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Wanna bet?
Set now the online gaming sector is raising its profile
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Pets to win prizes?
We profile more hopefuls for this year's *Computing* Awards for Excellence
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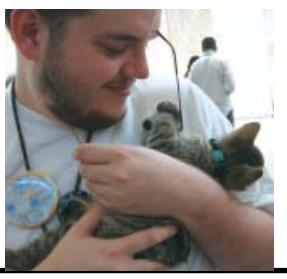

Job satisfaction
We have 10 pages of the best IT jobs, starting on
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6 October 2005 £2.75

Two-factor authentication could go live at UK banks before standard arrives

Banks step up security plans

James Watson

SEVERAL UK high-street banks are expected to announce plans to authenticate online transactions with some form of physical security device before the end of the year.

But any such move will come in advance of publication of an industry standard, which banking industry body Apacs had planned to release in May, and has now pushed back to the end of the year.

Lloyds TSB will this month start trials of a 'revolutionary new line of defence in the fight against online fraud', with customers testing a new way to log on to internet banking.

In May HSBC started a one-year rollout of security devices for its 870,000 Hong Kong customers, which industry sources regard as a prelude to rollouts in other countries.

And earlier this year Barclaycard completed a six-month trial of a security device (*Computing*, 17 March).

Any progress with so-called two-factor authentication from individual banks will not necessarily be based on the industry-wide standard. But Martha Bennett, research director at Forrester Research, says the industry realises that security needs to be tightened, and some banks feel they cannot afford to wait for the standard to arrive.

'Many of the banks are working on a two-track strategy: what's happening with Apacs, and what they can do immediately,' she said.

Bennett says several banks were set to launch products earlier this year, but stopped when Apacs started work on a standard.

'Now they're realising that the risk is growing, and action needs to be taken,' she said.

Apacs says if its standard does not make the first phase of a particular bank's project, it is confident it will be included in the second phase. 'The aim is not just to secure online banking, but also about securing other online transactions,' said a spokeswoman.

But not all banks are willing to go ahead without a standard: Barclaycard will wait to ensure interoperability between banks.

'We're looking at how to use it in the real world, in a number of banking applications,' said a spokesman for the bank.

HSBC is rolling out security devices in Hong Kong

Some 600,000 of the UK's 15 million internet banking users have stopped banking online because of security fears, says Forrester.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2140435

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eBorders deal gathers pace

Sarah Arnott

THE procurement for the government's £400m IT plan to tighten UK border security formally started this week.

The eBorders scheme will link relevant government agencies, as well as travel industry systems and transport hubs such as ports and airports.

Initially, the system will log every person entering and leaving the UK. Ultimately, travellers' details will be checked against government systems, with permission to enter the UK granted or denied before they leave foreign soil.

Last year the Home Office finalised a multimillion-pound deal with IBM to develop the Semaphore pilot system, logging passengers on 10 international routes. Now suppliers are being invited to bid for the main, 15-year eBorders deal.

The system is expected to be up and running by 2010.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2071239

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Whitehall signs public sector portal contract

Sarah Arnott

THE government has signed a multimillion-pound deal for an online marketplace to improve purchasing efficiency and make bidding for public sector contracts more appealing to smaller suppliers.

The Zanzibar 'purchase to pay' site – named after the world's oldest market – will be developed and maintained by PA Managed Services. A data warehouse and electronic hub will allow potential suppliers to search available contracts, bid, submit invoices, and receive payment.

The scheme has been established by OGCbuying.solutions, the commercial arm of Whitehall buying agency the Office of Government Commerce (OGC).

Public sector contracting is lengthy and expensive for both government and suppliers, because of the requirements of European procurement rules.

By streamlining the process, Zanzibar aims to help plans to open the marketplace to a wider range of suppliers traditionally excluded by the high cost of bidding for government deals.

It will also help meet the government's efficiency targets by boosting take-up of lower-cost eprocurement practices.

'Zanzibar will make an important contribution to realising the government's efficiency and eprocurement targets,' said OGC chief executive John Oughton.

'The benefits of joining emarketplaces have been proven within the public sector – they make it easier for suppliers to do business with government and will allow us to have a real understanding of total demand in the public sector.'

Hugh Barrett, chief executive of OGCbuying.solutions, said: 'Zanzibar will revolutionise the way the public sector does business. It should save time and cost for the public sector and suppliers alike.'

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will be one of the first to take up the scheme.

'This initiative will be a key enabler to DWP's commercial modernisation,' said commercial director David Smith.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2070611

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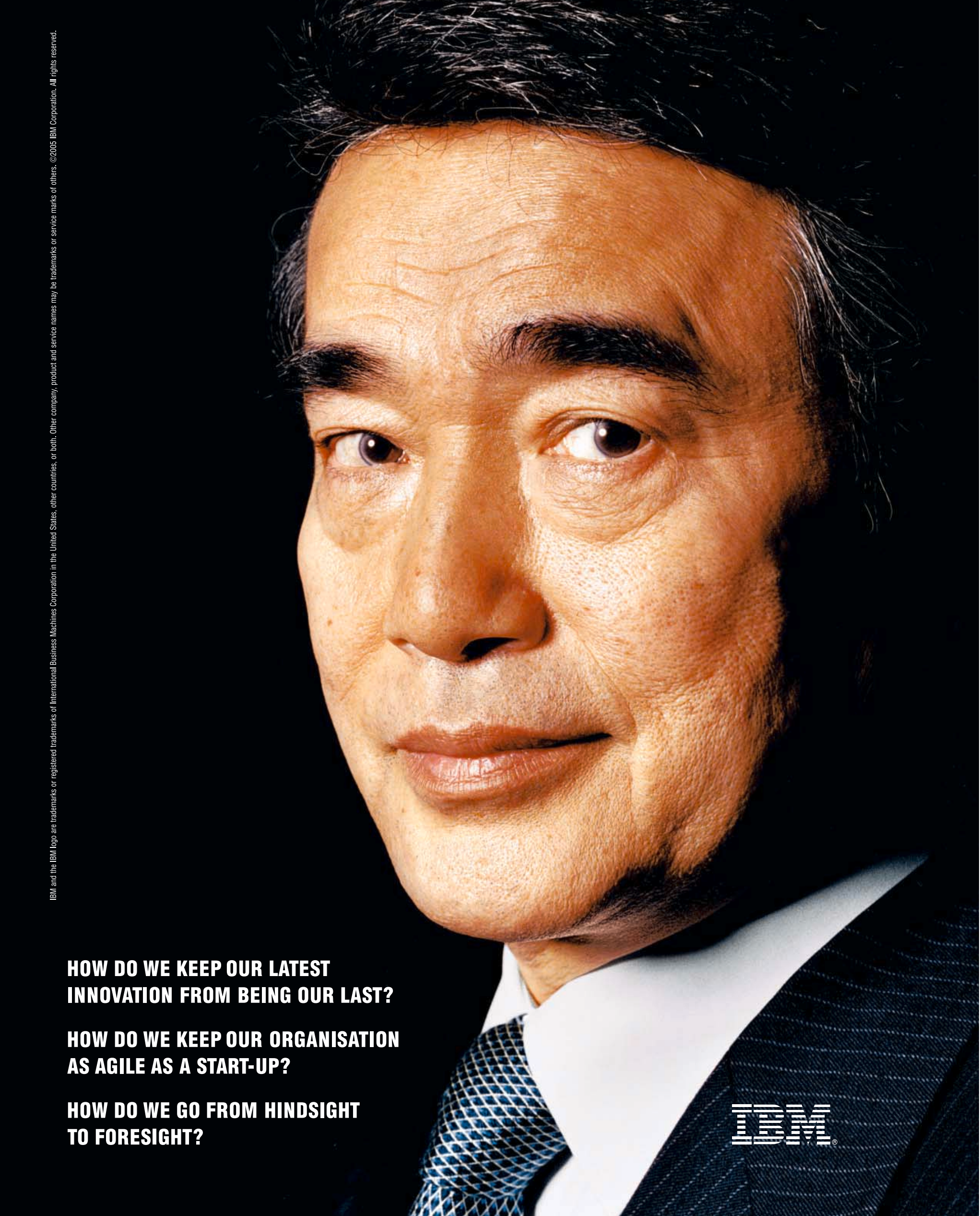

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Scottish Health Board Connects Healthcare Professionals for Patient-centred Care

with TrakCare

To realise its vision of patient-centred care, NHS Lothian recently announced its purchase of TrakCare™, the Web-based healthcare information system from TrakHealth that can connect every healthcare professional to every type of data, from every point of care, for every patient.

TrakCare is an integrated system of modules that will replace disparate and incompatible legacy systems – and speed the flow of information – from acute hospitals, as well as primary and community-based facilities. NHS Lothian, the second-largest health board in Scotland and home of the world-renowned Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, joins a growing list of leading healthcare organisations around the world that have chosen TrakCare to enable a new era of patient care.

As the provider of database and integration platforms for many leading health-care systems, InterSystems is delighted to partner with TrakHealth on the Lothian implementation. We thank NHS Lothian for the opportunity to work with them to ensure the success of this project.

The full text of NHS Lothian's press announcement about its initiatives for patient-centred care can be viewed at **www.TrakHealth.com/Lothian**. Information about InterSystems' technologies for improving patient care is at **www.InterSystems.co.uk/healthcare**.

INNOVATIONS BY INTERSYSTEMS

The outsourcing debate: users are becoming more demanding and more selective
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vnu business publications

30,000 firms still not switched to Bacstel-IP online system

Cut-off nears for Bacs changeover

James Watson

Voca will cut off access to the old Bacs system on 1 January 2006

UK FIRMS have less than three months to update their Bacs systems or risk being left unable to process payments.

Some 10,000 firms have made the switch since June, but as many as 30,000 companies have yet to move to the new online system, which will replace existing processes at the end of the year.

Research from payment processing company Voca, formerly known as Bacs, says the average organisation requires up to three months to migrate to the new Bacstel-IP system, the internet-based version of its widely-used payments service.

From 1 January, Voca will cut off access to the old Bacs system, potentially disrupting company payments such as payroll.

Mike Hutchinson, marketing director for Bacstel-IP at Voca, says staff not being paid is a real worst-case scenario, but those firms yet to migrate must act now to avoid any disruption.

'In simple terms, a direct submission in January from an old Bacs system won't work,' he said.

Of the 30,000 businesses yet to make the switch, about 10,000 submit payments directly to Voca, while the rest make payments through independent payment bureaux.

'Some firms just don't believe it will happen,' said Hutchinson. 'They believe their bank won't leave them hanging in mid air, but they need to take responsibility for this.'

Voca stepped up its efforts this year to inform all its customers – representing the bulk of UK organisations – about the need to make the switch.

'We have communicated with them via phone and email. We have run four direct mail campaigns this year. And we will increase that intensity in the final three months,' said Hutchinson.

Firms unable to complete the upgrade by the due date should look to make temporary arrangements with a bank or bureau.

Many bureaux, says Hutchinson, will still accept payment details in nearly any form – from emails and faxes to 'the back of an envelope'.

Hack

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2139783
www.computing.co.uk/2142593

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Underground workers aided by mapping devices

Daniel Thomas

TUBE Lines, the public-private partnership that maintains a number of London Underground lines, plans to extend its use of geographical information systems (GIS) to improve engineering works.

The organisation, which runs the Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines, is planning to provide trackside engineers and contractors with GIS mapping on handheld devices, so they can access more quickly information on location, condition and maintenance history of any given asset.

Tube Lines will extend its use of Intergraph's Geomedia products, which are already used elsewhere in the organisation. It wants to appoint a software development company to make the system accessible on handheld devices at the trackside.

The application will provide engineers with a link to Tube Lines' asset register and management systems, which hold data on hundreds of thousands of assets, including train parts, tracks and station fittings.

'It will show engineers where each asset is on the railway. It will make a huge difference in terms of getting to the right place quicker. People will know where they are and what is around them,' said a spokesman for Tube Lines.

'With the help of technology we're looking to lead the Underground from the Victorian era into the 21st century,' he said.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2076038

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Firms fail to monitor outsourcing activities

Mark Samuels

MANY organisations fail to monitor the performance of their outsourcing service provider, according to research published this week.

Consultant Deloitte polled some 100 chief information officers (CIOs) at leading UK corporate and public sector firms, and found that three-quarters believe IT outsourcing is a major driver for organisational change.

But just one quarter of CIOs use regular reporting to demand a high level of transparency from their outsourcer.

A further 16 per cent only judge supplier performance informally, and two-thirds of UK businesses do not even ask for detailed reporting.

Phillip Everson, a partner at Deloitte, says the challenges of managing technology in-house mean some companies are outsourcing simply to rid themselves of the problem.

'One of the main reasons firms outsource is cost. But in trying to outsource the problem, businesses often become hands-off,' he says.

Deloitte found a third of CIOs believe cost dictates what service is outsourced and where it is outsourced to.

Everson says that companies should be clear about their reasons for outsourcing, and pay more attention to contract writing and service benchmarking.

'Some businesses believe creating service level agreements and benchmarking will be a challenge, believing the provider is bound to improve the service that was in place before,' he said.

'You have to be clear why you're outsourcing and know, if you do have structural problems with your IT department, if your outsourcer is better placed to resolve those issues,' he said.

● See page 46 for more on outsourcing

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2072478

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financial world

Mobile network operator **02** has announced that its UK customer base topped 15 million for the first time during the six months to 30 September.

IT services group **Parity**'s interim results for the half year to 30 June showed revenue has increased 7.1 per cent to £88.8m, but the company made a loss after tax of £1.8m, compared with a profit of £144,000 in the same period last year.

Open source software supplier **Red Hat** announced revenue for the second quarter of $65.7m (£37.5m), up 42 per cent year on year. Subscription revenue increased 56 per cent to $54.3m (£31m), and net income grew 42 per cent to $16.7m (£9.5m).

