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Dear [fname]

It has been a busy month researching and writing proposals to *Small Business Online* – a Commonwealth program designed to help small firms take full advantage of the online environment. One of these proposals was written in partnership with Wine Industry Tasmania – the peak industry body for wine makers.

A part of the program is to ensure that small business websites are optimised for search engines, so when a potential client searches for a product on Google the small business websites are up there on the first page of search results along with the big organisations.

When I tested this by searching Google for “vineyards in Tasmania”, “cellar doors in Tasmania” and “wineries in Tasmania” (as a tourist might) only three vineyards from the 67 members of the Wine Institute of Tasmania appeared on page one of the results for any of the three searches. The other 64 vineyards were, to all intents and purposes, invisible. This is a bit like paying \$5,000 for a smart advertising poster and using it to wallpaper your bedroom.

You might like to experiment by searching Google for the keywords that clients associate with your business and see where you appear in the results in relation to your competitors. NDA usually has a top three position for searches similar to “computer training in Tasmania”. Call me on 1300 765 736 if you would like to know more about search engine optimisation.

Meanwhile, thank you Emil for telling me that DPIW's firewall removed all the images from last month's article on customising Excel toolbars. If your firewall was similarly over-enthusiastic you can see the full content of last month's newsletter by clicking on <http://www.nda.com.au/newsletters/september09.pdf>.

Kind regards

Nigel Davies

Director, NDA

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iPhone part 2: the music

This month I have been exploring the world of digital music. For some time the sight of ear-budded ‘yoof’ walking the streets listening to MP3 players has been a source of secret amusement. Surely, I thought, music is for a more sympathetic environment where there is minimal chance of being wiped out by a passing bus while the ears are full of Britney.

However I now realise that listening to music through ear-buds* in public is just the visible tip of the MP3 iceberg. The hidden 90% is where the real benefits lie – and they are *portability, packaging, extending the listening repertoire* and access to the world of *Internet radio*. Let's examine each of these in turn.

Portability

For many years my music has resided on a large number of vinyl records, an even larger number of CDs and a few cassette tapes. The vinyl records are no longer played due to the demise of my turntable, the cassettes live in a cupboard somewhere and the CDs are predominantly played in the car. At this point they tend to be over-played due to an innate laziness over changing them.

The portability benefit of MP3 players is that the entire content of this distributed mess of music can

be digitised and stored on a PC. This music 'library' can then be synchronised with one or more MP3 players which may be docked with your stereo system, your car, a bedside clock radio, headphones in the gym – in fact any device that has an auxiliary input socket or a built-in docking station.

You move from listening to a limited selection of music in one or two locations to having access to your entire collection of music in a much wider range of locations. Music becomes more convenient to listen to so you listen to it more frequently. And if there is no sentimental attraction (and your PC is backed up) you can sell the old media and free up a lot of shelf space.

Packaging

You no longer have to endure that (mildly boring) feeling at the end of a familiar track where you know that the next track begins with a predictable dah-di-dah-dah. The 'Shuffle' option on MP3 players permits you to randomly vary the sequence of tracks on any album and the 'Playlist' option lets you create playlists of music from across many albums to suit the mood of the moment.

Better still, the iPhone has a feature called *Genius* that lets you create playlists 'on the fly' by automatically selecting tracks from your collection that are similar to the track currently playing. I believe it achieves this by categorising every track against a wide range of musical genres and selecting tracks from the same genre. You can use this feature to create multiple playlists as the mood takes you and save them or not as you wish.

Extending the repertoire

But wait, there's more! Plugging the iPhone into your PC activates iTunes – Apple's online music store. The *Genius* feature then recommends tracks and albums not in your collection but based on your current listening choices (and this is in addition to the 'People who bought this track also bought...' feature).

This inevitably leads to extended explorations, the rediscovery and purchase of music you missed first time around and the discovery of new music.

Internet radio

Old radio (the 'wireless', as it used to be called) is characterised by the choice of a limited range of local radio stations, often compromised by poor reception.

By comparison, Internet radio (either a dedicated Internet radio or a PC or MP3 player with Internet access) has access to countless (literally - I tried!) Internet radio stations with perfect digital reception** and an overall sound quality determined by the transmission bit rate of the chosen station. On the iPhone you download from iTunes your choice of free Internet radio applications then save in Favorites your preferred stations. As I write I'm listening to *Radio Top 100 Classic Rock Hits*. Feel like a change? Switch to *4 Ever Floyd* – a station that plays only Pink Floyd, or *Radio Santana*, or flamenco guitar, or – well, you get the idea. You can also record the track currently playing direct to your iPhone or buy it from iTunes.

Digital music - the detail

Bit rates for digital music, whether you are downloading or recording, range from 40 kbps (ok for speech) through 128 kbps (fine for music) to 256 kbps, which is near-CD quality. The higher bit rates place a greater demand on network performance if you are streaming digital radio and on storage capacity if you are downloading from iTunes and saving.

The default setting for downloads from iTunes is 128 kbps per channel. As an indication of the activity this generates, one hour of digital music recorded at 128 kbps will trigger nearly 60 megabytes of downloads and take up the same amount of memory. You can use iTunes to record at up to 320 bps, but you may not benefit from the extra detail if you listen on an MP3 player rather than a docked device. For a fuller discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of different digital recording options see [this article](#) by Christopher Breen.

If you want to listen to Internet radio then Vodafone's implementation of 3G in Tasmania only gives acceptable performance up to 64 kbps and drops out at higher bit rates. A wi-fi connection to ADSL broadband gives better performance and avoids the risk of exceeding monthly 3G download limits and incurring penalty rates.

