

Privacy controversy has become PR nightmare

How upset are you by caller ID? Do you think the federal government should force the phone companies to get rid of the feature? Recall the caller ID boxes? Are you e-mailing petitions to Congress? Boycotting the phone?

How about the fact that the telephone directory lists your name and number? Gasps! Are you outraged?

Silly, huh? That's what this growing controversy over Intel's new Pentium III chip and an obscure bug found last week in Microsoft's Windows 98 is like.

Privacy and consumer watchdog groups are having hissy fits over the fact that Intel, in what I think is a laudable effort to insure security for online transactions and to aid large corporations in keeping track of their computers, included a unique Personal Serial Number (PSN) on each of the new Pentium III chips it is selling.

Intel has been flabbergasted by the flap. They honestly expected people would approve of the feature. Indeed, survey after survey shows that one of

the biggest drawbacks to e-commerce is a public perception that such transactions are not secure.

The new chip, with its unique serial number, would insure that the computer placing an e-commerce order is indeed owned by the person making the order. Now granted, there are some problems with that.

Suppose you order on a machine at work, or at a friend's house. It would be a major hassle explaining why the registered owner of that machine's chip is different than the person placing the order.

What a mess

But the Pentium III controversy has turned into a public relations disaster. From the ACLU to the Center for Technology and Democracy to the National Consumers League, consumer organizations are pressing the U.S.

Federal Trade Commission to investigate the issue and order Intel to remove the chip from the market.

"At its core, the Pentium III PSN establishes a system that supports the widespread tracking and monitoring of individuals' online behavior," says Jerry Berman, Executive Director at the Center for Democracy and Technology. "It stands to undermine consumers' efforts to control the use of their information. Our experience warns that without real consumer control and policies limiting their use, unique identifiers threaten privacy."

As originally set up by Intel, the PSN was always "on." That's the equivalent of the telephone company publishing everyone's name and phone number, of not allowing unlisted telephone numbers in the phone book. And I agree with the privacy watchdogs. That was NOT a good idea.

But as the flap developed, Intel came up with a way to disable the PSN, or, to use my telephone book analogy, for a customer to be "unlisted."

It's the same with Caller ID.

Most of us know that if you don't want your phone number to be displayed to someone who has the Caller ID feature, you simply punch in a code, "67."

When you buy a Pentium III, you get printed instructions on how to disable the PSN feature by downloading a simple fix from the Net.

Privacy advocates wait that some people won't know how to do that. I suppose some people don't know how to punch in the Caller ID disabling code, either. But if people are that upset about the potential for privacy violations, they shouldn't use the phone or buy a computer. Or they should learn how to disable the features.

Getting the bugs out

The bug found last week in Microsoft's Windows 98 is even more obscure. Under certain conditions, it is possible for a hacker to detect a Microsoft customer ID number assigned when a person registers a copy of Windows 98.

So? The number is just that. A number, with no name attached.

And the way under which a hacker could potentially detect it is so convoluted that it's hard to imagine this ever being a real problem. Still, Microsoft says it will post software "patches" on its Web site (www.microsoft.com) to disable the feature that attaches the registration number to customer documents.

Should you be concerned about all this? Should you stay off the Net? Sell your computer? Only if you think Caller ID and the telephone book invade your privacy.

Meantime, here are some Web sites you can check out to investigate the controversy yourself.

■ The Center for Democracy and Technology (www.cdt.org) - This watchdog group is leading the fight against the Pentium III chip. Their site explains their position and concerns and, if you agree, gives you some suggestions on how to voice your concerns, too.

■ The Electronic Privacy Information Center (http://epic.org) - An excellent site with detailed discussions on all sorts of privacy issues related to computers and the Internet.

■ CNET New.com (www.

news.com) - This computing news site has a roundup of numerous stories on the controversy over the Pentium III and the latest on the Microsoft security bug.

■ Intel (www.intel.com) - Incidentally, Intel's public site has not a word... nothing... on this controversy. This shows how dense big corporations can be and how, when criticized, they still tend to hunker down and pretend the controversy will go away. Missing a great opportunity to defend their Pentium III and counter the critics, Intel's PR bungling on this is evident by the lack of material on their Web site. No wonder they're getting so much heat from their critics. They're doing nothing to try to douse the flames.