BlackBerry maker **Research In Motion** reported second-quarter revenue of $490.1m (£279.5m), up 58 per cent on the same period last year. Some 620,000 subscribers were added in the quarter, taking the total BlackBerry customer base to 3.65 million. Net income was $111.1m (£63.4m), compared with $70.6m (£40.3m) last year.

Software vendor **Lawson** reported first-quarter revenue of $87.9m (£50.1m), up from $82.7m (£47.2m) in the same period last year. Net income was $4.2m (£2.4m), compared with a net loss of $417,000 (£237,795) in the corresponding period last year.

Integration specialist **Tibco Software** announced third-quarter revenue of $105.9m (£60.4m), the same figure as last year. Net income of $13.8m (£7.9m) was up from $8.6m (£4.9m).

Computing 30 share index

Biggest movers	
1: Wolfson Microelectronics	▲ 10.7%
2: Vanco	▲ 10.2%
3: Gresham Computers	▼ 25.0%

For full listing details, visit *www.computing.co.uk/index30*

Boots merger will not affect IT plans

Retail giant adds two years and £26m to contract with Xansa

James Watson

HIGH-STREET retailer Boots will press on with its existing IT plans following the announcement of a merger with Alliance UniChem in a £7bn deal.

Although it is unclear how Boots' IT programme will alter when the new pan-European pharmaceutical retailer is created, Rob Fraser, IT director at Boots, says there will be no changes until the deal is approved.

'For that reason, we will be pushing ahead with our current plans in a business-as-usual-style when delivering this and next year's commitments,' he said.

The company has just extended a contract with IT services firm Xansa for a further two years, worth £26m.

The new agreement will lengthen the current seven-year £90m deal to 2011, and the retail giant hopes the deal will generate millions of pounds in savings during that time.

As part of the new contract, Fraser says Boots is exploring a business process outsourcing (BPO) arrangement with Xansa for the management of its Advantage loyalty card scheme, following the completion of several major technology projects.

Boots hopes the contract extension will save millions of pounds

There are 13 million Advantage cards in circulation, and Fraser says the IT services firm will administer the programme for 75 per cent of the current cost.

Xansa has been working with Boots since 2002 on a three-year technology transformation project which is nearing completion.

Fraser says the retailer will now be able to concentrate on reaping the benefits from the completed technology projects, such as a major SAP implementation that was finalised in August.

'The focus will be on how we become more efficient within IT,' he said.

Boots is also wrapping up a new centralised patient medication record system, which will hold details of customers' prescriptions.

'The first phase of that project will end this month,' said Fraser.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2141035
www.computing.co.uk/2141022

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Firms show lack of preparation for disaster recovery

James Brown

MOST businesses are ill-prepared to cope with a disaster, according to research.

A survey, commissioned by the Institute of Directors (IoD) and telecoms provider Cable & Wireless and conducted by ICM, found that less than a third (29 per cent) of companies have updated their business continuity plans since the terrorist attacks in London on 7 July.

And the study of 100 IT managers at medium-sized UK organisations found that 62 per cent have no home working provision.

Jim Norton, senior policy adviser at the IoD, says he is surprised there is still a sizeable minority of companies that are failing to take business continuity seriously.

'Companies still do not really seem to understand the benefits of working from home, or having a work-from-home capability, irrelevant of the advantages this has for disaster recovery,' he said.

'You would have thought that after the 7 July terrorist attacks, as well as the past attacks by the Provisional IRA, not to mention hurricane Katrina that struck the US, the message would have hit home by now.

'People seem to think that keeping their back-up tapes in a fire-proof safe on-site is fine.

'But they are underestimating the risk that they might not be able to gain access to their site at all,' said Norton.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2141261

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BBC to share web technology with rivals

Broadcaster tests software that allows viewers to download past shows to a PC

Daniel Thomas

THE BBC plans to share with rival broadcasters internet technology that allows viewers access to past television shows, if trials prove successful.

The broadcaster began the second phase of the integrated Media Player (iMP) trials last week and is rolling out the software to 5,000 volunteers.

Some 30,000 people registered to participate in the trials of the iMP technology, which will allow them to access television and radio programmes from the past seven days by downloading them from the internet.

The BBC will gauge public interest in the service over the next three months, before presenting findings to the board of governors early next year.

'If we solve all the issues, there is consumer demand, and it meets the BBC's public value criteria, we will then look at how we can share this with other broadcasters,' said Tony Ageh, BBC controller for the internet.

If the BBC shared its technology, competitors such as ITV and Channel 4 would have no need to develop rival internet viewing platforms, preventing confusion caused by consumers having different products.

'We are addressing and hopefully solving problems that other broadcasters are also grappling with, and it's something we plan to share,' said Ageh.

The iMP application allows users to download and view programmes on their PCs, or potentially a television.

'We want to change how people access programmes. It's like an internet-based video recorder, although video recorders can't go back in time,' said Ageh.

The first set of trials took place last summer and checked the viability of the technology (*Computing*, 29 July 2004). Quova Geo-IP software has now been installed to ensure only BBC licence payers can access the system.

Digital rights management software has been included to prevent users from sharing programmes. It also automatically deletes programmes after a certain period of time.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2075962

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Politics rather than technology blamed for lack of Choose & Book referrals

NHS struggles to meet patient choice targets

Sarah Arnott

NHS the real story

USE of the electronic bookings element of the £6bn NHS IT programme is falling far behind government targets, but experts say politics is more to blame than technology.

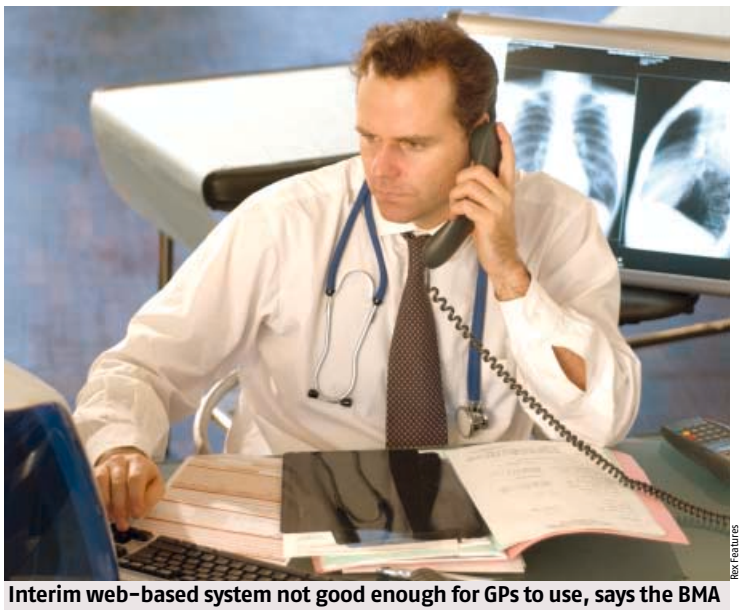
To qualify for a £100,000 incentive, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) should have been processing half of the nine million first-time referrals from GPs through the electronic Choose & Book (C&B) system by this autumn.

But just 8,130 appointments have been made through C&B.

The target for C&B was always over-ambitious, says Dr Paul Cundy, spokesman for GP computing at the British Medical Association.

'It is ridiculous to expect to create and implement a brand new system in 10,000 GP surgeries, among 45,000 GPs, for nine million referrals a year, in the space of 18 months,' said Cundy.

But changes to the requirement are more to blame, he says.



Rex Features

Interim web-based system not good enough for GPs to use, says the BMA

Initially, ebookings was designed to be just an electronic facility for making appointments. But with the development of the government's choice agenda for public services, it needed to offer patients four booking options.

'The danger is that the choice agenda is adversely colouring the technology agenda because if you took choice out the situation would be completely different,' said Cundy.

To speed up availability, a version of C&B has been offered to GPs through a web site, but is not integrated to GPs' systems. GPs are enthusiastic about the concept of ebookings, but the online C&B product on offer is not yet good enough, says Cundy.

'Using the web version rather than dictating a letter offers no benefits whatsoever,' he said.

Emis UK, software supplier to 5,300 GPs' surgeries has only quoted to 3,131 of its practices for upgrading their systems to integrate with C&B.

'The delays have been more about errors of judgment in the management structure because C&B implementation was procured in a piecemeal way rather than centrally,' said Emis deputy managing director Sean Riddell.

A spokesman for the national programme says it is asking Strategic Health Authorities to ensure PCTs are either on track to have C&B fully implemented by the end of December or are putting in place manual systems to provide patient choice.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2071854

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Schools adopt single sign-on

James Brown

SCHOOLCHILDREN in the UK are to use an open source single sign-on password system.

Named Shibboleth, the system is being introduced by the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta) to provide parents, teachers and children with secure access to educational content.

'Pupils and teachers use multiple usernames and passwords, as each web site their school subscribes to has its own, different, login system,' said John Chapman, technology policy and delivery project manager at Becta.

'With Shibboleth users will log in once with a single username and password.'

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2141672

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Council signs £7.2m deal to support strategic IT plan

James Brown

Contract part of plans to move to on-demand group computing

SOUTH Lanarkshire Council has awarded a £7.2m deal to Computacenter for a backbone server and storage system.

The deal, which includes supply, support and disaster recovery provisions, will replace the current contract the council has with HP which is soon to expire.

Robin Miller, IT strategy and standards manager for South Lanarkshire Council, says the contract is part of a longer-term strategic plan to move to an on-demand group computing environment to increase its storage capacity.

'We are looking to try not to increase the number of servers we have, but to use growth in power, storage and virtualisation to expand capacity,' he said.

'In fact, we are actually looking for a reduction in the number of servers we use, though if this proves not to be possible, we have a secondary plan to use spare capacity for disaster recovery and business continuity purposes.'

South Lanarkshire is looking to the future on-demand system to help handle as much of its storage needs as possible, and reduce the longer-term costs of ownership for its IT equipment.

As well as furthering the council's strategic IT goals, the new servers will also help the council meet growing national requirements for improvements to local services, such as noise prevention and waste disposal, says Miller.

'The Scottish Executive's policies mean that all council departments are looking for new ways to interact with citizens, and more often than not, those communications processes require an IT solution, placing increasing demands on our server and storage systems,' he said.

The council is in the final stages of negotiating the details of the deal.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2141689

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bulletin

NTL to purchase Telewest
Telecommunications firm NTL is to acquire rival Telewest to create the country's second largest communication provider. The deal values Telewest at $6bn (£3.4bn), and is expected to be completed sometime in early 2006. The combined company will have more than five million residential customers, 2.5 million broadband subscribers, and 4.3 million fixed-line telephony accounts.
www.computing.co.uk/2143100

Capita wins £17.7m TfL deal
Transport for London (TfL) has finalised a £17.7m agreement with Capita to set up technology systems for the Western Extension Zone (WEZ) of the London congestion charge scheme. The IT services firm has operated the congestion charge scheme in other parts of London over the past two years. The WEZ part of the project is expected to go live in February 2007.
www.computing.co.uk/2140433

London man on hacking charge
Daniel James Cuthbert, 28, was due to appear at Horseferry Road Magistrates' Court in London as *Computing* went to press, accused of hacking into the Disasters Emergency Committee web site. Cuthbert, from Whitechapel, East London, has pleaded not guilty to charges that he attempted to gain access to the organisation's site on 31 December, while it was co-ordinating fundraising efforts for victims of the Asian tsunami disaster.
www.computing.co.uk/2143026

Users in password overload
Users are being burdened with too many passwords, and their confusion could undermine IT security, research shows. A survey by RSA Security suggests many corporate IT users have at least 13 passwords to remember. The survey of 1,700 IT users claims that nine out of 10 have grown frustrated with this situation and are getting around it with poor password practice that diminishes IT security, say Victor DeMarines and Sheila Doherty, the survey's authors.
www.computing.co.uk/2143054

Office 12 to support PDFs
Microsoft has promised to support PDF files in the next version of Office. Office 12 will have a 'Save as PDF' function to create a PDF and electronically distribute a read-only version of the document.
www.computing.co.uk/2143098

Survey reveals many systems are being launched prematurely

Deadline pressures lead to insufficient testing

James Mortleman

MORE than two-thirds of European IT managers admit they launch systems without sufficient testing, research shows.

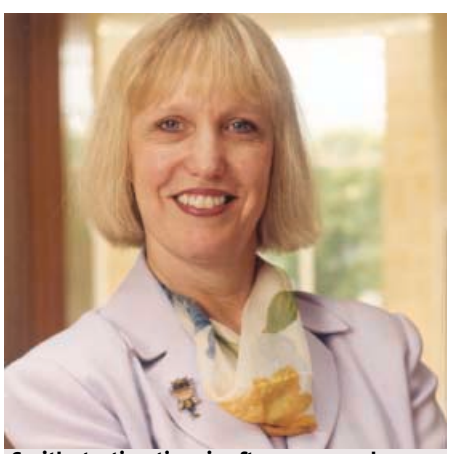
Among the reasons cited were poor availability of testing capabilities, lack of skills and pressure to meet project deadlines, according to a survey commissioned by LogicaCMG and published last week.

Alan Rodger, research analyst at Butler Group, says businesses must understand the true cost of failing to conduct adequate testing prior to the launch of systems.

'If you don't incur an initial cost in testing, it will come back to bite you. It's well proven that the cost of any error is more expensive to fix later on,' he said.

Rodger says IT departments need to communicate the importance of testing to the rest of the business, to avoid having to go live too soon.

'If there's pressure to deliver by a certain time then testing is often the area that suffers. IT must convince the business of the importance of testing,' he said.



Smith: testing time is often squeezed

But more than half of the survey respondents (53 per cent) said compliance is forcing them to take a more rigorous approach to testing.

Rodger says that the adoption of formal methodologies could also help the spread of best practice.

