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# THE VIBE

A Periodic Publication for the Friends & Clients of Vibrance Technology Corp.

## Internet Ads: Protecting Your Privacy

By Rich Eichacker, *Vibrance Technology Corporation*

Last quarter, I discussed how advertisers are loading tools onto your computer so they can track your movements on the Internet. This information is stored in a database and used to target ads at you. In this quarter's issue, I present some ways to protect your privacy.

*(Due to space limitations, please visit [www.VibranceVibe.com](http://www.VibranceVibe.com), for more information on each tip.)*

**Delete cookies once a week.** This is probably one of the simplest and most effective ways of limiting your exposure. You will, however, lose the ability for sites to remember your username and password, if they're enabled to do so.

**Change your browser settings to block cookies.** At the very least, you should block third-party cookies. Many web sites need to have cookies enabled to operate properly (web email sites, for example). Third-party cookies are not necessary and can be blocked.

**Anti-virus/anti-spyware.** Always keep these programs and their definitions up-to-date. If you received a trial version of an anti-virus program with your new computer, make sure the update function has not expired. If it has, purchase a new subscription, or change to another paid or free program.

**Give kids their own computer.** As mentioned last quarter, kids' sites load many more tracking tools than other sites, so it's best to isolate their use to a separate machine. This is especially true if you have a business computer in a home office. You can also create a virtual machine with a separate copy of Windows on an existing PC (see the Winter 2011 issue (#12) of *The Vibe*).

**Run your browser in privacy mode.** Internet Explorer's InPrivate Browsing or Chrome's Incognito are two examples. During privacy mode, your browser

operates normally. When you close the browser, however, cookies, temp files and history are all deleted, leaving no trace of your session.

**Adjust your Flash settings to increase your privacy.** Adobe provides a way to control how Flash programs behave on your system. This is especially important since Flash programs can access your webcam and microphone.

**Lock down your email.** Downloading images with email is an especially effective way for a spammer to know that you've viewed their email and that your email address is valid. To avoid this, turn off HTML display of messages and increase the privacy settings. Outlook, for example, can be set so that it forces you to confirm if you want to view/download images. Mail-scrubbing programs, such as MailWasher Pro, pre-filter messages and show only plain-text content before you download emails. Always be on the lookout for phishing scams and suspicious links in email, even from senders you trust.

**Protect your primary email address.** Use a different email address for web activities such as shopping and site registration. Or, create a new address for each site where you register. These are examples: [amazoneichacker@gmail.com](mailto:amazoneichacker@gmail.com) and [paypaleichacker@gmail.com](mailto:paypaleichacker@gmail.com). Don't forget to use different passwords for each account. Using email addresses in this way provides a particularly effective means of determining where spam is originating.

Finally, for the more technically inclined, you can **modify the Window's hosts file**. Adding entries into the hosts file can disable a web site domain and prevent anything from that web site reaching your computer. This tip also works for Macs and most other non-Windows computers.

# Problem Solved!

## Vibrance helps a company solve their custom pricing problem.

### Background

In 1996, company ABC was a start-up in search of an order entry/inventory tracking system that could create custom price lists for the items they planned to sell. Their vision was that each customer would get a price list with different pricing based on a number of parameters, such as discount level and location. These price lists then would be generated with minimal effort once the customer's information had been set up. The price lists, which could also vary from day to day as special pricing expired or was introduced, needed to be delivered to the customer with little or no hassle and "hot," or frequently purchased items, highlighted.

### Problem

Despite the numerous commercial order entry and inventory control applications available, ABC could not find one that offered enough flexibility in pricing structures to create the custom price lists they sought. Vibrance was hired that year to help create a software package that would meet their needs. Since then, their software has evolved with changes in their business and has been updated as technology has changed.

### Features

Here are some of the features of the system developed by Vibrance:

- A pricing structure where individual customers can have unique pricing as well as special, or sale, pricing when ABC needs to move product or is able to pass savings along. The database must keep a history of pricing changes so that a correct price list, from any point in time, can be generated.
- Print unique price lists for each customer, based on their pricing schedule. The database consists of product families, each of which contain up to 10 discount levels. For each product family, a given customer is assigned a discount level. This creates a standard set of discounts for each item. In addition to this discount, customers can receive special prices on specific items effective on a certain date. A third level of discounting exists, where an item price can be applied to a region and has a start and stop date. All this information must be compiled correctly for the customer when printing a price list or quoting a price during order entry.
- Easily distribute price lists to customers. In the original system, price lists were automatically faxed in an overnight batch. An upgrade in the 2000s dropped faxing in favor of email delivery. It also introduced PDF output so that a large batch of price lists could be emailed to a print shop, printed on a high-speed printer, then mailed directly to the customer.
- Keep track of orders with an order entry module that identifies: who the customer is, what they ordered and when the order will ship. It must also manage back orders so they are fulfilled as soon as product becomes available.
- ABC has a number of branches and warehouses, so an inventory tracking system must be able to track inventory, as it is ordered and received, for these different entities. An item inquiry must reflect current inventory levels and pricing.
- The software must implement a tickler system so customer service staff can set reminders to contact customers about orders or upcoming price specials. When the program starts, any tickler/reminder items for the current day must be prominently displayed on the main screen. It must be easy for staff to view, schedule and/or reschedule tickler items.

*This screenshot shows the Price Inquiry tab on the main Customer screen. Displayed are: the item's information, current inventory levels, and the customer's current pricing level (this customer is on level 10).*

*The other tabs allow staff to quickly look up information on the customer: the Order Summary tab displays a month-by-month order history for a given year; the Order History tab shows item pricing for specific orders within a date range; and the Tickler tab lists upcoming reminders for the current customer.*

Customer

Branch: New England  All Customer: Vibrance Technology Corp. (159119)

Customer (F1) Order Summary (F2) Order History (F3) Tickler (F4) Price Inquiry (F5)

Find SKU  Apply

Item #: 123456  
Description: White-80# Cover  
Size: 8 1/2 X 11  
Pack Quant: 2000  
Family: COPIER PAPER  
Category: Color Copy Paper  
Level = 10 Price/Case: \$79.07

Name	On Hand	On Order	Back Order
FRAN	4965	0	0
MANC	4961	0	0
POFT	5000	0	0
READ	4982	0	0
WALL	5000	0	0

Price by Level

Cost	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	L10
\$55.35	\$60.16	\$61.50	\$62.90	\$64.36	\$65.89	\$67.50	\$69.19	\$71.38	\$74.30	\$79.07



### ABOUT VIBRANCE

Vibrance Technology is a consulting firm specializing in the development of custom software and database applications. Vibrance creates software from the ground up, using the client's ideas and requirements to provide a solution that meets their unique needs. Vibrance has successfully implemented solutions for a wide variety of businesses and in a number of functional areas, including sales, finance and inventory management.

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