

Comments on the DRAFT 2004 Digital 21 Strategy

It is great to read from the consultation paper that the Government of the HKSAR recognized the importance of information technology (IT) to our economy, and is willing to sustain the momentum and continue to take the leadership in bringing the benefits of IT to our society. With respect to the eight main areas of action proposed in the draft, the following is my views and comments:

- a. As HK is having a strong tight with the Mainland China, we should consider to initiate and even support a central focal point which can help SME to be aware of the difference in technological standards and legal requirements between HK and China. This would facilitate the society as a whole. For example, when an organization is planning to start an e-business that would make use of commercial encryption in Mainland, it should be aware of, for example, the Encryption Regulations in China [see reference (1)].

In clause 35 of the draft, the “Mainland market” is targeted. To help the local industry ... build capability, the gap in IT requirements (in particular the regulatory requirements) between the Mainland and Hong Kong is worth addressing.

- b. Another concern is on the outsourcing strategy mentioned in clause 14 of the draft. Care must be taken to consider the security and privacy issues during the outsourcing of the computer center operation, in particular, when records related to the general public is involved in the exercise.

It is good to see in clause 21 that commitment to maintain a secure environment is emphasized and the security best practices will be shared with the community. However SME may not have the government equivalent resources to follow the government practice, for example, when dealing with the outsourcing arrangements. It would be a challenge to promote the awareness, research and commercial use of the security management practices to our society if we aim to be a leading digital city.

In addition, when incidents or disputes involving the IT systems arise, techniques in incident response and forensics analysis are needed. A general forensic framework and the necessary skill set suitable for the Hong Kong (and even Mainland) legislation should be developed and promoted to the IT community.

- c. Under the cost constraints that we are facing and expecting in the forthcoming years, the promotion and use of open source software (OSS) can be a low-cost solution. The openness of the China market to the Linux operating systems also prompts us to think of how we can make use of the various quality OSS available in the Internet. One reason why some enterprises still refuse to use OSS is the support issue. One way to promote the research and support of the OSS to our community is to establish a dedicated organization to study the source codes of various quality OSS, classify them, and promote them regularly to the business and the industry.
- d. Clause 27 mentioned the government’s commitment on the support for research and development. This is considered to be important and necessary. To facilitate the general public to utilize the research result, an open channel should be setup to ease the business and industry to access to these research results for commercialization. Feedback channel or forum should be established regularly as a link between the industry and the research organizations so that the general public can be aware of the research results, and it can also be a channel for the industry to communicate with the research organizations on what technology is being sought in the industry.

References:

- (1) http://www.chinaonline.com/commentary_analysis/internet/currentnews/secure/ecommerce-vb0322final2.pdf