'Adopting proper project management processes and methodologies makes you go down the right road. They also ensure you sign up to the reasons behind them. The IT department should have that commitment to best practice built in,' he said.

Margaret Smith, chief executive of user group CIO Connect, says part of the problem with the testing process is that changes are often left until it is too late.

'What can happen is that IT functions bend over backwards to accommodate user changes far too late in the cycle. They might then squeeze the amount of time they have for testing,' she said.

Smith says the problem is likely to be more prevalent in smaller organisations.

'Certainly among the larger companies, there is now a huge amount of professionalism, and some rigorous methodologies have been implemented over the past few years,' she said.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2086235

www.computing.co.uk

Firms hit hard by organised IT crime

James Brown

EUROPEAN companies are suffering increasing financial losses from security attacks and careless use of IT assets, according to research from the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).

Some 40 per cent of senior risk managers questioned said they had experienced losses through damage and misuse of technology, and 25 per cent said they lost money as a result of deliberate crimes, such as phishing.

Gareth Lofthouse, the EIU's European director, says there has been a rise in organised computer crime.

'The financial impact of system failures, hacking, viruses, and so on, has been escalating. Some estimates say the number of viruses has increased by 59 per cent in the past year,' he said.

Seventy per cent of respondents said they will invest in more security and antivirus systems to manage the threat.

Lofthouse says 'spear-phishing', which targets specific organisations, is a particular threat to look out for.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2143054

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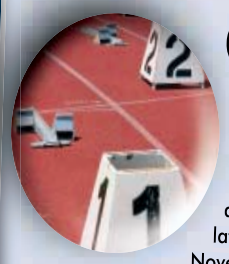

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Business climate boosts IT spend

Daniel Thomas

IT directors have increased their investment in new technology projects in the past three months, citing strong business conditions for the growth, says research.

The quarterly Chief Information Officer Confidence Poll from Forrester Research, published last week, shows that 78 per cent of businesses surveyed saw an increase in spending compared with the same period last year.

Some 44 per cent of firms witnessed more than a five per cent increase in spending, while only 10 per cent said budgets had decreased.

The spending decisions reflect an increased confidence in future business and economic climates, with 86 per cent of firms expecting improvements in 2006.

And 81 per cent of the US chief information officers (CIOs) interviewed expect to see further increases in IT spending next year.

Just six per cent of firms expect to under-spend on their IT budget this year, while 25 per cent think they will exceed allocated finances.

CIOs working at companies with more than 5,000 employees were more optimistic about budgetary increases than IT managers working at smaller firms.

Some 93 per cent of businesses with more than 5,000 staff reported a stronger business climate, which is helping IT investment, while 79 per cent of smaller firms expect the situation to remain the same.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2142949

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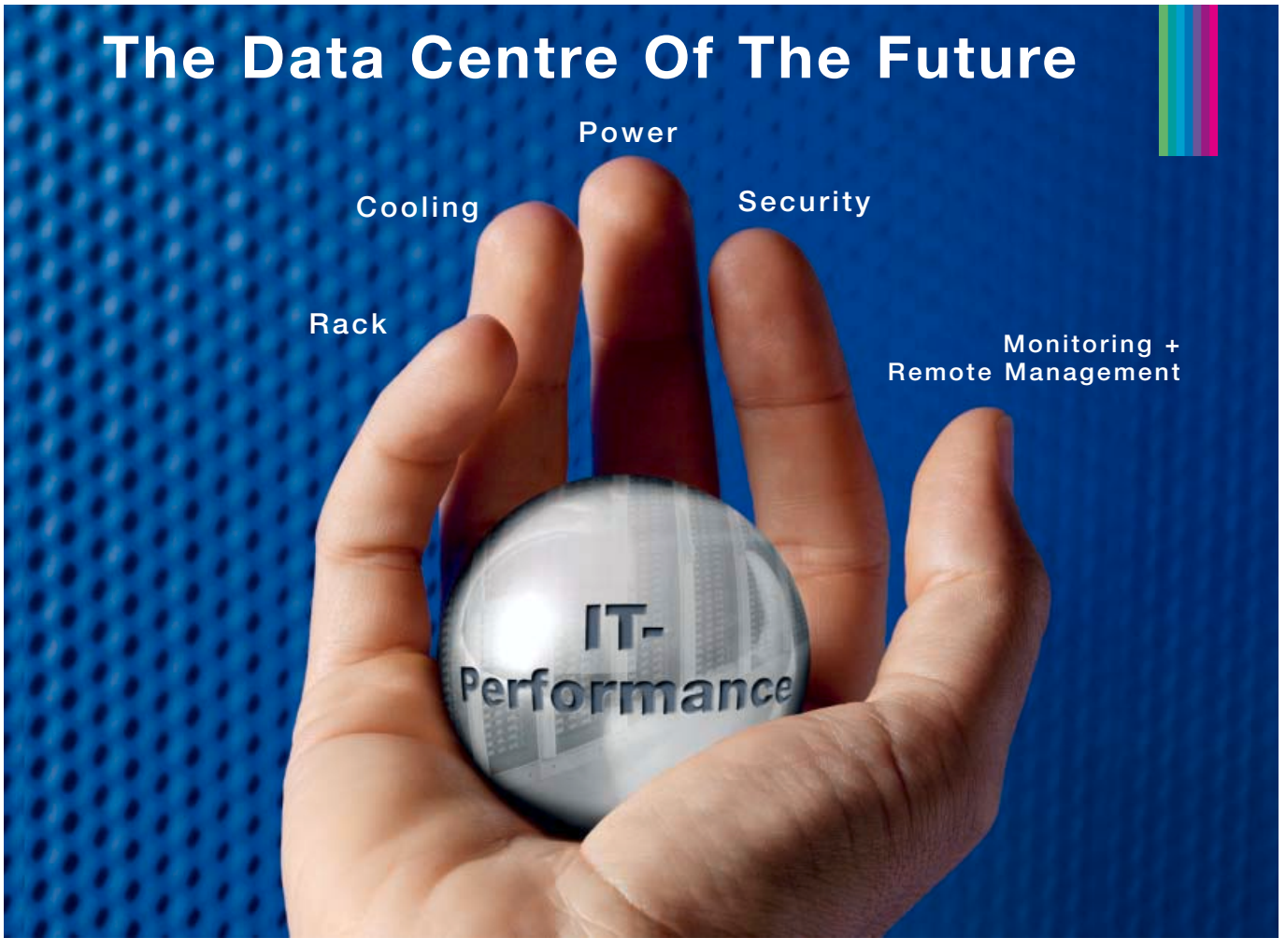

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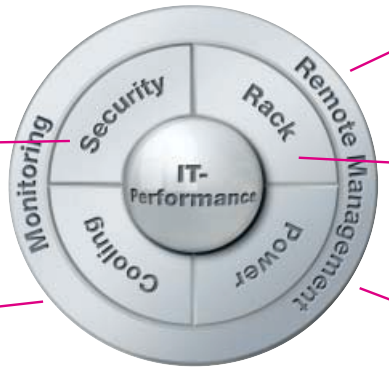

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A little code for the weekend, sir?

'I was checking through some of my code and comparing it with similar code I'd previously written,' says John Hamling, at P N Lee Statistics & Computing. Your chat-up lines won't work on us John. Oh, hang on, there's more.

'I noticed a worrying trend. In the more recent code, when checking data values using the IF-ELSE construct, the IF was checking for invalid values and the ELSE processed the valid values.'

This appears perfectly sensible to us, but: 'In my earlier code I generally did this the other way round, checking for valid values first. I always thought I was an optimist but I am now worried that I'm turning into a pessimist.'

Is anyone else suffering from pessimistic programming? Should we be coding optimistically, or is John's negativity merely an acceptance of the state of the planet? We're going for a lie down and a little cry.

The wheel of fortune?

It has been a busy few weeks, so we apologise for missing one of the most important stories of the summer – that of Peter Ash, of Lawford in Somerset, whose GCSE science project was to make his hamster wheel into a mobile phone charger after his sister complained that Elvis (the hamster) was keeping her awake by spending all night on his wheel.

If you could find a way to use your co-workers in a similar fashion, perhaps you would be prepared to share your intellectual property with us?

Meanwhile, Peter was awarded a grade C for the project, and grade D overall for the course.

Upside down, boy you turn me

Here at Backbytes we like to think we're at the cutting edge of technology, but frankly we can't compete with PC World.

As Mike Robson, at Cleveland Cable Company, discovered, PC World sells some pretty advanced kit.

'While browsing the PC World business web site for a 17in TFT monitor I came across this wondrous device,' he says, directing our attention to the L1780U monitor as made by LG. Among the monitor's features: 'Image will automatically rotate with the screen, without additional software.'

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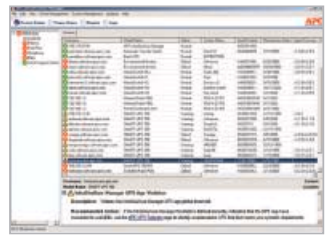

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Electronic till system supports expansion plans for fashion chain
See page 21

Internet sales hit high street

James Mortleman

THE growth of online shopping is having a major effect on high-street sales, according to web retail industry body IMRG.

The latest IMRG Index, which tracks the sector's performance, shows online sales in August were, on average, 31 per cent higher than last August. By contrast, August's high-street sales rose only 0.2 per cent on the previous year.

IMRG chief executive James Roper says a number of factors are hastening the growth of online shopping.

'The internet is becoming a place where smart people shop because you get better prices and more choice,' he said. 'Today, 90 per cent of people with a credit card shop online.

'In the past year there has been a lot of fresh investment. The sites are better, the navigation is easier and there is a wider choice of products being offered online.'

Delivery mechanisms are also getting better, says Roper.

'Often you have local guys who deliver all the time and will come to your door before 8.15am, because they know if they come any later, they'll probably have to come back again,' he said.

'I think there is going to be a bit of a bloodbath. A lot of inefficient merchants will die. My guess is that there will be a spate of them before Christmas,' he said.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2138434

www.computing.co.uk

Police tighten grip on sign-on access

Staffordshire force installs IT password management system

Daniel Thomas

STAFFORDSHIRE Police is to install a password management system to improve secure access to its IT systems.

The force began installing the Imprivata OneSign system on more than 45 password-protected systems this week, and hopes its 4,500 users will be able to access them using single sign-on before the end of the year.

Staffordshire Police also expects to radically reduce the time that IT helpdesk staff spend resetting passwords.

IT systems integrator Enline will work with the force to install the system, which will reduce the number of passwords that officers need to remember.

'Forty per cent of our IT helpdesk's time is spent on password management issues and we are hoping this will be cut,' said Ron Bentley, IS programme manager at Staffordshire Police.

'There will also be efficiency gains and improved security as I'm sure some people write down passwords on Post-it notes.'

At present, officers have to remember at least six passwords to access databases, including a Home Office enquiry system, police command and control applications, intelligence databases and family protection systems.

Staffordshire officers will use one password for multiple systems

The single sign-on system will improve productivity by making it easier to sign on to multiple systems, including terminals, web portals, mobile devices and Citrix thin-client applications.

The system will also further reduce helpdesk time by adding employee self-service functionality, and will help the force meet national IT security requirements from the Home Office and the Police Information Technology Organisation.

OneSign will be used to access new systems as they are incorporated into the organisation.

'We will be accessing information from other forces so it is important that we all start to adopt a federated approach to access and security,' said Bentley.

Staffordshire Police is looking into the possibility of adding further security to its systems, through biometric identification or the use of proximity cards to identify users.

'It's important to reiterate the importance of security to our employees,' said Bentley.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2071485

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ABN Amro improves storage performance

Banking group uses migration tools to cut time spent backing up systems

Miya Knights

GLOBAL banking group ABN Amro has introduced data migration software to remove performance bottlenecks from its storage systems.

The financial services company is deploying the software tool to ensure business-critical data can be migrated to back-up systems, while keeping applications running when the systems are being moved.

'We acquired the data migration software because there were no longer sufficient time slots available to perform all the necessary data migrations offline,' said Ad van Leeuwen, ABN Amro senior systems designer.

'We were facing the constraints of finding enough available time slots in the service windows to do the migration.'

The firm is an early adopter of Softek's Transparent Data Migration Facility (TDMF) software for Unix-based applications.

'The software decreases the number of comparatively expensive weekend hours required to carry out data migrations offline. It has enabled us to speed up the time it takes to do data migration from weeks to days,' said van Leeuwen.

He says the business case for investing in the software rested on proving that TDMF migrations could be carried out without risk while applications were still operating.

'We are expecting the software to realise significant improvements in overall system performance during primary operational hours,' he said.

The product has been successfully tested on an HP Integrity Superdome server attached to IBM storage arrays, handling the vast amounts of transactional data ABN Amro needed to store securely.

