

# Letters

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## Tip of the iceberg



I read Terry Pinnell's article in October's issue of *What PC?* on working from home and thought how easy it made it sound.

No mention of obtaining work or hourly rates.

Homeworkers or teleworkers need to consider that unless they are very lucky, they cannot hope to earn the same salary or remuneration working from home, using the PC. When a homemaker adds up the expenses and cost of working from home, he or she will have to invoice at a minimum of £15 per hour. This is to cover costs of using a PC and the Internet, never mind insurance, etc. Terry Pinnell glossed over this in his article.

The most important issue is finding work. Employers generally do not realise when they employ homeworkers, that they can forget paid holidays, sickness and pensions, etc. They only see a weekly invoice for £500 and compare this with the £300 they pay an employee on site.

The topic of homeworking is like an iceberg - most of it is hidden beneath the surface. I would suggest to *What PC?* readers who want to take up homeworking, join the Tele-

cottage Association or at least buy its *Teleworking Handbook*. The address is TCA, Freepost CV2332, Wren Telecottage, Kenilworth, Warks CV8 2RR.

My letter is not a criticism of Terry Pinnell's article but a follow-up. I feel that a single page in a computer magazine devoted to one of the largest issues facing business in the future should not be overlooked or dismissed as a filler. *Vance McDowell, Hove, East Sussex*

Thanks for your comments and you're right, there are many issues involved in homeworking. We're planning an article on that very subject, which we will publish in the not too distant future.

## Big is not better

All too often we read of suppliers who fail to deliver in terms of goods or promises.

Only recently I ordered two items of software from one of the big companies advertising in the computer press. Not only did they take 11 days to arrive (I was 'guaranteed' they would be with me in three to four days) but neither item was what I had ordered. After several telephone calls I was told that if I wanted a replacement I

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Please note that any letters sent to us by e-mail may be printed along with the sender's e-mail address, unless we are specifically instructed otherwise.

## ★ Star Letter



### Some mothers do 'ave 'em!

I was in my local newsagent recently and overheard the following conversation which I think you may find interesting.

A young lad was looking for a computer magazine and picked up *What PC?*. 'Can I have this one mummy, it has free games with it,' he said. Mother took the magazine, looked at it and said: 'No I am sorry Tommy (name changed to protect the innocent), this magazine is for people aged eighteen and over.'

After much protestation from the young man he was fobbed off with some inferior magazine.

Much puzzled, I went to look at the December issue of *What PC?*, as I have read it before and found it to be of an acceptable nature, not having any soft porn rubbish in it. I found that the mother had not read the disc label properly but had just seen the large number 18. As we all know, the number refers to the issue number not the age range. I am very sorry to say you lost a sale. May I suggest you keep all the numbers very small in future - or risk losing sales to someone under the age of 19 in the January issue, and 20 in the February issue, and so on?

I'm 32 and pleased to announce that it will be some months before my mother stops me reading your publication!

*Andrew McNish*

[andrew@pudding.poke.prestel.co.uk](mailto:andrew@pudding.poke.prestel.co.uk)

Actually, that was a bit of a saucy issue. We had a Seedy-ROM group test and a review of the Bras Direct Web site. Oo-er missus.



would have to send them back - at my cost. No apology was forthcoming and I waited another 10 days for the correct software to arrive.

However, I recently read of a piece of code which would enable me to track my online costs and cost £14.99 - CCA Software's NetMeter.

I phoned the number and was answered in a most polite manner and my order was taken immediately. I was told there might be a delay in dispatching the disks due to staff holidays but they would do their best and ensure that my credit card was not debited until they were in the post. →

my amazement the package arrived four days later, with a personal letter apologising for the delay!

My message to all fellow cynics is that customer service is alive and well in the shape of small companies. It is those who value their customers who deserve to survive and the larger 'warehouses' should look long and hard at the way they do business.

