

Jargon Buster [A-M]

ADSL (Asymmetrical Digital Subscriber Line) - A means of delivering high communication speeds over existing copper phone lines.

Analog - The technology used by the original mobile phones. Like traditional radio broadcasts, phone conversations and information are transmitted in the form of a continually varying current or radio wave. The transfer of information can be slow, so newer digital technology has largely taken its place.

Apache - A free web server program. Apache is usually associated with Unix/Linux, but is also available for Windows. A web server is the high-powered computer that runs your website.

ASP (active server page) - These are used on database driven websites.

Back-up - The essential job of saving and storing data on a tape or other storage device, such as a CD-ROM, outside your computer hard disk or computer network.

Bandwidth - The volume of data a line or channel can carry every second. Digital bandwidth is measured in bps (bits per second). The greater the bandwidth the quicker information can travel through it. Higher bandwidths are required for specialist applications like multimedia.

BPS - Bits per second. The rate at which one bit can be carried, normally expressed in thousands, Kbps, or millions, Mbps.

Broadband - High speed access to the Internet, generally at speeds of around 512Kbps or faster, such as ADSL or Cable Modem.

Browser - Software, such as Netscape Navigator and Microsoft's Internet Explorer, that lets you navigate around the web. Most browsers are provided free of charge.

Cable modem - A device allowing high speed access to the Internet over the same wiring used by Cable Television networks.

Cabling - Cables used to link computers together so they form a network and can communicate with each other.

Cache - A folder on a computer that stores pages already visited on the web. Used to reduce download times, especially when clicking the 'back' button on a web browser.

CD-ROM - One of the most popular formats for storing large amounts of electronic information. A CD-ROM can store 400 times as much information as a floppy, equivalent to 300,000 pages of text or one hour of video and audio footage.

CGI - (Common Gateway Interface) -This is the mechanism by which a 'script' receives the data entered by a web user (when you fill in an online form and click 'submit', for example).

Client/server - A type of computer system that has a powerful main computer (the server or file server) and a string of computers linked to it (clients).

Co-location - This is where a company places its own server (high-powered computer) in the data centre of a hosting company. Responsibility for the maintenance of the server resides with the company that owns it.

Configuration - The way a computer or piece of software is connected or set up to operate in a particular way.

Cookie - An information item placed on your computer by certain web sites you visit. This information can then be read by the same web site should you return at a later date. Some individuals see cookies as an invasion of privacy and so configure their web browser not to accept them.

Coverage - The land area where mobile phone services are available.

DAT - Digital Audio Tape (DAT) is a compact, high capacity form of data storage, suitable for archiving or backing up large amounts of data.

Database - A database collects information into an electronic file, for example a list of customer addresses and associated orders. Each item is usually called a 'record' and the items can be sorted and accessed in many different ways.

Data compression - A process that reduces the amount of data needed to store or send a video or audio signal.

Data storage - Any type of information - words, figures, still or moving images, sound or music - can be coded into a single electronic form: digital. Once in digital format, all these types of material can be shared, copied, processed, indexed and transmitted from computer to computer, quickly and flexibly.

Dedicated server - A server which is used solely for use by one organisation. The server is leased and stored in the data center of the host company.

Desktop publishing - Desktop publishing (DTP) software was originally developed to allow computer users to create professional-looking newsletters, magazines and brochures, complete with pictures, diagrams and colour. Now that word-processing software can do most of these things, DTP software has become more of a tool for professional designers, though small companies often use DTP for producing newsletters and reports.

Digital certificate - An electronic statement issued by a certificate authority that verifies a company's identity by validating that company's public key.

Digital signature - A section of data appended to a message which authenticates the information. Signatures are encoded by the sender's private key and can then be verified by the sender's public key. Any unauthorised changes to the file will be reported by an invalid signature for that file.

Document management systems - The control of electronic documents, such as images, spreadsheets and word-processed files. A document management system is created by combining several types of software to control document identification, storage, retrieval, tracking, version control, workflow management and presentation. Good systems can create, use and control documents across different computers, software packages and company divisions.