'We plan to deploy TDMF across all our Unix servers as a tool for load balancing and to enhance our application service level agreements,' said van Leeuwen.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2124363

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Inside enterprise

Council introduces digital pen and paper technology
Page 14

Online gaming: the new dot com darling
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How online mapping is changing the web
Page 18

Please sir: technology takes to the classroom
Page 23

An expert looks at the future of intellectual property policy
Page 24

bulletin

Schroders deploys CRM software
Global asset management financial services company Schroders will deploy hosted customer relationship management (CRM) software from Salesforce.com to 500 of its employees across 15 countries. It will use the software to improve the co-ordination, management and tracking of business-critical customer information.
www.computing.co.uk/2141609

Center Parcs raises online profile
Center Parcs UK has appointed Global Beach to redesign and build its web site. The holiday firm wants to raise the profile of its online activities and provide visitors with easy access to information and useful tools to help them book and plan their holiday.
www.computing.co.uk/2140413

Dell to attract high-end users
Dell has announced three high-end XPS PCs and a notebook that it plans to market as premium products backed with a higher level of customer service. At a briefing in New York last week, Dell said it is looking to attract higher-spending home users who are starting to equip their homes with wireless networks, multiple PCs and flat-screen televisions, but who do not necessarily have the expertise to manage such a set-up. 'We are trying to appeal to customers with technological experience,' said Dell chairman Michael Dell.
www.computing.co.uk/2143024

round-up

Mail software cuts Saga costs
Holiday and financial services firm Saga is to use predictive analytics software from vendor SPSS to increase profitability from direct mail campaigns. The firm, which targets the over-50s, has been using SPSS' Predictive Marketing software for more than a year, and says it has achieved significant cost savings and a revenue increase of £1m.
www.computing.co.uk/2142051

Microsoft tackles IE security
Microsoft has presented a preliminary beta 2 version of Internet Explorer 7 to an audience of hackers at the Hack in the Box security conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It is the first time the company has spoken about security for its browser, which has been riddled with vulnerabilities over the years.
www.computing.co.uk/2142994

Rise in demand for cheap PCs
Rising demand for cheap computers in emerging economies such as eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa is leading to a peak in demand for used machines, according to a study by Gartner. The increase in the availability of used computers is fuelled in part by recycling legislation that makes it more expensive to discard old PCs. But this is also giving rise to an industry that exports PCs merely to evade recycling laws.
www.computing.co.uk/2142995

Virus authors get smarter
Security reports from September indicate that virus writers are getting smarter, using smaller malware that performs a specific task rather than trying to cause mass virus outbreaks. According to the monthly virus chart from security firm Sophos, the most common infection in September was Netsky P, a worm first identified 19 months ago.
www.computing.co.uk/2143014

Google plans work with Nasa
Google is planning to open a million-square-foot office complex at Nasa's Ames Research Centre, in the heart of California's Silicon Valley. Nasa and Google have agreed to work together on a variety of projects, including large-scale data management, massively distributed computing, bio-info-nano convergence, and the 'encouragement of the entrepreneurial space industry'. The pair have also announced plans to collaborate on research and development projects.
www.computing.co.uk/2142975

Council boosts its customer service

Braintree is the first authority to install the Siebel 50 system

James Brown

Braintree Council aims to improve services for its 150,000 citizens

BRAINTREE District Council in Essex is installing customer service technology to improve the services provided to its 150,000 citizens.

The council will also use the Siebel 50 customer service system to help fulfil local authority service excellence targets laid down by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Roger Bramwell, Braintree's head of customer services, says the technology will make it easier for the public to talk to the council and receive a first-time resolution for their problems.

'In the past, customers would phone the local council and, apart from not knowing what department to go through to, there was no guarantee that they would eventually get there if they were transferred from a switchboard,' he said.

'We can now capture customer requests and keep a history of what they called us about the first time around, so the caller doesn't have to explain everything that has happened before.'

Braintree is the first UK local authority to take on the Siebel 50 system, which Siebel unveiled last week with the promise that smaller local government buyers will be able to implement it within 50 days.

Ed Thompson, a Gartner customer relationship management software analyst, says Siebel is looking to use the new technology to turn around a poor record of selling its software at local government level.

'The reason it has come up with Siebel 50 is that it had about seven live customers in the UK on its old local government package. That is not very many when you consider that the big boys such as Lagan, Northgate and Oracle all have about 30-plus local government customers live on similar systems,' he said.

'The plus points of the Siebel package are a good price point, and a reference-able customer in Braintree; the downside is that it is unclear just what level of integration the package can give,' he said.

'The less in-built integration it has, the more expense this system will cause later on in its lifecycle.'

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2142956

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www.computing.co.uk

New system to help manage trust funds

James Mortleman

OUTSOURCING giant Capita has implemented a low-cost, highly automated system to allow Child Trust Fund (CTF) accounts and policies to be administered.

CTF provider Children's Mutual selected Capita Life & Pensions Services to develop and manage systems to handle its CTF accounts and policy administration. Capita has built the underlying IT systems in partnership with Indian software developer Mastek, using the offshore provider's Elixir policy management platform.

The Elixir platform has a web front-end to make deployment and distribution easier, coupled with centralised back-end processes for ease of management and security.

The software uses a component-based architecture, which means it is simple to customise the system or deploy elements in a piecemeal fashion.

'Low running and operational costs were absolutely key for this project, so we had to look at a self-administering, automated system,' said Bob Puzey, Capita Life & Pension Services' IT director.

'The system uses character recognition and workflow technology to process anything from a policy application to a change of address without any need for manual intervention.'

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2140748

www.computing.co.uk

Leeds pen pushers go digital to cut out forms

James Mortleman

Data from care workers can be sent via mobile phone to database servers

LEEDS City Council says it will achieve huge savings by using digital pen and paper technology to eliminate traditional form processing.

A pilot project running since January among care workers has proved so successful that Leeds is now sharing the application with 40 other councils.

The authority employs 1,725 carers who work with about 6,000 people. Some 200 carers already use the system, with 1,400 expected to be using it by March.

'Our carers used to generate two million pieces of paper a year that had to be filed, managed and manually input into our systems,' said Doug Sutherland, corporate business relationship manager at Leeds Council.

'Now they have digital pens that transmit what they are writing on a paper form back to our servers via mobile phone within a minute. Intelligent handwriting recognition software analyses what they have written and the information automatically arrives in the appropriate fields of our database,' he said.

The digital pen, developed by Swedish company Anoto and supplied in the UK by Destiny Wireless, writes like a normal pen, but contains a digital camera, an image processing system and a communication unit.

It can tell which form is being used because the paper is printed with an identifying pattern of dots that are invisible to the eye, and Sutherland expects the system to generate huge savings.

'We have said we will save £1.2m over the next two-and-a-half years, but that is a very modest estimate. We can divert those resources into frontline care where it is most needed,' he said.

The technology will replace paper form-processing in many other areas.

'I have no doubt this technology will become common throughout UK local authorities, who are among the heaviest users of forms,' said Sutherland.

'We are already moving to introduce it in about half a dozen other areas of the council, including benefits analysis.'

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2138893

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Web gaming firms up the ante

The online gaming sector is banking on innovative IT to ensure its success

James Watson

A DOT com boom of a different sort is under way in the online gaming sector.

This summer has seen the arrival of several new companies on the London Stock Exchange (LSE), as online gaming, and poker in particular, has taken centre stage.

The biggest firm in the market, Partygaming, listed in June with a valuation of £4.6bn – the biggest UK stock market debut in five years. Although its share price has dropped since the initial flotation, the company last month joined the FTSE 100 with a valuation higher than British Airways and Dixons.

The next big listing in the sector came from 888.com, which floated in September with a valuation of £590m.

Most recently OnGame, a Swedish company that operates a range of international online gaming brands, has indicated that it plans to list on the LSE next year.

Big business: PartyPoker is ranked by PokerPulse as the world's biggest online poker site

Its main UK brand, PokerRoom.com, is rated as the world's third-largest online poker site by PokerPulse, an independent site that tracks the industry's big operators. PokerRoom.com comes in below PartyPoker and PokerStars on PokerPulse's ranking, and is just one spot above 888.com's Pacific Poker (*see box below*).

The common thread through all these firms is their reliance on IT.

Online betting firm Betfair has already invested £30m in technology to try to ensure its betting platform is the fastest and most resilient in the industry, and is planning a further £20m investment this year (*Computing*, 21 April).

'Technology is the basis of Betfair's success and its application in the betting exchange format has, in a relatively short period of time, revolutionised the way many people bet,' said Stephen Hill, Betfair's chief executive.

OnGame is similarly reliant on technology: it employs about 220 staff, of which 160 are developers.

Unlike many others in this market, the company derives its revenues not only from online gaming, but also from selling its technology as a platform for other brands to use.

David Flynn, chief technology officer of OnGame, says his firm provides software to about 15 other companies.

He believes that after the growth the industry has been experiencing, the market will seek to consolidate until just three or four players remain.

This is one of the primary reasons for the recent spate of stock market listings seen this year, says Flynn. 'We're looking to list on the LSE next year to raise funds to buy other companies,' he said.

Flynn says his firm has been outperforming growth in the sector.

'We've been growing at an average of three times the market rate,' he said. 'Two years ago we employed 40 people. Today we have 220 and we have adverts out for 45 new positions.'

OnGame's PokerRoom.com site has more than four million registered users, with between 10,000 and 15,000 new players joining every day. And tremendous scope for growth still remains.

'Some 80 million people play poker every day in the US alone, but only 15 million of them play online. So we have 65 million people in that market waiting to shift online,' said Flynn.

Supporting these volumes requires an extremely resilient technology platform: OnGame supports about 20,000 players online simultaneously, who between them play an average of 4.5 million hands of poker worth more than $20m (£11.4m) every day.

'We have invested a great deal in IT,' said Flynn. 'Our platform has to handle about 100 transactions per second.

'We're running on 35 servers. Just one year ago we only had 12 servers, so it has tripled in that time.'

Like most of its rivals in the market, OnGame runs a truly international operation: its headquarters are in Stockholm, its primary listing is planned for London, servers are hosted in a native Indian reservation in Canada, and its call centre is outsourced to South Africa.

Flynn's development team launched the firm's first mobile gaming application in April and is now working on a range of new products.

He is most excited about a poker application being developed for BlackBerry handheld devices, a move that is sure to boost corporate productivity.

The firm is also developing a full suite of casino games, such as Blackjack, which it plans to announce in the next few weeks.

To keep up with the rapid change in the market, the company has completely changed the way it develops software over the past 12 months.

'We wanted to move to something very iterative, so we looked into the "lean" programming methodology,' said Flynn.

'The result is a significantly faster development cycle, where new components are developed, tested and completed within a month. The change in speed is phenomenal, and it has had a good motivational effect on staff, as they get more deeply involved in the creation of new products.'

How long the growth of the sector will last is anyone's guess. But for the moment it is as hot as the peak of the dot com boom in 2000.

'We're here to stay,' said Flynn. 'About three months ago we became number three on the market. Our new goal is to become number one as soon as possible.'

Top 10 online poker sites

- PartyPoker
- PokerStars
- PokerRoom.com
- Pacific Poker at 888.com
- Paradise
- Prima Network
- UltimateBet
- Ladbrokes
- CryptoLogic
- Full Tilt Poker

Source: PokerPulse.com

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Online mapping is driving a new breed of web sites that help users locate the services they need

Map sites chart online treasures

James Watson

AS US authorities struggled to evacuate stranded citizens from New Orleans and across Louisiana in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, concerned computer programmers were rapidly coding a series of web sites to help the rescue attempts.

The programmers took advantage of the latest internet technologies to create sites that draw on a range of sources to aid relief efforts, allowing visitors to find information intuitively.

Taking advantage of the open access that Google provides to its online mapping service, a number of sites were developed that automatically charted relevant data on a map of the area.

For example, one site – Katrina Shelter – automatically referenced data from another resource of available shelters and homes across the US on a map (*www.katrinashelter.com/maps*). On the site, users can click on various locations and receive descriptions of how much space is available and how to contact them.

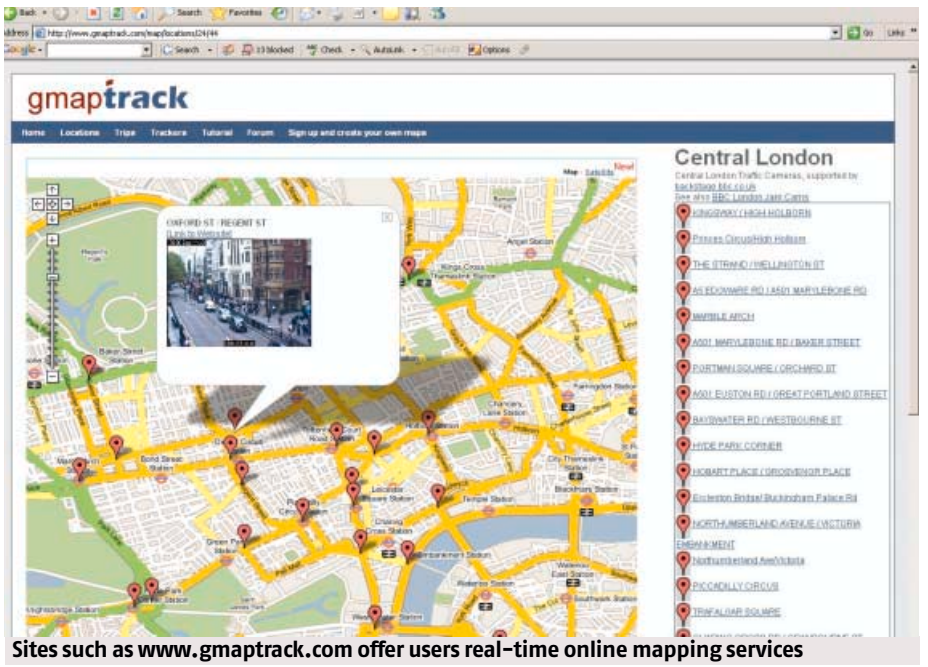
Another site focuses on relief efforts on the ground, providing a constantly updated map of stranded people waiting for help (*http://biggins.networkcommand.com*).

The sites highlight the sudden rise in popularity of online applications that make use of open and customisable mapping services, available from the likes of Google, Yahoo and Microsoft.

Another example comes from Paul Rademacher, a software engineer at Dreamworks Animation in the US. He built a site that sources housing information for the Silicon Valley area from Craigslist – an online classifieds site – and displays them by location as a layer in Google Maps.

The result, Housing Maps (*www.housingmaps.com*), was an instant online hit that provided a more intuitive and useful service than many local estate agencies could offer.

Best of all, the project took Rademacher less than three months to create, working only in his spare time.



Sites such as www.gmaptrack.com offer users real-time online mapping services

This ability to quickly and easily integrate data from different sources and display them online in an intuitive manner is becoming increasingly interesting to business users.

