

## The Big Picture – Security on the move

By Fran Howarth, Principal analyst, Quocirca Ltd

With data breaches a seemingly everyday occurrence, more could be done to protect data from loss. This article discusses the role that encryption plays in protecting data stored on mobile and portable devices.

To be found on the laptop, the one or more mobile phones, and the handful of USB sticks held in the average briefcase today is a potential treasure trove of company assets. The cost of the physical replacement of all those devices should that briefcase be lost or stolen is not insubstantial in today's expenses sensitive world, but that is just the tip of the iceberg.

Every one of those devices is likely to contain a great deal of data, from names, addresses and other information contained in contacts lists to intellectual property and other sensitive information related to work. Such information is valuable to thieves looking to steal material that could be used for identity theft or for corporate espionage.

Even if someone just publicised the fact that sensitive information has been lost, this can cause serious damage to the reputation of the organisation involved, as many companies and government agencies have found to their cost. And there may be serious ramifications if a device is lost that contains information that can be used to identify individuals. This is because regulations are increasingly demanding that individuals must be notified if a security breach such as that caused by a lost or stolen laptop leads to their personally identifiable information being compromised. This can result not only in reputational damage, but may also lead to financial loss as customers take their business elsewhere.

Such regulations are already in place in most states in the US and other countries worldwide, and the EU is currently examining similar legislation. However, many existing regulations related to security breach notification include at

least one caveat—if the data held on portable devices that have been lost or stolen was encrypted, the data is considered to be adequately protected and no notification is necessary. Most importantly for the individuals whose information has been placed at risk, the chances of the data loss personally impacting them in a material fashion is minimised.

Encryption of course is no information security panacea. Rather it should be used in combination with other security controls and should therefore integrate with other tools in use to provide an extra layer of protection for the overall security arsenal. But, as companies refine their security architecture and policies with data leak prevention in mind, they should consider the use of encryption technologies for data on portable media, laptops, smartphones and similar devices.

For further reading related to this topic see a [new report](#) from Quocirca, Removing the complexity from information protection, which discusses the role that full-disk encryption plays in protecting portable media and storage devices on the move. (Report commissioned by WinMagic)

## About Quocirca

Quocirca is a primary research and analysis company specialising in the business impact of information technology and communications (ITC). With world-wide, native language reach, Quocirca provides in-depth insights into the views of buyers and influencers in large, mid-sized and small organisations. Its analyst team is made up of real-world practitioners with first hand experience of ITC delivery who continuously research and track the industry and its real usage in the markets.

Through researching perceptions, Quocirca uncovers the real hurdles to technology adoption – the personal and political aspects of an organisation's environment and the pressures of the need for demonstrable business value in any implementation. This capability to uncover and report back on the end-user perceptions in the market enables Quocirca to advise on the realities of technology adoption, not the promises.

Quocirca research is always pragmatic, business orientated and conducted in the context of the bigger picture. ITC has the ability to transform businesses and the processes that drive them, but often fails to do so. Quocirca's mission is to help organisations improve their success rate in process enablement through better levels of understanding and the adoption of the correct technologies at the correct time.

Quocirca has a pro-active primary research programme, regularly surveying users, purchasers and resellers of ITC products and services on emerging, evolving and maturing technologies. Over time, Quocirca has built a picture of long term investment trends, providing invaluable information for the whole of the ITC community.

Quocirca works with global and local providers of ITC products and services to help them deliver on the promise that ITC holds for business. Quocirca's clients include Oracle, Microsoft, IBM, O2, T-Mobile, HP, Xerox, EMC, Symantec and Cisco, along with other large and medium sized vendors, service providers and more specialist firms.

Details of Quocirca's work and the services it offers can be found at

<http://www.quocirca.com>