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Forward Thinking

MICHAEL J. MILLER

sniffer could read all sorts of mail headers.

I understand the concern, and I do worry about privacy, but I understand the need to be able to protect people from malevolent deeds. At least there are restrictions on the use of Carnivore, which are basically the same as those for telephone wiretaps. More restrictions may well be needed, but the real problem isn't Carnivore by itself but the availability of other tools that would allow similar sniffing of confidential e-mail by people who don't care about legal restrictions.

For those who are worried about privacy, there are already a number of secure e-mail programs (like those we reviewed in our issue of September 1, 1999) or services (reveiwed June 27, 2000). But most people don't use these, either because they already have e-mail products they are happy with or because they find these too complex.

That's why I was impressed with the concept behind SigabaSecure (*www.sigaba.com*), which plugs into your system and existing mail services. In this scheme, you get a plug-in for most existing mail clients, which encrypts your message using a unique one-time key. Your usual mail pro-

gram sends the message itself, but the recipient must download the client as well. Then the key is sent to the client, and the message can be unencrypted— all pretty invisibly.

It's a good concept but limited by the fact that not all the clients and platforms you might want are available yet. And though I haven't tested the security, the idea seems great. It's an easy way of making any mail message secure, without disrupting your existing mail in any way. I'm sure others are working on similar things.

That leads to this question: If technology can make any private message secure, what is the benefit of the government spying on nonsecure e-mail? The short-term answer is that the government knows that most people won't bother to send secure mail, simply because it's an extra step.

If you have confidential mail, however, particularly something sensitive to your business, maybe you should not be so complacent. It may add another step, but you may find that being safe is better than being simple.

ARE YOU A TRAILBLAZER?

IN TODAY'S economy, the company that uses the most technology doesn't always come out ahead. But the company that uses technology best usually gets a great return on the technology investment and is well positioned to succeed.

A keen understanding of technology, a sense of how that technology will fit in with the mission of the company, and the expertise to deploy and implement technology well are the attributes of the best technology users. Companies that have these attributes set the technology and business paths that others follow.

We'll recognize the most innovative uses of technology in business and announce winners in our April issues.

Are you such a trailblazer? Is your company uniquely using technology to change the way it works? If so, we want to know. We've partnered with *Ziff Davis Smart Business for the New Economy* for the first Trailblazer awards, in which we will recognize the most innovative uses of technology in business. We'll announce these awards in our April issues.

To nominate your company or another you have worked with, please go to *www.pcmag.com /trailblazers* and fill out the entry form. Or perhaps you've had the opposite experience and want to nominate a tech horror story. Either way, we hope to see your entry there.

GADGET OF THE MONTH

NOMAD JUKEBOX
The Creative Labs Nomad Jukebox can hold up to 100 hours of music.

THE COOLEST product I've used in the last few weeks has to be the Creative Labs Nomad Jukebox ($500 street). This looks and weighs about the same as a portable CD player, but it holds more music—a lot more. The Nomad Jukebox has a 6GB hard drive which can hold about 100 hours of music. And the player seems well designed, with things such as a shock-protection buffer so the music doesn't skip.

Effectively, it works just like a bigger version of the portable MP3 players that have become so popular. It comes with software that lets you convert your CDs into MP3 format and then move them onto the jukebox via a USB con-

nector. You can create playlists, of course, and once the music is on the jukebox, you can choose a specific track or playlist or sort it by genre, artist, or album. And the sound quality is wonderful, with lots of choices and special effects. You can even use the jukebox to record WAV files.

I have a few quibbles. While Creative Lab's software works well for transferring files, I'd like to have the option of using software jukeboxes such as MusicMatch Jukebox or RealJukebox to move the files and playlists to the device. I wish it came with a belt clip, which would make it easier for travel. And I wish the batteries lasted longer (4 hours on rechargeable batteries is okay but not great).

But in general, this is a fun and less bulky way of taking your music with you.

MORE ON THE WEB: *Editor-in-chief Michael J. Miller answers your computing questions every Tuesday, exclusively at PC Magazine Online,* **www.pcmag.com/miller.**