Rod Smith, vice president of emerging internet technologies at IBM, says demand from companies for what he calls 'situational applications' is growing rapidly.

'From a business standpoint, it can really change the user-level experience within the browser,' he says.

While the most innovative sites are created by programmers such as Rademacher, companies are also getting on board.

Customer relationship management vendor Salesforce.com has created a tool that automatically maps a user's business contacts on Google Maps, helping salespeople visually plan how to schedule their meetings in the most effective way when they are on the road.

But the ability to integrate data from a variety of online sources extends beyond just linking maps to useful chunks of data.

Smith says more firms are seeing middleware as very approachable and standardised, and are now using custom scripts to create a range of compelling solutions.

Open source applications such as Greasemonkey are helping by allowing users to add custom scripts to any web page to change its behaviour.

Smith cites an online service called Book Burro (*http://bookburro.org*).

'It's one of my favourites,' he says. 'With this, I can go to Amazon and look up a book. It then pops up with a little note in the corner to show the price of that book at Barnes & Noble, halfprice.com, eBay and other sites I have linked to.

'As organisations have refined and evolved their back-end systems, they're looking at how this can apply to them internally. They want to see how they can use those components to do interesting things with their corporate applications.'

Another motivating factor is the ability to use such tools to rapidly create new services for customers.

'In the past, it would take six months to put an application together and deliver it. But with these tools, we are finding that people can put these things together in a month or less,' says Smith.

'It makes the web a lot more personal to you and me.'

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- Weather Bonk links data from several weather services to display appropriate weather icons on an online map of the UK (*www.weatherbonk.com/weather/index.jsp*)
- gTraffic.info also provides a traffic congestion service, but allows users to select different types of travel to display on the map (*http://www.gtraffic.info*)
- Gmaptrack has a map of all Central London traffic cameras, and when users click on one it displays a live snapshot of the traffic (*www.gmaptrack.com/map/locations/24/44*)
- For drivers with a heavy foot, this site tracks all speed cameras in operation across the UK: *(http://spod.cx/speedcameras.html)*
- Tourists can virtually tour London on sites such as CommunityWalk, clicking on landmarks to get details and photos (*www.communitywalk.com/map/65*)
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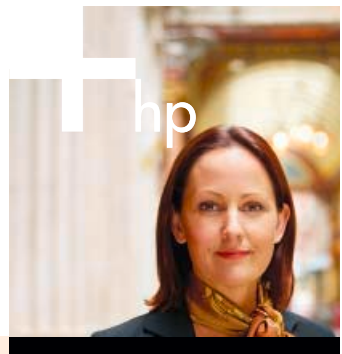

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Electronic till systems to support expansion plan

Miya Knights

HIGH-STREET fashion chains Oasis and Coast are upgrading their till equipment to support expansion plans and reduce maintenance time and costs.

Parent company Mosaic Fashions – which also owns Karen Millen and Whistles – is installing modular electronic point-of-sale (Epos) systems in all new Oasis and Coast shops.

'All the new stores we open are going to have the new system,' said Mike Padfield, Mosaic Fashions IT development manager. 'We are also replacing the current systems in our top 20 Oasis stores.'

Between the Oasis and Coast brands, the company has opened nine shops and more than 27 concessions since March this year, and Padfield says the new Epos system will be installed in 'at least the same number of stores again before the end of the year'.

The company's current supplier, DigiPoS Systems, is implementing the Retail Blade Epos system with replaceable components to make maintenance easier.

Oasis, and sister store Coast, will upgrade Epos systems as part of expansion plans

'We saw Retail Blade as a better system than the existing one, for a very similar price,' he said. 'And it is a better solution with more longevity because of the replaceable motherboards.'

Mosaic will maintain its current, third-party Epos maintenance contract for the time being, logging support calls about operational till problems to dispatch an engineer to fix till problems instore.

But the transaction time lost by Epos downtime could be avoided by exploiting the modular characteristics of the Blade system, says Padfield.

'The incentive for this rollout is to use a courier maintenance system,' he said. 'If it is a matter of a straight motherboard swap, then the courier could do the swap instead. This would drastically reduce cost and give us much faster service levels.'

He also says the new system has USB functionality for linking peripherals such as printers into the new system, as well as a longer-than-average, 10-year warranty.

'We will undoubtedly use USB peripherals in future,' said Padfield. 'And the warranty makes it much easier to write off the capital expenditure over a five-year period or longer, as well as limiting upgrade paths in future to main areas of need.'

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2140732

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Woolworths starts in-store payment for web shoppers

Miya Knights

WOOLWORTHS has gone live with a bespoke application to allow shoppers to pay cash in its stores for items ordered via its web site.

The application is the last in the retailer's web terminal initiative, which has seen the company make its entire stock range available to order in its 806 UK shops for home delivery.

Woolworths has now completed the integration of the shop web terminals into its new Kingstore electronic point-of-sale (Epos) till system installed in 2004, allowing customers to pay for goods sourced from the web site at the till.

The system also carries out a real-time stock check, to ensure the purchased products can be delivered in a timely fashion.

The application that links the retailer's Epos system to its web site and instore web terminals was developed using Dynamo software from supplier ATG.

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Technology put to the test in schools

Emma Nash

YOUR school days are the best of your life, so the saying goes.

I am inclined to disagree – I never really understood the fuss about school. Forced to run round a damp and freezing field in the middle of January in short sleeves and running knickers while being yelled at by a coat- and hat-clad dictator is something I have gladly put behind me.

I have also managed to live quite happily without a uniform, and the same goes for school dinners, homework, endless pointless rules and having to ask to be excused.

But there are some things that will always be synonymous with school. Remember the small bottles of milk with their blue straws? The sound of the bell signalling the end of lunchtime? The joy of getting a new pencil case at the beginning of term? (Or maybe that was just me?) And, of course, the ritual of morning registration?

But technology is now poised to change school life as we knew it. Sounding more James Bond than school rules, pupils at Redlands Primary School in Chippenham in Wiltshire are the first in the country to pilot a biometric-based registration system.

The system operates using pupils' fingerprints. Each child gives their biometric once. It is then broken down into a 40-point data set, encrypted, and stored in a central database. When the pupil arrives at school, they register at a check-in station, which automatically identifies and verifies their identity.

If a child has not checked in by 30 minutes after the start of the school day, they are recorded as absent and a text message is sent to their parents.

The system is intended to cut administration for teachers, giving them more time for teaching, as well as tackling truancy by keeping a closer and more accurate check on absent children.

These benefits are all well and good, but the introduction of the technology to mainstream, public use, and away from small-scale specialist projects, raises wider questions.

The civil liberty arguments about the storage and management of biometric details will obviously come to the fore.

They will need to be able to demonstrate that they can store such sensitive information safely, accurately and securely, to convince parents that their children are not in danger of becoming the spied-on subjects of a Big Brother nation.

The age-old routine of morning registration looks set to become a thing of the past

A school in California recently issued ID badges to its pupils to make the registration process easier for teachers. The school announced its plans in its weekly newsletter, thanking parents for their support.

But that support never came. Instead, a media circus ensued when it emerged that the badges contained radio frequency identification tags, allowing the school to keep tabs on its pupils' whereabouts. The badges became a symbol of the sinister side of technology – an emotive issue even without children being involved.

Although biometric registration is not quite the same as, essentially, tagging children, it is perhaps an indication of things to come, and of the potential of technology.

We already know that there is enormous resistance to databases of such information: look at the trouble the government is having convincing people of the viability of its ID card scheme.

And the results of the biometrics trials conducted by the UK Passport Service last year have fuelled negative publicity. Tests concluded that the fingerprint technology was just 81 per cent accurate.

If systems such as the one being tested at Redlands school are the way of the future, schools will have to prove that the technology is reliable.

But biometric technology is still regularly lambasted for being difficult to manage and insufficiently advanced. Businesses with sophisticated IT departments often cite such reasons as these for their resistance to adopting biometrics.

If such issues cause concern for these organisations, how will the average school be able to cope?

The school IT department will become an increasingly important part of the school structure as technology becomes further embedded in the education process.

If biometric technology proves successful in Wiltshire and is adopted by other schools, that may be the boost it needs among businesses, as they realise what it can do for them.

Whatever happens, it looks as if the age-old routine of morning registration is set to become a thing of the past.

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Do not restrict our creative industries

Will Davies

THE main battleground of the 2005 General Election was style not substance. While Michael Howard staked his claim on simplicity and brevity, the government used its manifesto to appear authoritative and at ease with the technicalities of policy.

This may explain how such a complicated issue as intellectual property (IP) managed to make it into Labour's policy proposals: 'We will modernise copyright and other forms of protection of intellectual property rights so that they are appropriate for the digital age. We will ensure content creators can protect their innovations in a digital age. Piracy is a growing threat and we will work with industry to protect against it.'

A major international conference in London this week hopes to take a step towards a more credible and robust IP regime. The Creative Economy Conference, organised by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and others, will explore the creative industries, threats and opportunities opened up by digital technology, and the most critical policy issues. But what will these be?

One thing we can be reasonably sure of is that enforcement will be a popular theme. Although it does little to endear them to the public, content industries have a habit of beginning any debate about IP on a note of paranoia. Creative industries are worth eight per cent of UK gross domestic product (GDP), but we are constantly forewarned that piracy threatens to wipe this out. Governments and industry must band together to uphold law and livelihood.

But this tone does not represent the most effective piece of public relations. Our creative industries make a marvellous contribution to our economy, but they can overstate the crisis that the internet poses.

The challenge is to focus on practical, productive activities first and foremost, while keeping alive the importance of policing existing IP rights. For instance, a host of new and more efficient publishing models are emerging that exploit the internet without imperilling the moral and financial rights of creators. Governments should recognise that these are precisely what the knowledge economy is all about, and nurture them.

A more forward-looking model of media literacy could also be developed. In the UK, the communications regulator, Ofcom, is responsible for the promotion of media literacy to help individuals confidently consume and create in a digital age. This is a noble ambition that should be treated as a serious policy programme, but when it comes to IP, the agenda suddenly turns matronly. 'Do not download illegally' it admonishes. And so children are taught what they are not allowed to do, but this should be secondary to what they are empowered to do.

These are already important questions for the DTI, and they are right to be pursuing the constructive lines of enquiry. Policy-makers are exploring whether there is anything more that can be done, in terms of model contracts or generic digital rights management solutions.

When it comes to IP, the agenda suddenly turns matronly. 'Do not download illegally!' it admonishes

There is one final issue that ought to be on the table at the Creative Economy Conference, but that almost certainly will not be. This is the fate of open-access culture and public domain. With copyright extensions likely to be driven through in the UK before too long, there is still too little space given to the interests of individuals, communities and – yes – businesses that exploit the internet in collaborative and productive ways. There are credible economic arguments for limiting the expansion of IP, not to mention the obvious cultural arguments for doing so.

This week's conference should be a useful step towards a more effective and legitimate model of IP protection for the digital age. But it would be a shame if it were to lose sight of Europe's longer-term goals of higher productivity and a thriving public culture.

William Davies is a senior research fellow at the Institute for Public Policy Research, where he is leading a project on 'Intellectual Property and the Public Sphere'. See http://ippr.typepad.com

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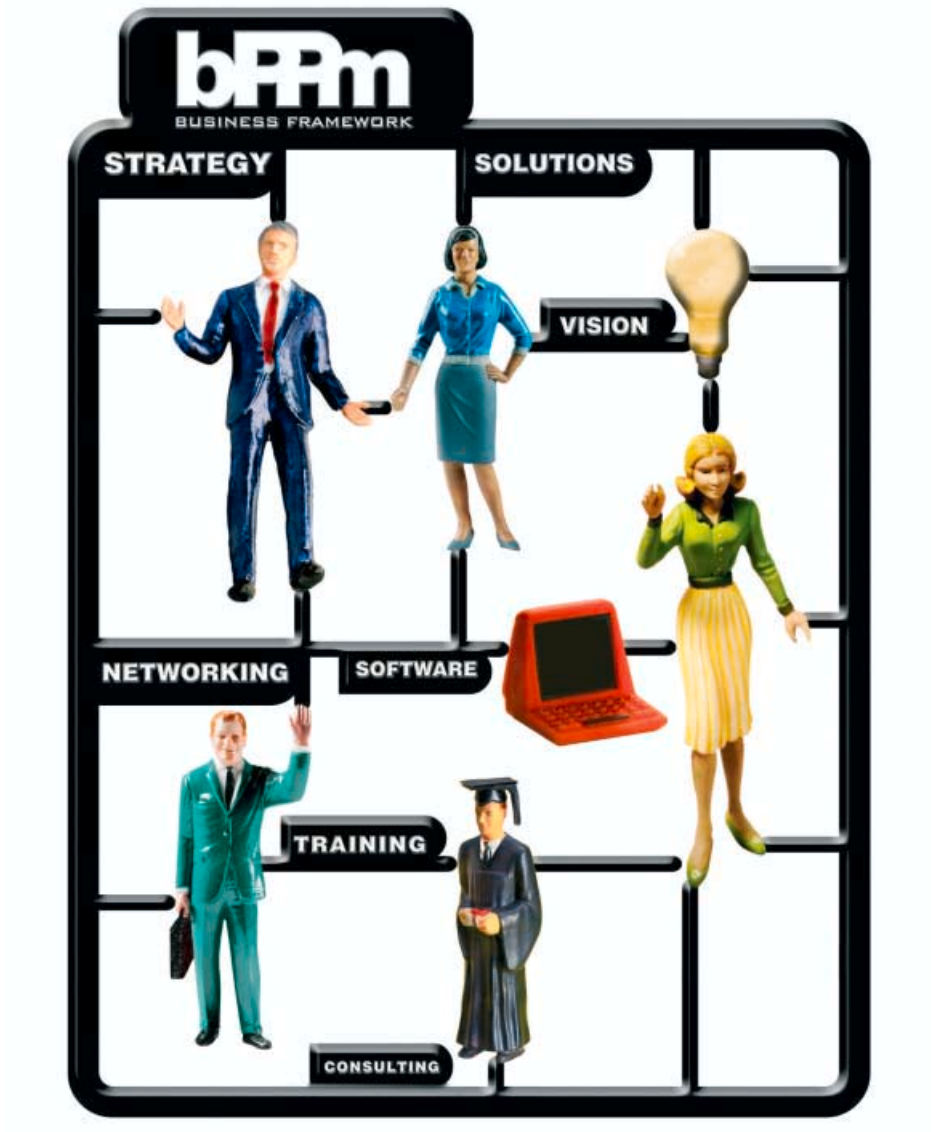

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IT must be central to convergence

comment

THE convergence of television, telephony and the internet is generating a great deal of national debate and economic activity.

