

LET'S TALK

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A woman with long dark hair and blue eyes is looking directly at the camera. She is holding a small, realistic-looking globe of the Earth in her hands, which is positioned in the lower center of the frame. The globe shows the Americas and parts of Europe and Africa. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

SHRINK THE GLOBE

With Remote Forensics

A DAY IN THE LIFE

...of a software developer

NEWS AND VIEWS

Analysis of latest cyber-crime

COMMENT

Managing Director
ANDREW SHELDON
gives his personal
opinion on the latest
developments in the
world of cyber crime



Remote control

THE comedy actor and writer Chris Langham is today languishing behind bars as he ponders his fate for downloading child abuse images from the internet.

His defence — that he was 'researching' a character for a new television series — was fundamentally flawed.

The fact is, possession of child abuse images is an absolute offence. If you deliberately download such material — whatever your motives — you are guilty.

As rock star Pete Townshend of The Who found to his cost, claiming to have been abused as a child is a flimsy argument.

Unfortunately, it's one I come across all too often when I am examining computers for the police — "I'm not a paedophile," the suspects claim. "I was just curious."

Don't get me wrong. I am sure there are victims of child abuse who genuinely believe what they are looking at is 'normal' from their harrowing perspective — and there will always be porn fans who 'push the boundaries' out of curiosity.

But it is an incredibly dangerous game to play.

Think of the consequences: Your name is splashed all over the papers; you lose your job; the wife leaves; the kids are bullied at school; oh, and you aren't allowed to see them again unless another responsible adult is present.

The fact is, most downloaders of such material think what they do is anonymous. What many don't realise is that EVERYTHING they do on a computer is traceable.

Every website they visit, every picture they click on, is recorded on their hard drive and various internet servers. It's an indelible 'digital footprint' that can be traced back to their home phone.

Some people think it's all a fuss about nothing. So what, if some sad old comic looks at 'dirty pictures', it's not doing any harm, they say.

But to me, images of child abuse are no laughing matter.

IT'S 6am on a late winter morning and Liam Bateman, senior forensic analyst at Evidence Talks, and colleague Dick Peake, are boarding an ageing Tupolev aircraft en route to an obscure former Russian state.

Their mission is to image 40 computers as part of a top secret investigation for an international client.

But by the time the pair touch down at Heathrow in a more conventional aircraft two weeks later, they will each have personally accounted for almost 500kg of carbon emissions being dumped into the atmosphere.

And that's without taking into account the weight of the huge amount of specialist equipment they took — which racked up a £1,200 excess baggage charge alone.

That's how it used to be done in the bad old days...before Remote Forensics.

Now, Liam and Dick can do the job from the comfort of their laboratory — or anywhere else there is an internet or 3G connection.

The clients get their results within hours — not days — and the planet benefits by the reduction of another two people's 'carbon footprints'.

It's a compelling solution to an ever-increasing problem for businesses and organisations with multi-geographical risk sites spread around the globe.

Remote Forensics takes advantage of a unique piece of software invented by Evidence Talks.

FIMS (Forensic Incident Management Service) is a fully-secure, web-based, case management system developed here in the UK.

All clients need to do is place a custom hardware 'POD' in their risk locations. At the first sign of an incident, a local technical support person in, say, Sydney, alerts their incident manager in London, who enters the details into FIMS.

Guided by specific forms generated by the software, the technician in Australia then removes the suspect media — hard drive, DVD, memory stick etc — and places it in the write-protected bay of the POD.

The incident manager can now contact his favoured forensic specialist and grant them secure access to the POD via a dynamically-created VPN over the internet. They can then image and analyse the media in real-time, and without any confidential data passing over the internet.

Because of the unique architecture of the system,

nothing is installed on the examiner's machine — all their existing favourite forensic tools are installed on the POD.

Remote Forensics has already caused a stir among senior police and intelligence agency staff when Evidence Talks managing director Andrew Sheldon demonstrated it using a mobile phone, in what was widely reported as a 'world first'.

TECHNICAL BRIEFING

● Evidence Talks is holding a free technical briefing on Remote Forensics on September 26.

The half-day event in Milton Keynes will include a live demonstration, a buffet lunch and a chance to network over champagne at the end.

To book your free place, please call Evidence Talks on 0845 125 4400.

How you can respond faster, save time and money, AND reduce your **carbon footprint** with new solution

Net 'playground for criminals'

THE internet has become lawless and a "playground for criminals".

