

Chambers of Commerce Securing the Way for E - Business

Results published in the DTI Information Security Breaches Survey 2004, identified that 74% of all UK businesses had experienced a security incident in the last year. As technology continues to advance and virtual borders diminish, British businesses are being encouraged to adopt robust security measures. To support the Government's initiative to make the UK the safest place for e-commerce, the British Chambers of Commerce has launched a number of electronic trust services designed to empower businesses against increased exposure to e-security breaches.

A lack of trust and security, combined with cost and knowledge impediments, have been identified as major barriers to the adoption, growth and wide spread deployment of e-commerce. As a result, many British businesses are missing out on the huge time and cost savings associated with e-enabling their business processes. Trading online can deliver an exponential increase in a business's marketplace overnight, whilst moving from paper-based to electronic processes can revolutionise efficiency levels.

On the other hand, businesses that are embracing ecommerce without initial investigation and investment into effective and efficient security solutions are putting themselves at grave risk. A carelessly mistyped email address could for instance result in confidential information reaching an audience it was not intended for and malicious attacks such as identity theft, fraud, spoofing and unauthorised access to systems can have serious implications for a company's credibility.

To support the government's initiatives to put the UK at the forefront of e-commerce, BCC signed a collaboration agreement in 1999 with ten national associations across Europe, to create the first pan-European network for securing b2b transactions across the Internet.

As a trusted partner to UK business and with a proven track record in the market, the BCC has developed its portfolio to provide a range of cost effective identity management and authentication services, underpinned by premium certification technology. Based on a PKI infrastructure, X.509 certification and operating to internationally recognised BS7799 information security standards, the BCC offers businesses a robust, reliable and trustworthy framework for securing electronic communications and transactions.

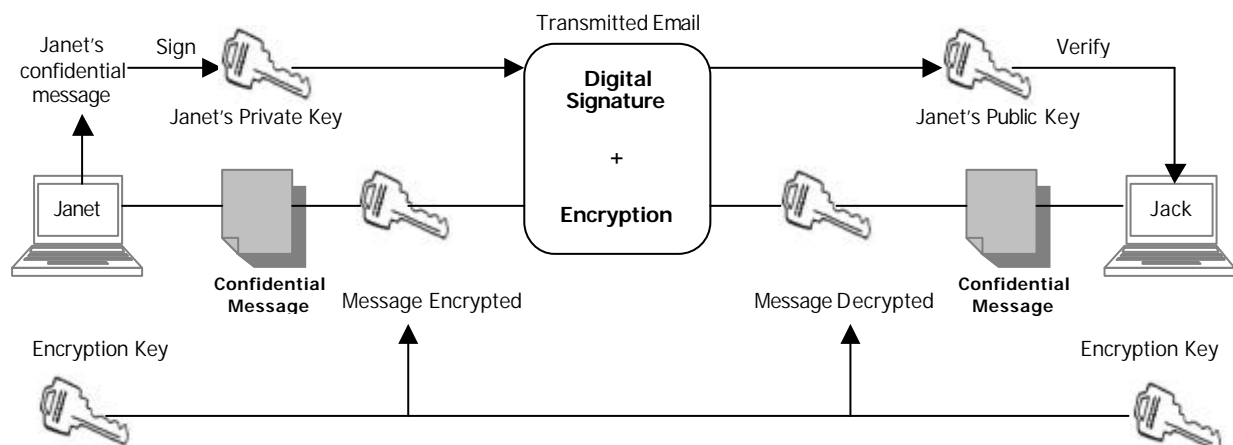
Developed with a specific focus on usability, the solutions are easy to use and can be integrated to help streamline various e-business processes.

"One of the key steps in addressing security breaches is strong identity management, a key issue raised in the DTI's Breaches Survey. The use of electronic signatures is one way to help mitigate risks in this area. To that end, the DTI is working closely to help businesses implement electronic signatures."

Stephen Timms
e-Commerce Minister
Department of Trade and Industry
Government IT Magazine, June 2004

With a combination of a digital signature and strong encryption, digital certificates provide a flexible solution to information security breaches, facilitating the development of e-commerce for any business.

So how does it work? As well as providing a credential for your personal identity, certificates can be used to encrypt emails and documents so that only the intended recipient can read them. The illustration below shows how this works, by means of a "public" key which is sent out to a user's correspondent so that they can use it to encrypt emails coming back to the user, and a "private" key which remains with the user for them to decrypt the mails.