Cable giant NTL is taking over rival Telewest with just this aim – to take on BT as a telecoms provider and the likes of Sky as a broadcaster.

While the discussions are focusing on – and being dominated by – the broadcasting industry, the implications of this convergence are far more widespread and potentially affect all who work in IT.

William Davies, from think-tank the Institute for Public Policy Research, writes for us this week about the dangers of over-legislation damaging the UK's creative industries as they struggle to understand and control issues such as intellectual property in a digital world (*see page 24*).

The TV-focused mindset is causing widespread concern as a result of EU plans to amend the rules governing broadcasting to include the web – a move which some see as heralding internet legislation by the back door (*see page 42*).

And the law has often struggled to cope with the software industry, for many years trying to fit an entirely new sector into existing legislation that was primarily designed for a physical, print-centric world.

Technology trade body Intellect has rightly identified media convergence as a major issue and is lobbying – and attempting to educate – the government to ensure the IT industry's opinions are heard.

But where is the IT user community in this debate? A world where TV, radio, media content and telephony all operate on the same digital infrastructure is not far away. Who will write the software and implement the systems to support this environment? IT directors and their teams, that's who.

This topic will become more high-profile in coming years, especially as deadlines approach for analogue TV switch-off, and TV over broadband use increases. IT leaders need to be at the heart of the debate, or risk being handed a model designed by legislators and broadcast lobbyists and be expected to make it work.

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Decision-makers want to know the benefit and value of investing in security measures, says **Steve Hunt**

Good security is a business enabler

IT IS an uphill battle to convince decision-makers in any business that they need to invest in security. Deep down, all professional business people think of security as an annoying layer of cost and inconvenience.

Getting the buy-in for security products and services means understanding what drives a company's security purchase decisions – basically, what is going on in the minds of the bosses. Fear, uncertainty and doubt are not the cleverest tools to use any more. The security industry is undergoing changes as it adjusts to the convergence of IT with physical security. But companies want something that may seem a foreign concept to the security profession: value.

Nobody wants security; they want the benefits of security. A homeowner does not want the finest deadbolt on the front door because of the excellence of its engineering; they want a comfortable, happy place in which to live.

Businesses also want something other than security. If a bank has a mandate to reduce expenses related to its cashiers, there are two options. It could fire all the tellers and lock up all the branches, but then the bank would have no interface with its customers. Or it could take all the money, put it in piles on the street corner under a clipboard that says: 'Take what you want, but write it down so we may balance your account.' And that, obviously, would not work either.

The best solution for reducing cashier expenses is to take the money, put in on a street corner locked in a box with a computer attached, and give customers a plastic card for authentication and auditing. Security was never the point. The bank had a business objective and achieved it by using some security.

Business managers, especially executives at the highest levels of an organisation, have a very simple view of security: it is a tool in the corporate toolbox for enabling business.

Your security strategy should protect your business, not just your building

Corbis

Managers responsible for an ecommerce business want a few things. They want to know who is using their web site. They want to ensure that visitors can do everything on the site they need to do. They want an easy way to manage it. And they need a report that tells them what has happened, so they can improve customer satisfaction, reduce errors and increase profits.

That example includes all four fundamental categories of security: authentication, authorisation, administration and audit. But the manager does not think of security once. That's because it is not the point.

Whenever possible, security professionals should purge the word 'security' from their vocabulary, and instead answer the questions inside the boss's head, without simply spouting the ways that security can stop bad things from happening.

Management will think in terms of what people will be needed, whether headcount can be reduced, how much it will cost, how much the company can save, and what new revenue the investment can earn for the company. They think not in terms of security risks, but in terms of credit risk, market risks and operational risks.

One US company spent $35m on physical security upgrades after 9/11, and $4m on IT security upgrades. Yet last autumn the company failed its Sarbanes-Oxley audit because of poor security. How? Visitors were given a badge for the day, but they could still walk unescorted past cubicles with unattended computers logged into financial systems. The auditor lost confidence in the integrity of the numbers. Anyone could have moved a decimal point or added a zero.

If you know that your facilities need more security, tell managers how it will help them measure or achieve compliance to regulations such as Sarbanes-Oxley. Audit employee behaviour, or lock up financial systems, or shred financial documents, or do background checks, or secure backup tapes.

Help management to identify the ways that the authentication, authorisation, administration or audit systems that you're proposing will solve the problem, or will help customers make the gains they hope for.

The aim is not to secure the building; it is to secure your business.

Steve Hunt is president of consultancy 4A International

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There's a time and a place for jargon

Letter of the week

YOU are way off the mark in suggesting that IT is to blame for using jargon and for poor communication with other parts of the business (IT needs to make itself understood, 29 September).

You cite the use of 'bi-directional knowledge transfer' to mean 'talking' as an example. But no engineer would ever come up with that – that is a marketing man talking.

Jargon is used in any specialism to allow brevity in discussion. When presenting information to a non-technical audience I necessarily use non-technical language. But to a technical audience I save a lot of time by using the jargon of our particular field.

Brian Parker
By email

In English, please

I have been battling with computers, users and computer 'experts' for 35 years (IT needs to make itself understood, 29 September). I always seem to be caught in the middle.

I long ago realised that if the salesperson cannot express the problem or solution in simple English that a user can understand, then the salesperson does not really understand the product.

Jargon is an excellent shorthand between experts, but should be kept tightly locked inside the expert's cage.

Mike Feilding
By email

A necessary evil

I wholeheartedly agree with your views on jargon (IT needs to make itself understood, 29 September).

Jargon does alienate. But it is often used to demean or diminish the arguments of sound technical people trying to express worthwhile solutions for the benefit of the business.

Even though using jargon always carries the risk that it will make users or potential clients switch off, it is impossible not to use some technical references, even in a business context.

There has to be understanding on both sides, but expecting that is probably asking for a miracle.

Bridget Saunders
By email

Current affairs

Despite being an IT engineer, manager, worker and teaboy for more than 25 years, even I am confused by what some of these guys are on about (IT needs to make itself understood, 29 September).

Usually a reply of 'And in English, please' or 'And your point is?' normally suffices in bringing jargon culprits to their knees.

If that does not work, 240V wired into the offender's chair has a remarkable effect – start low and slowly increase to 240V when they still insist on 'looking outside the box'.

The truth is that it is hard sometimes to come out of the lingo when you mix with ordinary sane people, and it is actually

computing
IT needs to make itself understood
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but

Let me be understood: 29 September

becoming an increasingly common language with everyone. Even my 18-year-old nephew can spout gobbledegook at the drop of a hat and he has nothing to do with the industry – yet.

Paul Wilson
By email

Able – but also capable

My impression is that the few women who actually do make a career in IT are disproportionately more able, on average, than the men who work with them (No excuses for IT's lack of diversity, 15 September).

My interpretation of this is not that women are inherently more capable than men, but that only the most capable women stay in IT. The only averagely capable women find other careers.

The complacent attitude expressed by two of your correspondents (Letters, 29 September), is that women find IT work inherently less satisfying than men. I can see no reason why this should be, but it is not impossible.

The alternative is that women have not been rewarded in a way that satisfies them. Only the highly capable, who presumably get higher recognition and rewards, stay in the industry.

The complacency of your correspondents resembles the attitude taken by those who said that women could not, for example, become doctors or drive cars. History has consistently proved them wrong.

Alec Cawley
By email

Work for your rights

A lot has been said about IT and sexism, IT and ageism (Letters, 15, 22, 29 September). The fact is that these issues exist but they are not going to go away unless people fight to change things.

I have been told to my face that 'because of the difficulty in pronouncing my name', that they would be more likely to throw my CV in the bin if spotted in a pile of potential applicants for a job.

I am a black woman, with an African name, and a mother of five children, yet have still managed to fight my way up to become an IT director of a large company.

How? Each time the goalpost has been moved, I have worked hard to cope with the change.

Doctors, lawyers, social workers and pilots are required to update their skills on an ongoing basis, so why not IT people?

I have decided that I shall continue to update my skills and keep reading until the day comes for me to meet my maker. If I see a job I want, and I do not have a certain qualification required, I go and get that qualification so I am better placed to apply next time around.

There is a potential pitfall awaiting me in five years when I hit 44.

What am I doing about that? Getting more qualifications, so I can set up my own business and move into consultancy, networking with the right people now so that when I am too old to be employed, someone out there will remember my good deeds. It is hard, but it works.

Ibukun Adebayo
By email

Well-developed

Martin Fustes says that good software developers are becoming hard to find, but does not offer any justification for this claim (Improve your best practice, 22 September).

I would like to see at least a passing reference to the supporting evidence or debates behind such statements. I could equally assert that good IT journalists are becoming hard to find, although I might be wrong.

Peter Elliott
By email

Agencies play by the rules

Here we go again (Letters, 29 September). Sorry, Nick Lake, but agencies do not place fake job adverts. Legislation and watchdogs ensure that laws are complied with. It is illegal to advertise a job that you do not have a commission to fill.

Lake suggests that the telltale signs are an absence of an employer's name. Publishing a name allows candidates to go direct to the employer, which would lose the agency the commission.

No salary package? Employers often specify that the package is not to be advertised. Role description lacks specifics? Does Lake mean it does not specify what is on his CV?

The real problem in the IT recruitment market is too many 'IT experts' in very narrow fields with employers offering broader IT posts.

Raymond McKerron
ANA Recruitment

Talking point

On project testing
(More problems for CMS2, 15 September)
Pressure to get systems up and running without adequate functional and non-functional testing will inevitably mean blockages and the system buckling. End-users often find it difficult to be objective about what they need, so have poorly specified requirements up front. Testing needs to be established at the start of the project's lifecycle or the system will inevitably develop critical defects that are costly to identify and rectify, resulting in negative PR, lost productivity, wasted resources and disappointed customers.
Graham Smith
IS Integration

On schools IT
(How standardising IT will benefit UK schools, 1 September 2005)
The problem in schools IT is that the various systems are difficult to manage and keep up to date, requiring a lot of overhead from teaching staff. The latest developments are in lesson planning systems, which are believed capable of reducing teacher workload and improving lesson planning and delivery in the classroom. The dilemma is in getting all of these systems to talk to one another, and this is where education technology body Becta needs to put in some effort. Training and support is also a big issue, but there is often not enough money made available to schools to implement systems properly.
Gerard Toplass
Azzurri Communications

On compliance
(Companies given compliance guidelines, 29 September)
Digital record disposition is emerging as a major consideration for many archives. Exactly how and when data can be destroyed is governed by some regulations, and is at the heart of operational risk management. An archive strategy has to balance regulatory requirements to retain records with a corporate desire to destroy them for both practical and liability motives.
Steve Tongish
Plasmon

On successful IT
(Key measures for a successful project, 22 September)
Paul Underwood highlights the importance of focusing on realising the real benefits from IT projects. One of the most comprehensive processes for monitoring progress towards this goal is the Office of Government Commerce's Gateway Review process, which provides project managers with guidelines to help them focus on the benefits throughout a project. The fifth and final review is indeed built around a formal benefits realisation checkpoint.
Ray Mather
Jupiter Consulting Services

computing AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE 2005

This week we profile the nominations for voluntary and innovative projects at this year's *Computing* Awards for Excellence 2005, to be hosted in London on 16 November

Voluntary Sector Projects of the Year

People's Dispensary for Sick Animals

The People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) is the UK's leading veterinary charity, every year providing more than 1.2 million free treatments to sick and injured pets of people in need, through 42 PetAid hospitals and 181 shops.

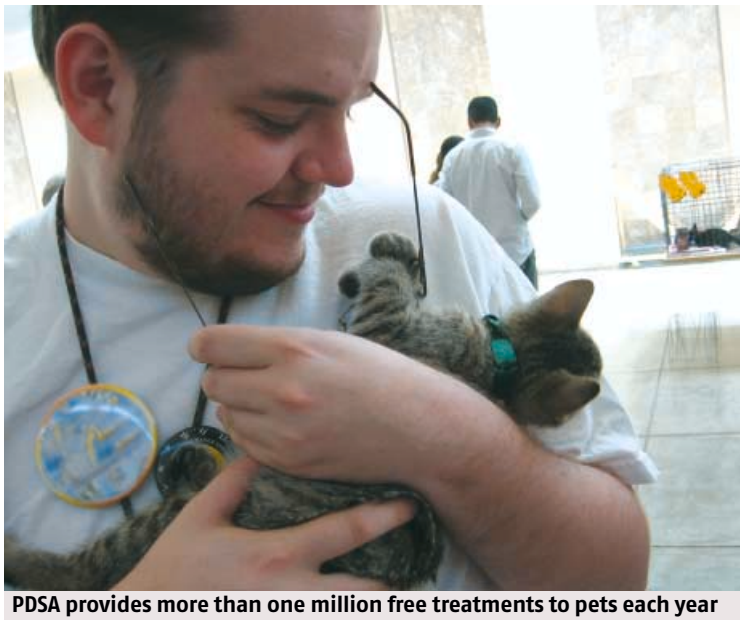
The charity wanted to improve communications and make central IT resources more available to staff, so installed a secure broadband network provided by supplier Star.