Summary

The flexibility of the iPod / iPhone / iTunes combination – portability, packaging and access to new music – has the potential to revitalise your interest in music. iTunes on its own (a [free download](#) to either PC or Macintosh) is excellent software for recording CDs and organising a digital music library.

* The generic term amongst the cognoscenti for headphones and similar devices is 'cans'. However if your cans are too big there is a danger you may end up looking like Princess Leila.

** You either receive perfect reception or no reception at all if the signal deteriorates beyond a certain point. Fixed line ADSL broadband or a wi-fi link to ADSL should give perfect reception; 3G wireless

reception depends on your carrier and location.

Some musings on music

For me the Age of Music began in approximately 1559 when Thomas Tallis wrote [Spem in Allium](#), a 40 part motet. This is the original 'wall of sound', 400 years before Phil Spector hit Detroit. Music reached its zenith in 1822 with [Beethoven's final piano sonata](#). Listen to all 10 minutes and 46 seconds of Schnabel's interpretation and see if your perceptions of music and its emotional content remain unchanged (and listen for the beginnings of ragtime in the final movement - 100 years ahead of its time).

Unfortunately after that it was pretty well all downhill until the Age of Music ground to a halt in 1991 when a Mrs Gallagher of Manchester, stuck for Christmas presents, unwisely bought a guitar for her errant offspring Liam and Noel.

I had the good fortune to experience a final flowering of music in the late 60's when there were so many good bands you could listen to even the famous ones live for the equivalent of about \$5 in today's money, and in the dining room of your Uni hall of residence. One purple patch in 1969 brought to our doorstep [Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band](#), [Roger 'Goatman' Chapman and Family](#) and silver-fingered Alvin Lee [Going Home](#) with Ten Years After. And nothing much happened after that, although I maintain a sneaking admiration for U2 and a peculiar affection for bizarre interpretations of national anthems, such as this nihilistic rendition of [God Save the Queen](#) (and wouldn't that liven up the pre-game show at major sporting events).

When I expressed these opinions to my Gen Y son he commented that lots of good music had been written since 1991, and generously played me some. Unfortunately the only track I liked was by [Pearl Jam](#) – circa 1990. I rest my case.

TAA Bridging Course from Cert IV Training & Assessment

We have developed a two-day bridging course for trainers who have the old Certificate IV qualification in training and assessment and who need to upgrade it to the new [Training and Assessment](#) (TAA) qualification. The course comes with comprehensive documentation and provides a quick and painless way to move to the new qualification. To register your interest for this course call Kristina on 1300 765 736

What's on at NDA this Month

October 6-8 marks the start of our [Diploma in IT + Microsoft Certified Professional Developer](#) (MCPD) program for 18 clients at NDA's Hobart training centre. This is the first of five by three-day training sessions, each corresponding to one of Microsoft's .NET exams.

On October 21 we present [Writing Convincing Reports](#) in Launceston. Come to this course if you wish to learn more about persuasive writing as applied to tenders, proposals and technical reports.

Forthcoming Training Courses

NDA is now able to release the following courses for stand-by enrolment, some at significant discounts on standard rates (**to obtain the discount, please phone Kristina on 1300 765 736** and mention this email when making bookings):

Hobart – IT courses

[MYOB Setup and Operation](#) 1/2 Oct – 15% discount \$485 (standard rate \$570)

[Publisher 2003 and 2007](#) 6 Oct – 15% discount \$204 (standard rate \$240)

[Excel Basics 2007](#) 8 Oct – standard rate \$240

[Excel Introductory 2007](#) 8/12 Oct – standard rate \$480

[Excel Intermediate 2007](#) 12/15 Oct – standard rate \$480

[Excel Advanced 2007](#) 15/16 Oct – standard rate \$480

[Project 2003 and 2007](#) 13/14 Oct – standard rate \$480

[Word Advanced 2003](#) 26/28 Oct – standard rate \$480

Hobart – Business Skills courses

[Time Management](#) 7 Oct – 20% discount \$228 (standard rate \$285)

Launceston – IT courses

[Access Programming](#) 1/2 Oct – standard rate \$480

[Office 2007 Conversion](#) 7 Oct – 20% discount \$384 (standard rate \$480)

[Excel Basics 2007](#) 9 Oct – standard rate \$240
[Excel Introductory 2007](#) 9/12 Oct – standard rate \$480
[Excel Intermediate 2007](#) 12/14 Oct – standard rate \$480
[Project 2003 and 2007](#) 13/16 Oct – standard rate \$480
[Visio](#) 15 Oct – standard rate \$480
[Word Introductory 2003](#) 20/23 Oct – standard rate \$480
[Word Intermediate 2003](#) 23/26 Oct – standard rate \$480
Launceston – Business Skills courses
[Professional Telephone Techniques](#) 9 Oct – 20 % discount \$228 (standard rate \$285)
[Writing Convincing Reports](#) 21 Oct – standard rate \$285
[Training Delivery](#) 29/30 October – standard rate \$570
Devonport – IT courses
[Excel Introductory 2007](#) 9/12 Oct – standard rate \$480
[Word Advanced 2003](#) 26/28 Oct – 20% discount \$384 (standard rate \$480)

HOBART Level 3, Trafalgar Centre, 110 Collins St Hobart TAS 7000 Phone: (03) 6224 2660	LAUNCESTON Level 1, 65 St John Street Launceston TAS 7250 Phone: (03) 6334 4910	DEVONPORT The Roberts Building, 23 Stewart St Devonport TAS 7310 Phone: (03) 6423 4547
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