Domain name - A convention used to allocate and structure the Internet hierarchy into meaningful sections. For example, at the higher level are the com, org, uk and net domains, which can then be broken down into further domains such as scottish-enterprise.com, scotent.co.uk, etc.

Drive - The device in a computer that reads data from a disk.

DTP - See Desktop publishing.

DVD (digital versatile disk) - A high-density format for playing full motion video. It provides vast data storage capacity (currently 4.7Gb, more than 7 CDs). Although popular within the home market, DVDs can also be used to hold computer data.

E-business - Covers the wider use of web technology, from running corporate intranets, to communicating by e-mail or posting up a web site. You don't have to sell online to be involved in e-business.

Ecommerce - Popular term for almost any sort of business, or part of a business, that takes advantage of the new sales opportunities opened up by the technologies of the world wide web. Ecommerce can be business-to-business (B2B), business-to-consumer (B2C), consumer-to-consumer (C2C, as in the case of auction sites, such as eBay and QXL) and even, in rare instances, consumer-to-business (C2B, as at Priceline.com, where consumers say how much they want to pay for an air ticket and wait for an airline to take up their offer).

EDI - Electronic data interchange. EDI is the exchange of business documents, like orders and invoices, between computers run by trading partners. It is fast, saves on paperwork, gives greater control over the way you operate and develops closer trading partnerships. It depends on proprietary systems, which are not always compatible with each other, and is gradually being

superseded by open, Web-based technologies such as XML.

EDIFACT - This is an international standard for EDI, allowing information to be successfully transferred between trading partners.

Email - An email can be sent over corporate computer networks and the internet in minutes. Distance is no object. E-mail is cheap, quick, convenient and flexible. You can send an e-mail to a colleague, if your company's computers are networked, or to customers around the world, via the internet. Emails can contain different file types such as text, graphics, video, audio, spreadsheets, etc.

Encryption - A method of scrambling sensitive messages and data so that they cannot be read without a password.

Ethernet - A popular standard for linking computers in a network. Thin Ethernet networks use the same coaxial cable that is used to connect a TV to an aerial.

Expansion port - A slot inside a computer into which additional hardware, such as a network card or an internal modem, can be plugged.

Extranet - A website offering secure access to suppliers, partners and clients to share corporate information.

File server - Also known as a server, this is a dedicated machine that runs the network operating system that services all the other computers in a network (the 'clients'). All the working files of a company are stored centrally on this server.

Firewall - Security tools that analyse the communications traffic passing between networks. Rules set up within the firewall decide whether or not to allow specific traffic types to pass between these networks. Firewalls are most commonly used at the point where a private corporate network meets the public Internet.

FTP (file transfer protocol) - A method of transferring files from one computer to another. It is the standard way of uploading web pages to a server.

Gateway - An access point connecting one network on the Internet with another neighbouring network. There are also payment gateways that offer direct access into a bank's private network.

GIF (Graphical Interchange Format)- A compressed graphics system used commonly on the Internet to reduce download times. They have the suffix .gif.

Group calendaring - A shared electronic diary, where everyone records meetings, appointments, leave and things to do. Group calendars are particularly useful in planning

meetings between busy people, group working and project teams. They can also be used to log progress on a project.

Groupware - Software programs to support groups of people who work together, but not necessarily in the same place. Examples include Lotus Notes and Novell GroupWise. Groupware ties together common activities, such as e-mail and group calendaring and helps people share information more effectively.

GSM (global system for mobile communications) - A digital network technology used by mobile phone network operators.

Hard disk - Situated inside the computer, the hard disk stores permanent data.

Home page - The first page you see when you connect to a website. Getting your home page right is one of the first essentials for e-commerce.

Host - A company that leases its server (computer) space to websites.

HTML (hypertext mark-up language) - The computer language web pages are written in. You do not need to learn to write HTML code, as there are inexpensive software packages that will do the coding for you, behind the scenes. Variants, such as DHTML and XML, are now becoming more popular types of code. Pages written in these new formats can be used in newer internet browsers.