Cranfield Aerospace choose ChamberCard to secure its online transactions with the MoD

In partnership with Cap Gemini, the ChamberCard digital certificate service secures web access to DECS, the Ministry of Defence's single electronic trading platform, supporting the MoD's vision of delivering a secure electronic interface between the MoD and its trading community. The smart card based solution, delivered under contract to Cap Gemini, is managed by a secure authentication process delivered by the Chambers of Commerce, a network that has been trusted by business for centuries. This ensures that the identity of each applicant has been verified to a high level of authentication requirements and involves a rigorous face-to-face registration process – giving the MoD and its trading partners unequivocal proof that the people they are dealing with are who they say they are.

With a combination of a digital certificate on a smart card and a pin, the ChamberCard service provides all of the functions required for a trustworthy online relationship, including user authentication, non-repudiation of transactions and confidentiality of data transfer.

Cranfield Aerospace specialises in hi-tech aerospace engineering, providing innovative solutions to the Ministry of Defence. Having chosen ChamberCard as the secure means to connect to DECS and thus transact with the MoD, Cranfield Aerospace has been able to reap the benefits which electronic trade has to offer.

By choosing to access the portal via the web, Cranfield Aerospace has been able to leverage the low cost and widespread availability of the Internet with a solution that was easily integrated into their existing ICT infrastructure. This is because the technology requirements for ChamberCard are minimal and consist of Internet access, a web browser and a smartcard reader.

In terms of usability, Denis Batt, Commercial Manager for Cranfield Aerospace states "ChamberCard was very simple to install and is very straightforward to use".

Other benefits of moving from the old paper based system to the electronic system include less paperwork and administration as well as quicker payment, saving both time and resource. In addition, electronic trade has also helped to establish a closer relationship with the MoD and can provide a sustainable competitive advantage.

Currently DECS offers four main services including an e-procurement system where suppliers can bid for business online and a collaborative environment facility to enhance collective working between the MoD and its commercial partners on various initiatives and projects. To learn more about DECS, visit www.d2btrade.com

"We've found the major benefits to be the simplicity of the electronic system and speed of payment. The whole purchase to payment process can now be completed by one individual, saving both time and resource."

Denis Batt
Commercial Manager
Cranfield Aerospace

In the longer term, the managed service provided by the BCC relieves the MoD of the management overhead of running a PKI system supporting thousands of trading partners. The managed service includes customer support, registration, logon validation, the renewal of certificates and regular audits to ensure that the technology and robustness of the operation is never compromised.

It took just three months to implement the security solution and to integrate it with the other elements of the portal developed and supported by Cap Gemini. The solution was successfully piloted with a small number of suppliers in late 2002, with active recruitment beginning in early 2003. Almost two years into the project and the adoption of ChamberCard by trading partners to date is encouraging, with over 400 suppliers currently using ChamberCard as their means to access the purchasing portal. For more information about ChamberCard, visit www.chambercard.co.uk

Chamber SimplySign - A simple approach to information security

"There is no doubt that over time, people are going to rely less and less on passwords. People use the same password on different systems, they write them down and they just don't meet the challenge for anything you really want to secure".

Bill Gates

Recently launched Chamber SimplySign is a browser based digital certificate which has been designed with a specific focus on user requirements, for an easy to use, cost effective application with a high level of functionality.

SimplySign adheres to Government level two authentication requirements, and is approved for use on the Government gateway portal where businesses can transact securely with Government departments for services such as electronic VAT returns and farming subsidy claims.

Chamber SimplySign certificates can also be used to digitally sign e-mails, e-forms and other electronic documents, verifying the identity of the sender whilst providing the same legal protection as a physical signature. Based on a public key infrastructure, a high level of encryption ensures the integrity of the data sent and guarantees access to only the intended recipient.

At just £25.00 a certificate, SimplySign is proving to be a successful e-business tool, providing trustworthy online identities as well as privacy and integrity that user ID, pin or password can't compete with. Most importantly, you don't have to be a techie to be able to use the service as the only technology requirement is a PC and an Internet browser. For further information about Chamber SimplySign or to purchase a simplysign certificate, visit www.simplysign.co.uk