

E COMMERCE - THE JARGON DE-MYSTIFIED

Applet - an applet is a small program that can be sent along with a Web page to a user. Java applets can perform interactive animations, immediate calculations, or other simple tasks without having to send a user request back to the server.

ASP (Application Service Provider) - These are like the computer bureaux of the 1970s, and offer on-line real-time access to standard packages. Users pay a metered charge to log on and perform tasks using standard accounting, spreadsheet and word processing packages. Gathering momentum in the USA, they may soon have a presence in the UK.

Attachment - an attachment is a file which is appended to an e mail. The file may be a word-processing document, or a spreadsheet, for example.

The importance is related to the security risks associated with opening attachments, as any program code stored in an attachment is executed. The code can contain a virus which can potentially damage a PC or network (see macro virus and virus below).

Authentication - a process which is used to confirm the identity of a person, or the integrity of a transaction.

Bandwidth - the capacity of a system to deal with network traffic.

Browser - a program which enables web access.

Cable-modems - are a service provided by cable TV companies such as ntl and TeleWest. The TV cable is used to send and receive data, and not the telephone line. The service relies on the provision of cable in the area. As cable has been targeted at the consumer, many businesses are not close to cable networks and therefore will not be able to take advantage of cable-modem.

Cookie - bookmarks which remember details about a site visited. They have evolved to

become fairly intelligent robots. They will store details about a site, what log on preferences have been set, passwords and specific buying patterns.

The cookies can be links to an advertiser's site – you click and this immediately creates a cookie – the advertiser now has details about you.

Deep links - have entered the news after a UK commercial site recently obtained an injunction preventing a German firm from using internet links deep into the UK web site.

By using deep links into someone else's site, the home pages are avoided – and, it is usually the home pages which contain the revenue earning advertisements. Such links can also fool visitors into wrongly assuming that the information portrayed belongs to the site they logged on to, and not to someone else's (copyright) material. The first such case arose in 1996 and involved the Shetland Times.

Digital signature - a method using encryption techniques and a public/private key to verify the authenticity of a person or transaction.

DSL - is an abbreviation for Digital Subscriber Services. It is a method of transferring data over traditional BT copper wire lines. The data is transferred at higher speeds than normal. There are a number of variants including:

ADSL – Asymmetric DSL

HDSL – High rate DSL

VDSL – Very High Speed DSL

SDSL – Symmetric DSL.

Dot com - an expression referring to the internet industry. Frequently used in the context of 'a dot com company' and 'a dot com millionaire'.

e commerce - conducting business over the internet and therefore by electronic rather than by paper-based methods.

EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) - is a standard method of exchanging

documents, such as invoices, between companies who may have incompatible hardware and/or software.

Electronic form filling and transmission is far quicker than manually completing a form and then posting it. A further extension of EDI is the processing of electronic funds.

Standards have emerged for different types of funds transfers – for example the SET standard (see below) for credit card transactions.

Extranet - a network, but only for 'invited' business partners. These are set up mainly to cope with B2B (business to business) transactions. One company may have access to a number of different extranets.

Firewall - a hardware and/or software based security system to prevent unauthorised access to a network or server.

Gateway - a device or devices which enable two or more different types of network to communicate with each other. Sometimes described as a bridge.

HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) - a programming language used to create web pages

Host - a computer or network which holds information such as a web site on behalf of a number of different companies. Also see ISP below.

ISP - an Internet Service Provider. An ISP acts as a host (see above) providing e mail services, web site services and access to information channels. There is a growing distinction between domestic ISPs and commercial ISPs.

Domestic ISPs such as FreeServe are set up for the end consumer, whereas commercial ISPs are used for business web sites.

Commercial ISPs are likely to charge more for their services, but generally their serviceability is higher than some domestic ISPs which can become swamped with users at peak periods.

JAVA - a programming language which can be run across a variety of platforms. Its interoperability means that applets can easily be downloaded to any computer, when required.

Local loop - the last kilometre or so of cable from a telephone exchange to a house or business is known as the local loop. It

has been monopolised by BT who have charged for pro rata use of the telephone over the cable. This monopoly is now loosened and is paving the way for broadband internet access.

Macro virus - a macro virus is a program written within a standard application, which executes a malicious payload when the document or spreadsheet is opened. A macro virus can perform a variety of unwanted side effects from putting up strange messages to completely destroying data on a network.

Non-repudiation - provides proof of the origin of a transaction. It protects the recipient against the sender denying that the transaction was originated by him (the sender).

PKI (Public Key Infrastructure) - the framework in which digital certificates are created and used, based on a public/private key.

SET (Secure Electronic Transaction) - is one of several standards for ensuring credit card payments are secure over the internet.

TCP/IP - a protocol designed to allow different computers to communicate with each other regardless of the hardware or operating system platform.

URL (Uniform Resource Locator) - a standard method of identifying web resources, such as web sites and web addresses.

Virus - a generic term for a rogue piece of software. The internet has enabled viruses to be transferred from one network to another very quickly. The current crop of viruses rely on using some of the more common applications software to transmit their payload to the largest possible number of users.

HOW WE CAN HELP

If you would like information as to how we can assist you with your e commerce activities we will be more than happy to provide you with help.

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