That's the verdict of a House of Lords committee which has called on the Government to do more to protect web users.

Criticising the "wild west" approach to policing the internet, the Science and Technology Select Committee said it was wrong to expect individual users to take responsibility for their own security.

Chairman, Lord Broers, said: "People will always be outfoxed by the bad guys. Where a decade ago the perception of the e-criminal was a lonely hacker, today they belong to organised crime groups, are highly skillful and focused on profit.

"We feel many of the organisations profiting from internet services now need to take their share of the responsibility."

Concern over health records

A LEADING doctor has expressed concern over plans to allow personal health care records to be accessed over the internet.

The Government is pushing ahead with the creation of a national database that will let patients book appointments and check information on the web.

But Dr Claudia Pagliari, of Edinburgh University, said challenges still exist over security, and some patients may not wish sensitive information, such as mental and sexual health data, to be recorded centrally.

Dr Gillian Braunold, who is overseeing the introduction of the new IT system, said: "We have made every effort to ensure the service is protected by the highest levels of international security."

Wiki watchers

CAREFUL what you edit on Wikipedia...

A new online tool claims to be able to reveal the identity of organisations altering the 'people's encyclopaedia'.

Wikipedia Scanner alleges that the CIA made changes to the page on Iran's president.

But the software's author, Virgil Griffith, admitted it could not identify individual authors.

Forensics nail Bea teacher

FORENSIC analysis helped police snare one of Princess Beatrice's favourite teachers during a paedophile investigation.

A probe of Richard Findley's computer revealed he had typed phrases such as 'little girl pics' and 'pre-teen pics' into an internet search engine.

More than 150 indecent images of children were also found on his hard drive.

Findley, head of history at St George's School in Ascot, pleaded guilty to grooming a girl of 12 in a chatroom. He was actually communicating with an undercover police officer.

Findley faces up to 14 years in jail when he appears for sentencing at Southwark Crown Court on October 5.

Russian wins copyright case

A RUSSIAN man who was selling music downloads for as little as 5p per track has been cleared of copyright offences.

Denis Kvasos, former owner of Allofmp3.com, successfully argued his site was operating within the local law.

Music giants EMI, Warner and Universal claimed the site was attracting millions of customers before it was shut in June.

The head of Russia's anti-piracy organisation, Konstantin Zemchenkov, said the court's verdict set a "very bad precedent".

Supermarkets in email probe

ONE of the biggest forensic computing tasks ever undertaken will be carried out by the Competition Commission during their investigation into the dominance of supermarkets.

Asda and Tesco have been ordered to hand over millions of emails amid concerns that farmers and suppliers have been bullied into reducing their prices.

A DAY IN THE LIFE... Software Developer

Name: Floris Petrus Coetzee (aka FP)

Age: 33

Status: Married to Madeleine (with an announcement due).

Job title
Development Manager

Describe your day
Have a strong cup of GOOD coffee. Check emails – including automated messages from our systems. I then start with the highest priority task – writing code, installing and configuring a system, writing documentation or whatever needs to be done.

What are you working on at the moment?

Setting up a virtualised Remote Forensics system for security testing.

What's the best thing about your job?

Working with interesting technology, the variety in the projects, the people...and the coffee.

And the worst?

Writing documents.

What's the most unusual project you have worked on at ET?

Nothing I am allowed to talk about!

What did you do before you joined?

My first job was a systems programmer in a stainless steel plant in South Africa – I had to wear a hard hat and fire retardant clothing! Then I worked at a TV company which produced Neighbours and Baywatch.

Any other careers?

Nope! Programmed since my dad bought a Commodore 64 in the 80s.

What's your ambition?

To see Remote Forensics a success.

How do you relax outside work?

Tinkering with computer software – which includes playing Playstation 3 and PC games. I also enjoy reading, watching movies and playing board games.

What's your favourite meal?

A nice barbecue (braai). It has to be steak though!

Favourite drink?

Coffee (did you need to ask!).

Best night out?

A movie and a meal!

Who do you support?

Arsenal – I'm trying to get in to English football!

Favourite movie/TV/book/band?

The Big Lebowski/My Name is Earl/The Princess Bride by William Goldman/Snow Patrol

Best holiday?

We try to visit our parents in South Africa each year.

Best holiday experience?

Catalonia, Spain.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Slightly bigger house with a slightly bigger family!