

Their numbers are growing every year, but those who choose to work from home run the risk of getting caught with their pants down in more ways than one. **Jon Packman** twitches the curtains of home business security.

# HOMELAND security

security series part 3

**t**he Office of National Statistics says 3.1m of us worked from home in 2005, but this only refers to those who work 'mainly' in their own home. It doesn't include occasional home workers or, for some strange reason, anyone who opts to sit in a converted shed rather than in the house.

Suffice to say there are a lot of people who can now get their job done wearing a dressing gown. Of course, it's all been driven by technology and in particular, the internet. Unfortunately, while embracing this new business environment for the best part of a decade we've found that the benefits are accompanied some pretty unsavoury security threats.

Whatever their size, all enterprises acquire and generate information in the form of paper records, electronic media or intellectual property that is vital to their operation and growth. Customer lists, marketing plans and financial details are just some of the information types that could be of interest to others and even stolen to order. The DTI's *Security Breaches Survey 2006* singles out small businesses as not doing enough to assess the risks and prepare themselves against potential disaster.



→ It's always worth reminding clients of the risks of not shredding at a high enough security level



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One of the main reasons for home workers falling behind in addressing security issues is a gap between their perception and the reality of the threats. Many are also ignorant of their legal responsibilities. “Every company in the country has a legal duty to protect private information about their customers,” explains Abby Wilson, UK branch manager at shredder manufacturer, Martin Yale International.

“There are an abundance of fraudsters just waiting to get their hands on private data relating to customers’ names, addresses, bank or credit card details and account numbers. All of these surfeits of information can easily be pieced together by a criminal in order to assume an individual’s, or even a company’s identity.

It’s always worth reminding clients of the risks of not shredding at a high enough security level, and about the advantages of using cross-cut machines. Wilson also warns against the dangers of off-site shredding services: “How do you know your top secret data isn’t just being taken away to be dumped, or worse sold to data security fraudsters for a profit?”

Where shredders and other devices are concerned, working from home presents an extra set of considerations when it comes to a purchase. Usage may be occasional or light, but size, design and safety features will be key priorities. Child locks or proximity sensors on a shredder could be vital in a family house, for example.

One of the simplest but most effective means of protecting information is to use physical controls, and with the home office market it’s worth bearing in mind the influence of personal taste on buying decisions. Combining security with style is important to those who are prepared to pay for quality safes and filing cabinets. Many companies will subsidise the cost of furniture and provide grants to employees who choose to work from home, so a skilful sales pitch to larger organisations to offer packages to their remote workers could prove incredibly beneficial.

## → HSM HAS SHREDDING ALL WRAPPED UP

HSM is the dealer’s choice for quality shredders with its comprehensive range of industrial precision shredders and balers, office shredders, professional shredders and, of course, personal shredders giving dealers unbeatable choice and support from a single supplier.

The Shredstar, the HSM personal shredder range, offers dealers four trendy machines elegantly styled at entry level prices making them ideal for the home and office. Each shredder has its own special features but the star of the Shredstar by HSM range is the versatile multi-tasking and very cute MultiShred that sits comfortably on your desktop.

The MultiShred offers dealers several unique selling points – not only its compact size, but its ability to shred CDs, floppy disks, credit cards and of course paper; shredding up to eight sheets at a time. The MultiShred is at last something truly different in shredding for dealer’s sales people to go and sell to customers. This little machine is also currently included free in a promotion on HSM Models 125.2 and above.

Unique among UK shredder suppliers, HSM offer unrivalled engineering prowess designed into their whole range. HSM shredders combat identity fraud but also offer larger end users the ability to reduce the amount of waste going into landfill and HSM can also advise on how this waste can be sold to offset the cost of waste management.

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As well as the aesthetic pleasure of a stylish veneer, added value can be found in the fact that secure storage for company assets can also be used for personal valuables. And apart from the obvious physical protection, a safe can give factual information on insurance ratings for items such as jewellery. As with shredders, there's a growing need for safes to accommodate a range of digital media. However, because modern data storage is primarily made from plastic materials, the ability of CDs and USB drives to withstand high temperatures is severely limited. Traditional secure storage may therefore not be adequate to prevent destruction in the event of a blaze.

"Standard fire safes will not protect valuable computer data," says Jane Quinn, general manager at Safe International. "Plastic media has a melting point of approximately 52°C, so a data fire safe is essential to protect precious records held on CDs etc." She adds that 80% of companies experiencing a fire are interrupted from returning to business due to lost information.

Security breaches can be devastating, even with insurance. For people working from home, and especially for those who run their own companies, protection is an extra responsibility that's often overlooked. But it's home businesses that are at the greatest risk from losing their assets through physical theft, computer skulduggery, or unexpected disaster. Commonly this is down to a lack of resources, awareness and technical skills. Chris Hinds, head of marketing at Brother UK, advises dealers to make it easier for these customers to address the risks by gaining an understanding of their current concerns and strategy. From here you can identify weak points and suggest improvements.

"Ensure that you have a thorough knowledge of the security benefits of a certain product and then make it simple for the customer," he says. "Show them something they haven't seen before or weren't aware of. Most end users are entirely uninformed of the security risks involved in printing, for example. By bringing new risks to their attention, you'll add value and demonstrate an impressive level of expertise." ●

# Security in style

"We've all heard about the dangers of throwing our bank statements, or utility bills into the bin at home," comments Jill Organ for Rexel Shredders, "but when working from home or home office, are we comfortable with disposing of confidential or sensitive work related materials?"

"At Rexel we understand that people don't want bulky and noisy shredders in their homes and that is why we have created two shredder ranges designed specifically for use in a home office."

"The Whisper shredder range has been designed specifically to make less noise when shredding than traditional shredders. Both the V30 and the V35 are up to 50 per cent quieter than other machines making it possible to dispose of information safely and efficiently at any time."

"The Style and Style+ shredders are the perfect accessory to complement the smartest home office to help people protect themselves against opportunistic identity thieves. With their modern black and white aesthetics, the shredders are capable of shredding credit cards and up to seven sheets of paper at a time and feature pull out bins for easy emptying. The shredders are even more compact than the original ProStyle range and their secure confetti cut mechanism minimises emptying and increases security." **USP-1123**

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [WWW.REXELSHREDDERS.COM](http://WWW.REXELSHREDDERS.COM)