HTTP (HyperText Transport Protocol) - The communications mechanism used to exchange information on the Internet.

Hyperlink - A connection linking different pieces of information on the web. Hyperlinks (or 'hot links') appear as hot spots on a web page, in the form of highlighted words or images. By clicking on the hyperlink, the reader can instantly jump to another part of your site or to a completely different website.

IIS (Internet Information Server) - This is the Microsoft web server program. A version called PWS (personal web server) is included with Windows 98.

Internet - The Internet is a global network of computers with roughly 500 million users, all over the world. Anyone can join this network. From your computer you can send and receive information anywhere in the world - all at the cost of a local phone call, 24 hours a day. As people gradually learn more and more about how to use this technology, the Internet is transforming whole industries and creating new ones from scratch.

Intranet - An intranet is a 'private internet', not necessarily linked to the Internet itself, that can provide a powerful means of communication within a company or a group of trading partners. If it is linked to the larger Internet, it will be via secure 'firewalls' to protect your private information. An intranet can help a business, which has several different kinds of computer - Windows or

DOS PCs, Macintosh computers, Unix workstations - which need to talk to one another. Internet standards are designed to allow different computers and network types to communicate, so an intranet can remove many potential technical headaches.

IPP - Internet Payment Provider - a company offering merchant account creation and online transaction services.

IRC - Interactive Relay Chat - a method of communicating with other users on the Internet in real time using a text-based service.

ISDN (integrated services digital network) - A fast phone line that significantly increases the rate at which you can transmit and receive information (either 64 or 128kbps), for example when connect to the Internet. If you have large files of data to transmit (such as video or high resolution photography) or you want to video and data conference regularly, you may want an ISDN line. Broadband connections are even faster than ISDN, and are beginning to supersede it).

ISP (Internet service provider) - A company that provides third party access to the Internet. All ISPs offer some standard basic services, such as 24-hour Internet access, a unique e-mail address for your company, storage space for your own website and basic software programs for browsing the Internet.

Java - An object-oriented programming language, developed by SUN, that has seen widespread adoption for use on the Internet. With Java, web designers can create more sophisticated and enhanced web pages - for example, with animated graphics or built in spreadsheets. Small Java programs, known as applets, can be embedded within a web page.

JavaScript - An object-oriented programming language that allows Java objects to be embedded directly in a web page.

JPEG (Joint Picture Expert Group) - A graphical image compression system used widely on the Internet to reduce download times for images. They have the suffix .jpg.

LAN (Local Area Network) - A way of linking computers in one building together so that they can share files, software, hard disks and peripherals such as a printer or scanner.

Link - A hypertext facility that allows a connection between two objects on the Internet, whether they be text, video, audio or graphics.

Listservers - Applications that automatically manage e-mail discussion forums. They can be sent commands via e-mail to perform several functions such as subscribing and unsubscribing to specific lists, providing a member list, etc.

Logs - Web servers normally produce log files that can be analysed to measure website

objectives. For example, number of visitors, time spent on the site, information sought, etc.

Meta tags - Information stored in a web page that's not displayed in the browser window and which contains keywords describing the site. Some search engines use these meta tags to index that site.

MIME (Multimedia Internet Mail Extensions) - a facility which allows emails to contain several sections, with each containing different media types.

Mobile communications - Mobile communications let you operate without the need for a fixed phone line, giving your business greater operational flexibility, faster customer responsiveness and savings in staff time. Connecting your phone to a laptop computer lets you send, receive and access business information wherever you are, creating a 'virtual office'.

Modem (Modulator/Demodulator) - A device that enables computer signals to travel over phone lines. Modems come in different speeds. If you intend to use the Internet, you should usually go for a fast 56 Kbps V90 standard modem. Also check out special modems and access to faster ISDN or broadband connections. These are now widely available in many urban areas of Scotland.

Multimedia - Programs that use or offer a range of media, e.g. data, voice and video.

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