

Thursday Thoughts – 11th March 2021

Happy belated International Women's Day.

You will find a shorter Thursday Thoughts this week as I have been helping with the planning for tomorrow's Altrincham and Sale Chamber of Commerce Annual Business Awards (in which our company PPP Management were nominated but sadly not shortlisted). It promises to be a memorable evening with a simultaneous Zoom and live stream, dignitaries attending virtually and an awesome music ensemble. More of that next week no doubt.

This week's blogs of the week have an "Altrincham" focus as they all come from companies nominated in the Digital Company category of the Chamber Business Awards.

After a quick update on employment law the blog continues with details of a bug in the Apple Find my feature, news of the forthcoming release of Twitter Spaces (Twitter's answer to Clubhouse). There is a new Microsoft Patch Tuesday and a warning from F5, fines for a company sending marketing texts without valid consent.

Next week is issue 52 of Thursday thoughts ... it will be longer I promise!

Blogs of the Week

The Smart Bear – Google Algorithm Update May 2021 and Website Speed

Informed Solutions - Moving Towards Safe Autonomous System

Altrincham HQ - Are You Demoting Your Friends Social Media Posts?

Important Employment Law Changes in April

In case you have been too busy dealing with the impact of coronavirus there are a raft of employment law changes coming in April 2021. Changes include the extension of IR35 reforms to the private sector, changes to the age bands for the national minimum wage, and increases to statutory redundancy pay and statutory maternity pay.

Bug in Apple's Find My Feature Could Exposed Location History

Researches in Germany have identified flaws in Apple's Bluetooth location tracking system which could lead to unauthorised access to the last 7 days of location history (therefore allowing users to be identified).

Users will be familiar with the "Find My" feature which helps them to locate other Apple devices, including iPhone, iPad, iPod touch, Apple Watch, Mac, or AirPods and shortly this will be deployed to other "AirTags" for your keys and wallets. The location tracking feature essentially turns every mobile device into a broadcast beacon.

New research shows that the design allows Apple correlate different owners' locations and build a "social graph" of their users.



Twitter Spaces

Twitter Spaces, the audio chat rooms that Twitter hope will compete with Clubhouse is set to launch in April. Most users who update their app will receive an "Introducing Spaces" advert.

The company has only allowed a select few to create a new Space right now. It will be interesting to see what the data protection team have to say about this.

Mazafaka the Cybercrime Forum Hacked

In the 4th case of its kind this year, Mazafaka, a prominent underground #cybercrime forum was hacked this week. There is a degree of satisfaction within the cyber community when this happens. Hackers getting hacked shows nobody is invincible. You can read more here:

<https://thehackernews.com/2021/03/mazafaka-elite-hacking-and-cybercrime.html>

F5 Warning of Vulnerabilities in its Big-IP network security

The security and automation vendor F5 is warning that it has found 7 critical and 14 other vulnerabilities in its Big-IP network security and traffic-grooming products. These bugs were considered to be serious enough for America's Cyberspace and Infrastructure Agency (CISA) to issue issued an advisory.

Another Microsoft Patch Tuesday

Exchange servers experienced unprecedented and indiscriminate attacks at the end of February from multiple threat groups. All looking for plant backdoors on corporate networks. As a result Microsoft release out-of-band fixes a week earlier than planned. But the ramping up of attacks after the release on March 2 has led the company to issue another Patch Tuesday update for older and unsupported system which are vulnerable to ProxyLogon attacks - 89 security flaws are included in the patch.

Leads Work Ltd fined £250,000 for Marketing Texts

The ICO has issued another PECR fine to Leads Work Ltd. The Fine, £250,000 was for failure to have correct consent for marketing activities. The company sent 2,670,140 marketing text messages to individuals without consent (10,000 complained).

LWL also used data from a 3rd party who had invalid consents to send direct marketing texts. What we can learn from this is that if we rely on data from 3rd parties we have to make sure that they have the subject's consent to share, and that you have proof of how and where you sourced this data. This fine could have all been easily been avoided. You can read the details here:

<https://ico.org.uk/action-weve-taken/enforcement/leads-work-limited-mpn/>



Blogs of the Week

The Smart Bear

One of the shortlisted nominations for Digital Company of the Year is the Smart Bear team. Their blog this week talks about the new Google Core Web Vitals algorithm and how speed will affect your website going forward. Did you know Google plan to change the way they rank websites, based on speed, in May this year. Apparently they plan to rank the sites at the top that users love the most. Of course they have made it super difficult to understand. This is a great translation of “Google Speak” that the rest of us can understand: <https://www.thesmartbear.co.uk/google-algorithm-update-may-2021-and-speed/>

Informed Solutions - Moving Towards Safe Autonomous System

The Informed Solutions team are also shortlisted in the Digital Company of the Year. Their blog this week discusses why we should not to rush when introducing systems that include autonomy, artificial intelligence (AI) or machine learning (ML). While the benefits are clear (quicker diagnosis of illness and disease, contactless delivery from a self-driving pod etc.) it is really important to keep safety at the front of your mind when developing the system. If you’re developing, buying, or regulating autonomous technologies you need assurance of the system’s safety. Get it right and the benefits will include quicker processing of data, smarter case management and improved efficiency. You can access the blog here: <https://www.informed.com/uk/blog/2021/february-2021/communications-confidence-and-trust-moving-towards-safe-autonomous-systems/>

Altrincham HQ - Are You Demoting Your Friends Social Media Posts?

Alex McCann and Altrincham HQ are shortlisted in no less than 3 categories this year. This blog of his is an old one but it will resonate with many. It helps to tell us how social media works and how to stop friends and family demoting your business posts. It’s not intentional but the dreaded social media algorithms. Every social media platform uses them. So if businesses posts aren’t shown to everyone the business owner has pay to get there. So the more you interact with a person, the more you will see that persons posts in your feed “each like, comment and share as a tick which counts towards a scoring system of what you will see”. So to help your friends and at the very least like their business page posts and if you can, share, comment or retweet. Well worth a read: <https://altrinchamhq.co.uk/are-you-demoting-your-friends-social-media-posts/>

