

## SME's run risks on privacy

By Mark Fenton-Jones. The Australian Financial Review.

Just like businesses from the big end of town, smaller operators also need to take steps not to fall foul of the Privacy Act.

A glance at the complaint case notes, summaries and determinations on the Office of Privacy Commissioner's website shows a liberal sprinkling of small to medium-sized businesses among those that have faced complaints.

Although they were not identified, the reasons behind the complaints are cause for concern.

Along with improper disclosure of information by telecommunications companies, retailers and accountants, failure to take reasonable steps to protect personal information from misuse and unauthorised access, modification or disclosure figure prominently in the commissioner's list.

Lacking the costly and high-tech means employed by big businesses to protect their data, small businesses can be especially vulnerable because owners and managers often take home information that larger businesses require to be left on site.

For example, a manager takes home payroll data to work on overnight, but while away from his computer, his children playing on the same PC accidentally delete the data. Or worse, the data is lost between home and the office and found by a third party, opening the business to penalties under privacy laws or litigation by an angry client whose details were disclosed.

Technology is available to provide protection and can be relatively inexpensive.

Covetek Australasia is the local distributor of biometric fingerprint security access products of Taiwan-based Aimgene Technology and BioEnter International in Korea. Those products promoted to SMEs include the FP71C fingerprint flash disk and a fingerprint hard drive enclosure for IT security.

The USB fingerprint flash disk, like the commonly used memory stick, has storage capacity from one to four gigabytes, and costs between \$97 and \$180 depending on capacity. However marketing director Kevin Mackay said prices were under review and an 8Gb disk had just been released.

The disk uses fingerprints and an encryption engine to protect data. Using a slide sensor to register and verify fingerprints, it can operate with any computer running Windows 2000/XP/Vista. The disk engages a screen lock on a user's PC or laptop preventing it being used without an authorised fingerprint verification. It can also encrypt and lock selected files within the computer and encrypts all data that is stored in the flash disk so data is portable, secured by fingerprint and encryption.

Also using fingerprint authentication is the EC258 external USB hard disk enclosure priced at \$176, which enables small businesses to protect hard drives used to regularly back up computer records and store them offsite.

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