

Information Systems

9 Computer Misuse Act

Terry Marris February 2009

The Computer Misuse Act makes it a criminal offence to:

- gain, or attempt to gain, or help someone to gain unauthorised access to computer systems
- to use a computer for criminal activity and
- to interfere with programs or data stored on a computer system without authorisation

We see how this Act might apply to TradeBreak.

9.1 TradeBreak

TradeBreak is a monthly 40-page magazine containing just advertisements for local small businesses such as roof repairers, children's nurseries and plumbers.

A small business owner wishing to place an advertisement contacts TradeBreak Sales either in person, by phone or by e-mail. Wording, layout design and dates for inclusion of the advert in the magazine are agreed and the small business owner is billed.

The layout and content of TradeBreak is set up on Apple Macs by copy editors who are skilled in layout, making the material attractive and easy to read. On the next day after the copy deadline date, the copy is sent to print. TradeBreak has a printing press.

Paper, ink, staples and spare parts for the printing presses are bought in from suppliers as needed. Their own engineers service the paper cutting, stapling and printing machinery.

When the print run is completed copies of TradeBreak are delivered by van to members of the distribution team for posting in every letterbox in their area. Of course, TradeBreak contains an advertisement for itself, since it makes its money from those who place advertisements with them and the company wants to attract more customers.

The company works on tight profit margins and good financial control has helped them survive and thrive.

The company has 33 employees including three apprentices.

Members of the management team have been in printing all their working life.

For further information on the company e-mail tmarris@lec.ac.uk.

	Computer Misuse Act	Application to TradeBreak
1	to gain, or attempt to gain, or help someone to gain unauthorised access to computer systems	Management to decide and publish rules and regulations governing employees access to various levels on their computer systems. For example, IT specialist staff maintain the computer systems and so have full access to any part of them. Copy editors are allowed only to access the desk top publishing, graphics manipulation and email software. Any attempt by any employee to access any part of the computer systems for which they have not had express permission to do so will result in disciplinary action including dismissal and court proceedings.
2	to use a computer for criminal activity	Employees found to be using TradeBreak's computer systems for criminal activities such as selling stolen goods via e-bay, downloading illegal software and images, and stealing personal information such as credit card numbers, will face police action.
3	to interfere with programs or data stored on a computer system without authorisation	Employees found to be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • downloading unauthorised programs or images, or • using another person's username and password to access data or a program, or • altering, copying, deleting or moving Tradebreak's data or programs e.g. copying customer data onto a memory stick and taking it off the premises will face disciplinary action.

Further, the Act applies to any person outside TradeBreak attempting to break through the antivirus and firewall software, to access its computer systems, to install viruses, Trojans and worms, or to implement any form of denial of service attack.

Bibliography

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer_Misuse_Act accessed 8 Feb 2009