All hospitals and regional offices had broadband and new PC equipment installed in just two working months.

The new network has cut costs and allowed more use of secure home working for staff. Retail sites can now input sales figures directly into the central database, and IT support teams can provide remote diagnostics without requiring visits to site.

The network has allowed a number of key applications to feed into PDSA's customer relationship management system, providing a single view of the charity's supporters, and helping the marketing team improve campaigning.

Future plans for the charity include bringing hosting of the PDSA web site back in-house and development of an organisation-wide intranet.



PDSA provides more than one million free treatments to pets each year

MapAction

MapAction is an international charity that supports humanitarian relief operations through the collection of geographical information and production of crisis mapping for aid agencies in disaster zones.

The charity used web services technology to integrate geographical information systems, global positioning systems (GPS) and satellite communications to support teams in the field and at base in the UK. Using mapping technology from supplier ESRI, MapAction teams collect, analyse, present and deliver customised reports to help the response to crises.

The system was used in Sri Lanka to support relief operations after the tsunami disaster in December last year.

MapAction assisted the government by collecting information from affected districts to provide real-time mapping of the area, covering data such as population statistics and road accessibility, and the activities of the various relief organisations working in the region.

Future plans include a global data archive and distribution of electronic interactive maps in the field to humanitarian organisations.

GAP Activity Projects

GAP Activity Projects (Gap) is an educational charity that provides overseas volunteering placements for 17- to 25-year-olds. Each year, Gap places 2,000 volunteers in projects in 31 countries.

Gap worked with the University of Reading on a project to web-enable its processes, as part of a Department of Trade and Industry-sponsored programme. A number of innovative systems were developed using modern programming tools such as XML, C# and SQL Server, including online applications and payments, management information, and interactive features to support a web community of volunteers.

As a result of the project, more than 80 per cent of applications are now completed online, freeing up staff time for other work.

Gap has launched an electronic magazine to communicate with more schools, and overall marketing costs have been cut through the higher-profile web presence.

The new systems will support greater internationalisation of the charity's work, aid fundraising and help create new services for Gap students.

Teach First

Teach First is a not-for-profit organisation that recruits high-calibre graduates to undergo placements in challenging London schools, sponsored by businesses that help provide training in leadership and subsequent internship opportunities.

To manage the relationships in the scheme – involving schools, universities, government organisations and businesses – the charity introduced an online customer relationship management system from supplier Salesforce.com, which is also a sponsor of the operation. Using the web-based software immediately saved the charity £80,000 a year, money previously spent on third-party application development and support.

The system manages all Teach First's activities, from graduate recruitment to event management, campaigning and communication with the various stakeholders and participants in the programme.

Teach First has placed 340 students in teaching posts in London, the first of whom will graduate this year to move into roles in teaching, business, government or the voluntary sector.

Plan

Plan is one of the world's largest child sponsorship charities, raising money from more than one million sponsors in 15 countries to invest in projects such as health, education, housing, water and sanitation.

The unique nature of the organisation means it is difficult to find off-the-shelf software to support its operations, so an in-house team is employed to develop applications using Microsoft's .Net tools. But the charity found it was having problems in effectively testing and fault finding newly-developed systems before implementation.

A review by consultancy Silversands identified issues such as high levels of user support needed, problems with changes and patching, and a complicated fault finding process.

As a result, Plan decided to centralise IT control across its three hubs in Europe, Asia and the US. Part of this involved creating a replica of the IT infrastructure to test new applications or upgrades before going live.

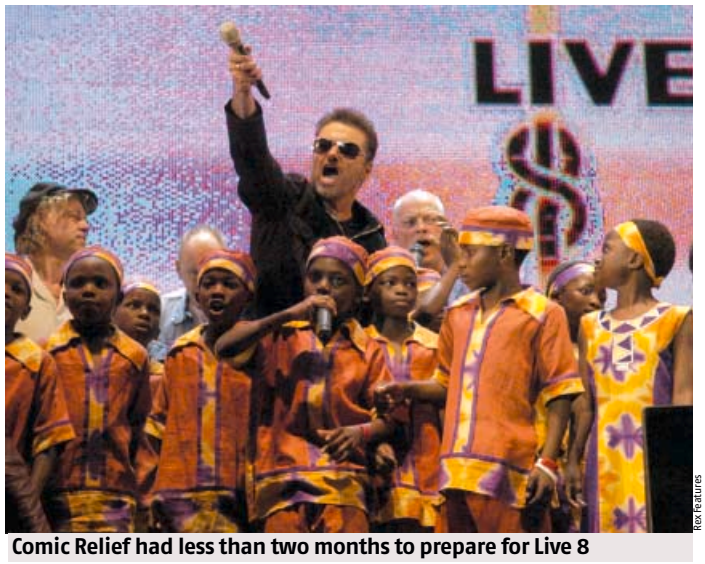
The new environment was built around VMware software to create a virtual infrastructure testing capability. The system has improved the speed and efficiency of testing, reduced the risk from changes to software, and will help deliver innovative applications that allow IT to help sponsors track the progress of their child. ➔

Comic Relief

Comic Relief set up a web site to support its Red Nose Day fundraising activity, to process online donations as well as provide information to visitors on the charity's work. On Red Nose Day itself, the site processed more than 240,000 transactions worth more than £8m.

The site was built with help from sponsors Cisco, Energis, Macromedia, Oracle, Sun Microsystems, SkyNet Systems and Akamai, using innovative grid technology to support 14 web servers, with 500Mbit/s of available bandwidth. The use of collaboration tools with broadband and virtual private network technology allowed a UK-wide team of 20 consultants to manage the site, while reducing travel and accommodation costs by 60 per cent.

After a successful Red Nose Day, the team behind the infrastructure was given less than two months to prepare for supporting the global Live 8 concerts in the summer. The systems were re-engineered to take more than nine million petition entries online, with some 300 million hits during the concerts. Traffic peaked at 905Mbit/s, serving 5.3TB of data – the equivalent of four, five-week long Red Nose Day campaigns.



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Comic Relief had less than two months to prepare for Live 8

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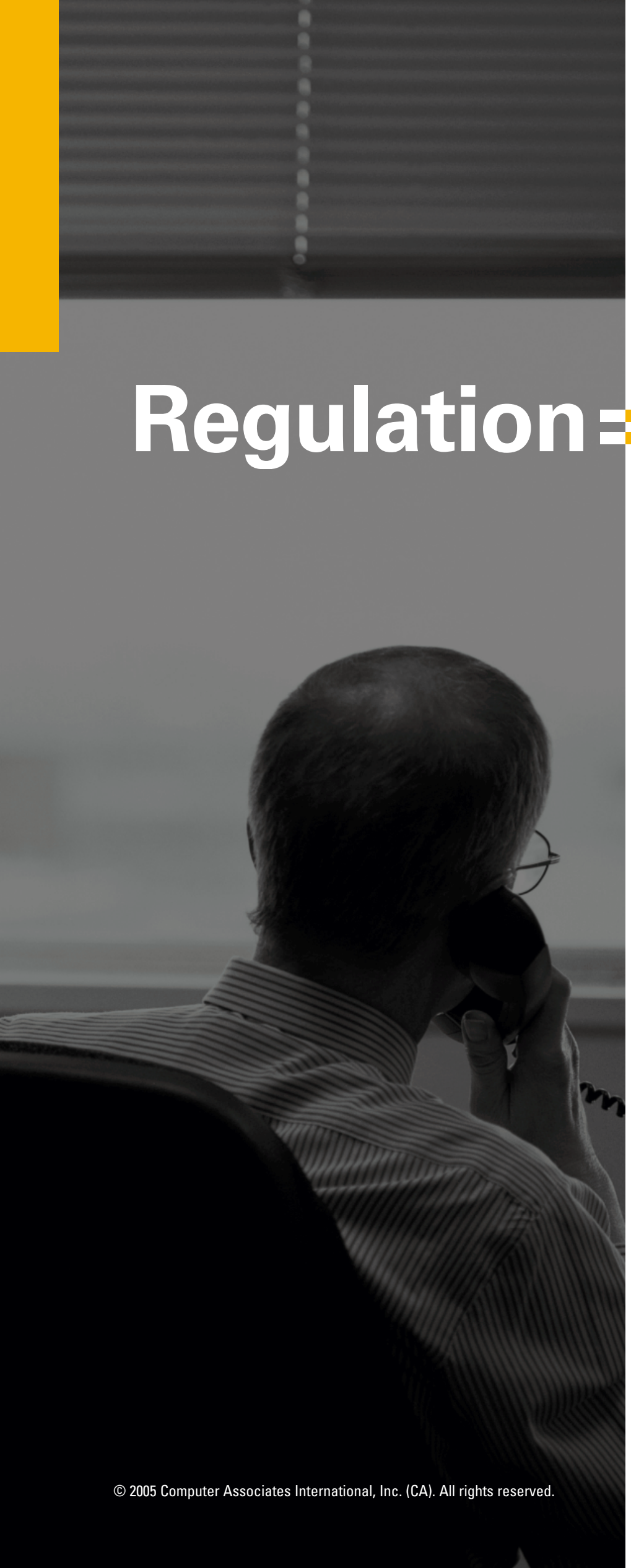

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Innovative Projects of the Year

BNP Paribas UK

Financial services giant BNP Paribas used grid computing technology to build a more flexible IT architecture for its structured credit department.

The banking group had historically followed industry practice of building IT systems with plenty of spare capacity to cope with future growth.

But realising that this would mean spending extra money on hardware and support, the company turned to vendor DataSynapse to create a grid infrastructure to increase its use of existing resources.

The first phase of the project went live in July 2004, with 100 servers connected onto a computing grid. The second phase was completed in March this year, adding a further 150 servers to create a system that now processes some 30,000 tasks every day.

'Prior to the grid implementation, the pricing of complex derivatives could take hours,' said Dipak Shah, head of structured credit IT at BNP Paribas UK.

'Now it's at the touch of a button – we can get a price in minutes.'

The grid system has also helped the bank create new revenue streams by introducing complex financial products more quickly.

Rex Features

The Environment Agency worked with Fujitsu on the £9.5m Floodline Warnings Direct project

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency is responsible for warning the five million people living in two million properties in flood risk areas about possible flooding from rivers and the seas.

Communication to so many people in such a short time is a challenge, and the systems in place since 1996 were reaching the end of their useful life.

The agency worked with Fujitsu Services on a £9.5m project to develop Floodline Warnings Direct, to allow alerts to be issued by email, internet, text messages and mobiles, as well as fixed telephones and fax.

The system combines a web front-end, specially written middleware, spatial databases and text-to-speech conversion software to improve the work of the agency.

The project has taken more than three years, with work starting in May 2002, through design phases in October 2003 to beginning development work in early 2004.

It is running in parallel with business transition and preparation work up to the present day.

pH Europe

pH Europe provides bulk container transport services for a range of companies shipping products as diverse as pharmaceuticals, food, chemicals and industrial parts.

Working with systems integrator JDS Professional Services and products from supplier RF Code, the company developed a system to track trucks and containers in real-time.

The project introduced a hybrid approach using radio frequency identification (RFID) tags on containers and global positioning system (GPS) satellite tracking for trucks.

As a truck leaves a pH site, an automated check scans the containers in less than five seconds, and relates them to the truck for tracking purposes. This improves asset utilisation and allows better planning and scheduling.

pH is also offering an asset tracking service to allow customers to monitor their assets, and create additional revenue as a result.

Further benefits have been achieved by cutting labour costs, reducing breakages and losses, and providing a better, more flexible service to customers.

Innovative Projects of the Year

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) is the government education agency responsible for overseeing the GCSE and A-level exams and national tests at ages 7, 11 and 14.

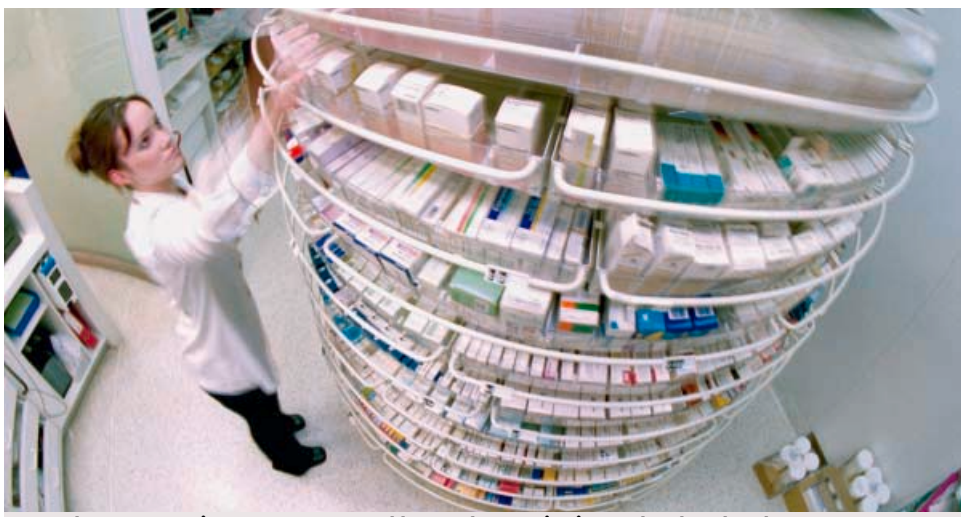
In 2003, QCA launched a six-year, £29m project to build an IT system for delivering on-screen tests to 4,000 secondary schools, and to develop a new practical IT test for 14-year-olds.

This year, a national pilot covering more than 45,000 pupils was completed, proving the process from registering to completing the tests.

The system is installed in some 700 schools, rising to 4,000 by 2007. The project has reduced operational costs per pupil from £7.20 for comparable paper-based tests to £4.60, and aims to implement on-screen exams in all secondary schools in England.

