	Can be expensive and overkill for the average home (Small business) user, unless you have a server
Direct Attached Storage (DAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great for backing up the whole machine quickly, especially if your PC has a "firewire" (1394) port</li> <li>• Relatively Cheap</li> <li>• Portable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The temptation to use the extra space for live data</li> <li>• The disk can fail</li> <li>• The disk can be stolen</li> </ul>
Network Attached Storage (NAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great for backing the whole machine up quickly and keeping multiple backups</li> <li>• Can be hidden – so less stealable</li> <li>• Most units have 2 disks internally allowing Mirroring for resilience (Security)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More expensive than DAS</li> <li>• Slower to backup as you are moving data across your network</li> <li>• Requires you to have a network</li> <li>• Slightly more complicated to use</li> </ul>

For most users DAS is the best/cheapest solution, as long as you follow some simple rules.

1. This is a BACKUP unit, it is not a place to store live data. It should only ever house copies of data that you have on other machines. As soon as you put live data on it you need to back it up!
2. Use it regularly

External disk box's (DAS) can be purchased for approx £60 for 400Gb. This is enough to get several complete copies of whole machines on. It is important to remember that this is still just 1 disk in a box and it can fail so make sure you only use it for copies of data that you have elsewhere. Also I know of cases where a house has been broken into and the laptop with its attached backup device have been stolen. I would recommend that you get a long USB cable and hide the unit somewhere it cannot easily be found. Remember a laptop can be replaced, your data cannot.

A slight aside at this point... Make sure that you have copies of all programs that you use. When you bought your PC they MUST have given you some kind of recovery disk with all the basic software if they did not then chase them for a set of disks. Try and locate everything you need to rebuild your PC. Then 1<sup>st</sup> copy these disks to the backup disk you have just bought and 2<sup>nd</sup>, put (hide) them somewhere safe! The worst part of rebuilding a PC is finding all the drivers required to make it work.



## D, How do I get it there?

This is another relatively simple answer. I will assume that you have decided to take my advice and have purchased an external DAS drive.

Windows XP has a built in backup program that is good enough for most situations. It can be found at Start/All Programs/Accessories/System Tools/Backup or by going to Start/Run and typing in "NTBACKUP" and pressing enter.

Simply attach your new DAS to the PC and use the Wizard that appears to backup the whole machine to the storage. This program is basic, but does the job. It can even be scheduled to run automatically (every night). Depending on the amount of data you are saving and the type of connection that you have, the back up time will vary. If it is taking too long to back the whole machine up you can do a "differential" backup, which will only take files that have changed since the last time you backed up. I would not recommend that you do this unless you really have to.

Another great tool is Drive Snapshot. Which can be found at <http://www.drivesnapshot.de> This tool differs from NTBACKUP as it takes an image of your PC, which can then be, in case of failure, restored to a blank disk. You can download it and have a play for free, a licence is €39 which is not too bad, considering how good it is. I am currently working on some scripting to automate the backup process and you are welcome to have a copy when I am done.



## Essential DIY Maintenance

This section actually bumps into the following section, but here we go....

Things to do...

1. BACK IT UP!!!!
  2. Apply Microsoft patches
  3. Defrag PC
  4. Run Spyware checker
  5. Run Virus checker
  6. Clean out temp folders etc
  7. Apply Application patches
- 
1. As the PM says, "Can I direct my honourable colleague to the answer to his/her previous question"
  2. Make sure that "Automatic Updates" is enabled and periodically (at least once a month, after the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday) go to <http://update.microsoft.com/> select "Custom" and apply all updates that it offers (also look under the "Software-optional" and "Hardware-optional" sections). This will help keep your PC safe and secure.
  3. Open up "My Computer" right click on your c:\ drive, select "Properties" then "Tools" then "Defragment". Select your drive and defragment it. In the next section I will also recommend some other tools for doing the same. This will improve performance, especially if you have never done it before.
  4. Run a spyware checker, I recommend SpyBot. <http://www.spybot.de> Install it, update it, use it regularly.
  5. Run a Virus checker, I recommend AVG Free. This is lighter weight than most of the ones you can buy and does a good job. <http://free.grisoft.com/ww.homepage>
  6. Use a program such as C Cleaner (<http://www.ccleaner.com/>) to remove junk from your pc. I do not generally like Registry cleaners as they tend to mess the machine up, but this program is OK. It will remove all your cookies so you may want to go in to the setup and tell it which ones to keep
  7. Use a program such as Secunia PSI (<https://psi.secunia.com/>) to scan your pc and tell you which programs need patching, and how to do it.