Mike Wendland covers technology and the Internet for NBC Television stations coast-to-coast and is heard talking about computers every Saturday and Sunday from 4-6 p.m. on AM1270, WKTT in Detroit. He is the author of six books on the Internet and can be reached through his Web site, at www.pcmike.com.

BUSINESS MARKETPLACE

Items for Business Marketplaces are welcome from all companies and residents active in the Observer-area business community. Items should be typed or legibly written and sent to: Business Marketplace, c/o The Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, e-mail: kmortson@homecomm.net or faxed to (734) 591-7279.

Froudenberg recognized

After meeting or exceeding stringent Ford guidelines in service, quality, delivery and technical support, Froudenberg-

NOK of Plymouth has recently received Full Service Supplier recognition from Ford Motor Co. for its vibration dampers, engine seals and gaskets, and transmission seals and gaskets.

New construction

Dana Corporation of Ohio has announced plans to build a 108,000-square-foot Automotive Customer Support Center in Farmington Hills. Construction is expected to be completed by September, 1999. The eight-acre site is located between Twelve Mile Road and I-696. The new facility will be organized around customer automotive platforms,

with sales, engineering, and technical support and development capabilities targeted at problem-solving of issues related to noise vibration and harshness (NVH), ride, and engine performance.

Innovative product

Compumark Corp. of Farmington Hills announced XPE-DITER/Code Coverage, a new system-wide test analysis product that helps organizations confidently deploy mainframe-based applications. XPE-DITER/Code Coverage helps improve application quality through a unique risk management capability that helps identify potential applica-

tion failure points prior to production.

Racing venture

Johnson Controls of Plymouth, under its HomeLink® product brand - will be the primary sponsor for Lansing-based Rocketports Racing during the 1999 BFGoodrich Tires Trans-Am Series season. The 1999 season marks Johnson Controls' second season with Rocketports Racing in the Trans-Am competition.

Office acquisition

Fabnestock & Co. Inc. announced that they reached an

agreement in principle to acquire six additional brokerage offices and personnel in the state of Michigan. The offices, located in Plymouth, Adrian, Birmingham, Grosse Pointe Farms, Port Huron and Trenton, will become part of the First of Michigan Division of Fabnestock. The offices and staff are part of Fifth Third/The Ohio Company.

Partnership

The Michigan Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation has entered into a partnership with the Simons Michelson Zieve Advertising (SMZ), in which the agency will donate its ser-

vices to the foundation. SMZ will help the foundation achieve its goals by assisting with its advertising and marketing efforts.

Acquisition

A&W Restaurants Inc. (A&W) of Farmington Hills, its equity partner, Grotech Capital, and Long John Silver's Restaurants, Inc. (LJS) announced a definitive agreement under which A&W and Grotech Capital will acquire LJS upon the consummation of a Plan of Reorganization for LJS in its Chapter 11 case.

WINTER SPECIALS



Save Hundreds, Thousands of \$\$\$...
With a Telcom Credit Union Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC) Loan.

Here's an example of how you could save \$494 a month and \$5928 a year by refinancing other debt with a Telcom HELOC.

	BEFORE		AFTER	
	Balance	Monthly Payment	Balance	Monthly Payment
Visa/Mastercard	\$7500	\$225	0	0
Store Credit Cards	\$4500	\$135	0	0
Car Loan	\$13,000	\$437	0	0
Telcom HELOC			\$25,000	\$303*
TOTAL	\$25,000	\$797	\$25,000	\$303

Our HELOC program features no fees, no points, and absolutely no closing costs. The current interest rate is a low 7.75% annual percentage rate (APR).

We also have other home equity programs that allow you to borrow over 100% of your home's value, as well as a full range of first mortgages. Call a Telcom Real Estate Loan Specialist at 248-569-1700, ext. 231 or 289.

*Actual HELOC payment may vary depending on interest rate fluctuations. Loans over 80% LTV may require PMI premium.

Telcom Credit Union

21100 Northwestern Hwy. 44300 Warren Road
Southfield, MI 48075 Canton, MI 48187
(248) 569-1700 (734) 453-4212

www.telcomcu.com



WINTER SPECIALS

The best moments last longer if you share them with someone.

olsen
COLLECTION

Trunk Show

One Day Only!
Saturday, March 20th 11am to 4pm
Preview this innovative collection of European fashions!

REDWOOD & ROSS • 241 Merrill Street • 248.661.7320