Jon Hosgood,  
jonbosgood@clara.net

## CD storage looks good

I have been looking at various ways to back up my hard drive and to store data, and I think a writeable CD drive would be more useful than other backup devices, such as Zip drives. I am not too bothered about the speed of the drive as long as the written CDs can be used on a normal CD drive. Do I have any options for, say about £200, that include a basic software package, with either an internal or external drive?

PGarfield@compuserve.com

I am looking to buy a CD-Recorder drive. Unfortunately there does not seem to be a clear choice, so I was wondering if you could recommend the best one.

I want a good quality, user-friendly drive. Speed is not as



important (a 6x read, 2x write would be adequate). I am looking to spend about £300, but will pay more for good quality or extra features.  
tju14@central.susx.ac.uk

CD-Recordable technology is certainly becoming a more attractive proposition, and a small round-up of the latest drives is on the cards for a future issue. The last drive we looked at was the Plasmon CDR480 in the December issue, a very capable and easy-to-use external drive offering 8x reading and 4x writing, complete with software, for £511.13 inc VAT. Plasmon is on 01763 262963.

## Want it – can't find it!

Loved your article on Adaptec's Easy CD Creator Deluxe (November issue) – it sounds just what I'm looking for. Any idea where I can buy it? I've rung most of the big suppliers plus all the firms listed in Adaptec's Web page. They in turn have recommended retailers who don't appear to have heard of it or are prepared to order it. Do you know a good retailer on the south coast or any mail order firm that might help?  
Dave Henderson  
benderd3@boat.bt.com

One of Adaptec's distributors has given us the name of a reseller who can send you Easy CD Creator Deluxe. If you call

Bates Infotech Solutions on 0171 531 9999, they will be able to sort you out. Bates does not have a showroom where you can see the products in action, but will be able to send you what you want.

## Excel tip

I've just been reading about Mr T Cuthbert's problem in November's PC doctor regarding printing A5 format in Excel 97, and I think I have a better solution than copying to Word.

All he has to do is change the margins in Page Setup to reflect A5 format. To produce an A5 page with 1.5cm margins the settings would be: top 1.5cm, bottom 10.1cm, left 1.5cm and right 7.7cm.

This produces a spreadsheet with page breaks showing the correct layout and prints to A5 on any printer supporting A4.

Ray Wilson  
Seghill, Northumberland

Thanks for the suggestion, but unfortunately this won't necessarily work. Many printers, including our office laser printer, detect the paper size automatically and if it doesn't match – say if you're using A5 paper when the printer expects A4 – it will give an error message. To print on A5 like this you would need to reset your printer after every single sheet.

## Getting your backup

In March I bought a Conner tapestreamer from First Computers (Leeds). It worked perfectly with my 486-based

system. In August I upgraded to a Pentium system. Shock! Horror! The tapestreamer refused to do anything!

A trip to First Computers produced an immediate replacement, but it performed no better than the original. The problem was eventually diagnosed as an incompatibility between the tape streamer and the controller on my new Pentium motherboard. This meant that I could not restore my system to the new hard drive which I had purchased along with the motherboard.

First Computers refunded the price of the tapestreamer acknowledging that it was unusable with my system. (Not bad after five months' use and considering there wasn't actually anything wrong with it!) but of course could only offer sympathy regarding inaccessible data.

In the event, the outcome was not disastrous; I reinstalled software from the original disks, and recovered the data from the old hard drive. I wonder, though, how many people out there are contemplating upgrades, without being aware that their backups may then be useless.

G Stainton, Huddersfield

## Tas Books

The phone number given in the November issue for Megatech, the supplier of Tas Books, should have been 01372 727274.

## November CD-ROM

The cover CDs for the November issues of *Personal Computer World* and *What PC and Software?* contained a program entitled **Lamb Screen Toy**. VNU has been informed that this is commercial software and not available for free use. Please do not download this program onto your system, and if you have, please delete it. Copies of this software may be obtained from Village Center at:

www.villagecenter.co.jp/english/poe.html