## Are there any tools useful to small businesses on XP and Vista

Hmm....

Please refer to <http://del.icio.us/CosmaP/DavidLloyd> for some useful links. Actually, if you are interested you can look at <http://del.icio.us/CosmaP> for all my links.

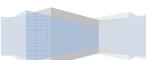
- C Cleaner – Removes all sorts of Junk from your PC
- Spybot-S&D! – Removes Spyware
- Auslogics Disk Defrag – A rapid file defragger
- JkDefrag v3.34 – An alternative Disk Defragger
- Secunia PSI – Personal Software Inspector
- Haute Secure – Software to protect your computer from malware
- Xobni – Download Xobni Great email tool
- WordPress – Canned Blog Platform
- The PC Decrapifier – Removes all the junk that manufacturers put on your PC
- Speedtest.net – Great for seeing how fast your Broadband really is
- Belarc Advisor – Personal PC Audit Gives you loads of info about your PC
- Joomla! – Canned Blog Platform
- Filezilla – Great FTP Client
- AVG Free Advisor: Free anti-virus, anti-spyware and anti-malware tools
- Drive Snapshot – Back up software
- Gibson Research – Lots of Security Based Stuff
- NVU – Web authoring software
- Helenes Computer Guide Freebook – Quite a nice, if dated, Guide to basic IT stuff.

Most of these tools are free or shareware. Can I suggest that, when they ask for voluntary contributions (such as Spybot), you make a small contribution. These are generally small companies that function on a tight budget and can only keep on making the great free software if they are supported.

There are other tools that can aid you in most situations, including virtual machines, web builders etc... But I can't list them all.... The list really is endless and so I suggest that you take a look through my links or just ask.

REMEMBER NEVER install something without checking it out 1<sup>st</sup> (or ask someone that knows). Some of the tools that are out there will cause havoc, while pretending to help. If you are not sure, then take a backup, disconnect the back up device, and test away.

I am adding to this list and may not have time to detail all the entries here. Take a look at the web site.



## **What's the easiest way (other than having proper networking) to ensure file access between a home/office computer and a laptop**

This is an “it depends what you mean” answer. If you mean “How can I move data between my Laptop and my PC?” then the answer is “use a floppy disk, or a data key” (sneaker net).

If you mean “How can I access my PC when I am away from the office?” then there are various ways. You can use products such as Ultra VNC, PC Anywhere, or Gotomypc which give access to the desktop or you can look at products like Hamachi, which allow you to set up a virtual network and access it directly.

I personally would recommend buying a network router which would allow you to a, connect several PC's to the internet at the same time, b, Share resources (files, printers, backup devices) and c, set up a secure connection to your home for when you are travelling.

Having a “Proper” network really is not very hard.

## **How can I create myself some 'digital stationery'? For example a styled email template with logo & contact details.**

Creating digital stationary for Word documents is quite easy. Start a new document, make it look the way that you want your stationary to look, do a “save as” and save it as a template (with a .dot extension instead of .doc). When you double click on it, it will open up a new document with your look and feel.

If you want to use it in email you can do the same and attach it as a theme each time you want to use it.

My advice is to open mail and read the online help as it is different for each version of each mail program.

## **What is "Web 2.0"?**

I will admit to pinching this answer from Wikipedia...

Web 2.0 is a term describing the trend in the use of World Wide Web technology and web design that aims to enhance creativity, information sharing, and, most notably, collaboration among users. These concepts have led to the development and evolution of web-based communities and hosted services, such as social-networking sites, wikis, blogs, and folksonomies. The term became notable after the first O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 conference in 2004. Although the term suggests a new version of the World Wide Web, it does not refer to an update to any technical specifications, but to changes in the ways software developers and end-users use the Web. According to Tim O'Reilly:

“Web 2.0 is the business revolution in the computer industry caused by the move to the Internet as platform, and an attempt to understand the rules for success on that new platform.”

Some technology experts, notably Tim Berners-Lee, have questioned whether one can use the term in a meaningful way, since many of the technology components of "Web 2.0" have existed since the early days of the Web.



## For people wanting a very basic website, are there any of the template 'build your own' sites you'd recommend?

Hmmm... Deep breath...

This is a huge, "It Depends" answer. In a nut shell...

To have a website you need...

1. A Domain Name – You will have one from your ISP (Internet Service Provider) but it is likely to be rubbish. Buying a name is cheap and easy, the hard part is coming up with the name.
2. Somewhere to put it – Your ISP will more than likely give you some free space. It may not be much, but it may do for you (as long as you are careful with your pictures). Alternatively you could rent some space from one of the Hosting companies.

Most, but not all, hosting companies have some kind of web builder tool you can use. There are so many that I could not hope to tell you which is good and which is not. Webfusion seem to be an OK hosting company as do Go Daddy. I like the Domain management interface in Go Daddy, but, as beginners, you may prefer reg-123's management interface (and they have a partnership with web fusion).

Some companies, such as AMEN (and Go Daddy) will install and give you access to a CMS (Content Management System), such as Joomla! Or Wordpress. These are more advanced canned websites that you can customise (By using templates or manually) to suit your needs. Many of the websites you see about are built on top of these sorts of CMS systems. The benefit is that they give you many facilities that you would never do for your self, the down side is that you are constrained by what the system you use can do. As an example take a look at <http://w3.babyaid.org> . This is a Joomla! based website that I am working on for a friend. AMEN set the site up and now I am starting to customise it. I have added one article, but we need to change all the graphics and "build" the site.

Remember CONTENT IS KING. You can have the best looking website in the world, but if there is no content then it is a waste of time.

My Advice is.... Spend some time deciding what you want the website to do, will you be selling things (so you need checkout facilities) will you be Blogging (RSS functionality is good), then find a hosting company that offers the facilities you need. Many companies will give a 30 day money back offer; this is good as it lets you try them out. A couple of times I have found that a hosting company does not offer the facilities I need, after I have paid for it!

One last comment. Another good facility that some hosting companies offer is statistics. Seeing who is looking at your site and when can help you gauge the effectiveness, or otherwise, of advertising campaigns. And can help you know what to improve on your site.

I have just seen "Microsoft Office Live Small Business" (Link on my link list). That looks very interesting.



## What I can do (preferably without spending too much money!) to raise the profile of my website and get more hits?

Lots of things...

1. Register at <http://www.google.co.uk/webmasters/> as a webmaster – This will allow you to request that your site is scanned by Google
2. Go to Yahoo, Lycos and any other search engines and register your site. Look for Webmaster tools
3. Buy some Adwords adverts at Google. This is relatively cheap and you can control where your adds go
4. Go to blogging sites and make comments, make sure your address is in your signature (underhand, but effective)
5. Ask similar companies to link to you and then link back to them
6. Make sure you have meta tags on your web site with appropriate words in
7. Make it very interesting and dynamic so people will want to look at it and blog about it
8. Change it regularly so that people have a reason to come back
9. All the usual stuff you would do to advertise your business

## In Conclusion...

*IT, what's it all about?*

Who knows... In looking back through this I find that the title seems to have no connection with the subject matter, but heck, who cares? I like it so I will keep it.

What is the message? Well...

1. As Douglas Adams said "DON'T PANIC!!!" There is usually a solution.
2. Back it up, then back it up again, and then do another for good measure, you can't have too many backups. The law of Sod dictates that the one time you need to recover something from a backup it will not exist! I promise you that there are few things as sickening as realising that you can't find something you have just spent a week working on or that you need to submit to the tax man in 2 days!
3. The more complicated your recovery process is, the less likely it is to work when you need it.
4. There are lots of things on the internet that can be had for free, so before you spend any money take a look. Just remember that there are lots of bad people out there so don't install anything with out checking it out 1<sup>st</sup>. If you like the items you have downloaded and used for free and they ask for a contribution, please make one. It keeps the programmers in their little holes writing useful tools that you can have for free.

Any Questions?.....