In future, the system may be extended to other examinations, as well as a further 30,000 colleges and primary schools. It is also attracting interest from overseas education bodies.

The QCA also manages a £37m per year business developing paper-based tests, and says that migrating this activity to the new system could save more than 30 per cent of the costs of the operation.



More than 180,000 items were scanned by 44 pharmacies in England and Wales

Cordon Pharmacy

In January this year, suppliers Aegate and BT completed a three-month pilot with six pharmaceutical firms to tag medicines at the point of dispensing using radio frequency identification (RFID) and barcodes.

More than 180,000 items were scanned by 44 pharmacies across England and Wales, using a custom-built scanner to authenticate prescriptions against a secure database. The pilot showed that tagging products in this way can help tackle counterfeit medicines, improve patient safety by reducing medication errors, and improve the service provided by pharmacies. Some 90 per cent of pharmacies in the pilot said the technology gave them more confidence that they were dispensing the correct medicine.

Aegate's parent company, PA Consulting, is now investing £15m to bring the authentication at the point of dispensing service to market in the UK.

'The scanner has proved a very innovative addition to the dispensing process,' said Fliss Davies, of Cordon Pharmacy.

SE3D/HP Labs

HP Laboratories in Bristol led the formation of the SE3D Animation Showcase, an initiative to allow 12 promising film-makers to create 3D animated films using utility computing technology.

HP Labs created a service to support animation rendering – the process of converting 'wire frame' computer models into finished frames of film.

This is a good test environment for utility computing because the process requires heavy compute requirements, but only at certain points in the film production cycle. Smaller companies cannot afford to buy their own systems to support rendering, but offering a pay-as-you-go service makes access to such advanced technology a possibility.

Animators loaded their digital input data to the rendering service, which runs on 120 HP servers in California. Rendered frames were downloaded by the animators when complete.

The project demonstrates the use of utility computing in a commercial environment – sharing and paying for limited resources, although in this case the initiative was supported by UK arts and media funding bodies.

The 12 SE3D films were shown at the Cannes Film Festival this year.

Virus alert level

ALERT STATUS is 2: (1 to 5 where 5 is most serious). There is serious worm/virus activity without a public exploit code

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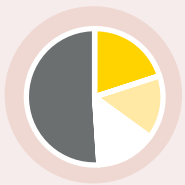
Most active viruses this week...



1 **Netsky q** 20%
2 **Zafi b** 15%
3 **Zafi d** 14%
4 **Others** 51%

QUOTE *of the WEEK*

'Google and Nasa share a common desire: to bring a universe of information to people around the world.'

Google chief executive Eric Schmidt, announcing a partnership between the two organisations

the Week

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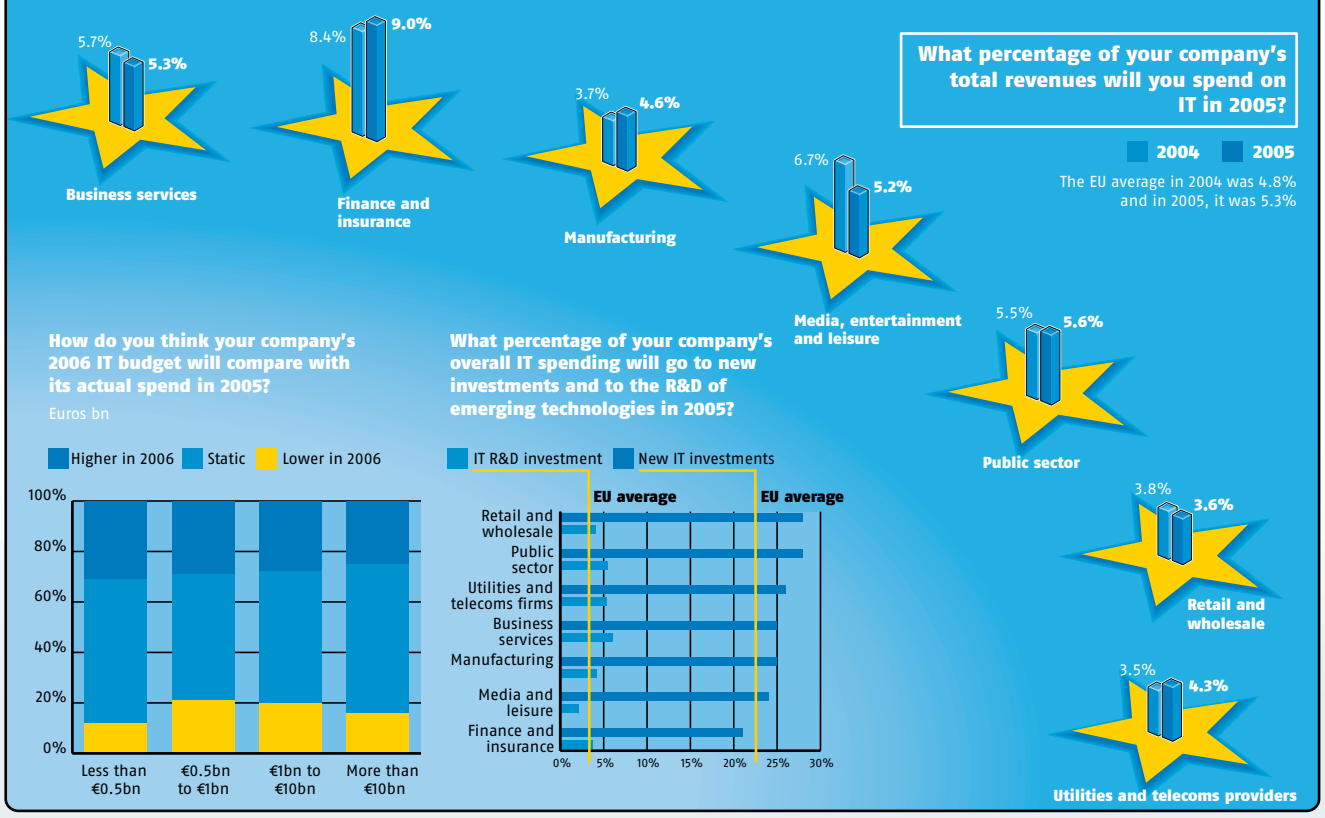
Critical stats

IT budgets in Europe
Source: Forrester Research



News from Europe

Smart cars could help reduce road accidents in the future, reports the *Reuters* news agency. Dr Charles Spence, an experimental psychologist at the University of Oxford, says scientists are studying utilising the senses, such as smell and touch, to develop safety features. Spence says vibrating seats, belts or foot pedals could alert drivers in a subtle way to a dangerous situation

News from Europe

Awareness of internet calling technology is steadily growing in the UK, reports *BBC Online*. Almost half of those questioned said they knew they could make cheap phone calls via the web using voice over IP (VoIP) technology. The research commissioned by VoIP firm Skype found that people aged over 55 were the most likely to use the net to keep in touch

US news

Search engine Google has signed an agreement to develop up to one million square feet at the Nasa Ames Research Center in Mountain View, Silicon Valley. The two organisations will work together to develop computing tools – and to promote entrepreneurial initiatives in outer space, reports *Information Week*

News from Asia/Pacific

China has defended new restrictions on online news content, reports *The Australian*. 'Any media in any country have to observe laws and regulations,' foreign ministry spokesman Qin Gang told a briefing. The new rules, issued recently by China's State Council, require operators to re-register news sites and to police sites for content that can endanger state security and social order

News from Asia/Pacific

South Korean chip maker Samsung is planning to spend $33bn (£19bn) expanding output, reports *BBC Online*. The company says it aims to create 14,000 new jobs and add 5,000 research posts over the next seven years, creating the world's biggest semiconductor factory. The lines will be added to Samsung's Kiheung and Hwaseong factories near Seoul

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Mark Samuels kicks off this month's networking special report with a look at how leading-edge network technology investments can help to create a more efficient system

UPS enlists wireless help to deliver a better service

PACKAGE delivery specialist UPS personifies the modern-day wireless business. The company spends $1bn (£566m) annually on IT, much of which is directed towards leading-edge wireless projects.

'The whole idea is to make scanning as easy as possible and to give our people in operations the freedom of movement,' says UPS European technology marketing manager Andreas Topp.

Topp has worked at the company for almost 12 years, starting in a part-time position while completing his IT degree.

'When I started, we had to check every label postal code manually. Now everything happens automatically,' he says.

'One guy would scan, another guy would load the packages. Now everything is done by one person who wears wireless technology.'

Topp now has a specific remit to deliver UPS's customer-facing technology.

His role requires careful pan-European co-ordination: the Belgium-based executive works in league with Graham Nugent, UPS's IT legacy and strategy manager, based in Poland.

'Graham and I are joined at the hip – he does the operational side of technology and I do the customer-facing side of things,' says Topp.

'When he tries to make our operations leaner and meaner, I try to get the best on the customer side.'

Nugent's priority in the past six months has been UPS's Global Scanning System (GSS).

On the operational side, GSS aims to make package scanning as easy as possible, while on the customer side, Topp says GSS allows each package to be scanned whenever it comes into contact with a UPS employee.

'From a tracking and tracing perspective, it gives us the possibility to show every stage that a package has taken through our network,' he says.

Topp: UPS is already on the lookout for further innovation, and has RFID in its sights

A package posted from London to New York, for example, will be scanned as it is taken from the aeroplane, sorted at the air hub and placed on the delivery truck.

Topp says GSS provides maximum information and allows instant visibility.

'If a package is not showing up at any point in the network, we know that something has gone wrong. We can then inform the customer and take the necessary steps,' he says.

The GSS system allows UPS sorting staff to use small Bluetooth scanners, worn on the middle finger.

The scanners send package tracking data to the company's computer network via WiFi terminals attached to the employee's belt.

UPS has concluded a pilot project and is rolling out the technology in the Netherlands and Germany. UK deployment will start in November.

Topp says it was helpful that the trials involved UPS's scanning operators from the beginning.

'We found out that the feel of the ring scanner was not as good as it could have been, so we changed it a little,' he says.

'We are also seeing a 30 per cent reduction in repair costs,' he says.

Such savings can be partially credited to the lack of snagged cables, which no longer occur thanks to the company's move to wireless technology.

By 2007, UPS's $100m (£57m) GSS system will be used in 118 countries, and will be introduced at 2,000 of its facilities.

The company-wide rollout will also involve the introduction of about 12,000 WiFi access points.

'The project is huge – it is one of the biggest we have undertaken,' says Topp.

But GSS is just one technology. And, like the rest of UPS's European processes, Topp says the company's use of wireless technology has evolved as a multi-stage process.

Another important stage involved the gradual worldwide introduction of Diad IV, the company's latest version of its handheld computer for delivery drivers.

The $100m (£57m) project automatically provides drivers with updated delivery information. Diad IV will be implemented in Europe from the beginning of 2006.

'From the customer side of things, the device will be the foundation of every service we are going to roll out,' says Topp.

He adds that Diad IV in particular will be the foundation for many of UPS's customer-facing applications.

One key example is On-route/Re-route: a service that UPS is testing, which automatically tells a driver where to deliver a package if a customer moves from one location to another.

Other customer-facing, shipping and billing applications have already been rolled out across Europe.

Quantum View Manage, a web-based proactive visibility system, allows customers to filter delivery data to receive only the information relevant to their business. Some 3,300 European businesses are already using the system since its introduction last year.

'If a package is not showing up at any point in the network, we know that something has gone wrong'

UPS Europe has also introduced Campus Ship, a web-based system that enables multiple users in an organisation to ship packages and letters from their desktop.

And UPS Billing Data translates company shipping data and produces spreadsheets and business reports.

Topp says these tools combine to produce a comprehensive package – but the company continues to be on the lookout for further innovation.

'It's all about producing increased control and visibility,' he says.

'In three years, we will start looking more towards radio frequency identification technology – and that is something we are already doing.'

Smart labels and RFID

UPS's wireless postal network relies on smart labels, tags fixed to the top of boxes and envelopes that are read by overhead scanners so packages can be automatically sorted.

'I call it the package's licence plate,' says UPS European technology marketing manager Andreas Topp. 'You can get all the information, such as weight and destination, electronically.'

The tags help package sorting at UPS's multimillion-pound, automated air hubs.

Topp says the firm is doubling the capacity of its main European air hub in Cologne, a facility due to re-open later this year.

Radio frequency identification technology (RFID) could also help speed automation at the air hub. But while the cost of UPS's smart labels is negligible, RFID tags cost about $1 (57p) each.

So UPS – which receives about 40 million small packages a day – is placing tags only on small sort bags at the moment, which usually contain between 40 and 60 packages.

Such tagging helps the company to know where the sort bags are in the air hub facility.

'It is all about cost. We recycle those bags; they come back after a week or so and we do the whole thing again. It's an internally focused project that helps us know where packages are,' says Topp.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2075955

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www.computing.co.uk

A government venture aims to show companies the benefits of grid computing, says **Martin Fustes**

DTI backs plans to promote grid computing in business

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has long been a generous advocate of grid computing, having invested more than £250m in the e-Science research programme that is responsible for developing grid computing resources in the UK.

With its roots firmly embedded in the science community, grid computing has always had more than a faint whiff of academia about it, and the business world has – for the most part – been content to let it remain in the research lab.

But the DTI is keen to promote the benefits of grid computing to the wider business community – and earlier this year announced a £1m investment to set up a programme to promote grid's commercial potential to British blue-chip companies.

IECnet, as the collaborative programme is known, is a joint venture between the National e-Science Centre and IT trade body Intellect. It was set up as a result of the findings of a grid taskforce formed by the Information Age Partnership think tank in 2003.

IECnet manager Ian Osborne says the taskforce was set up to assess the potential of grid computing in UK plc.

'In 2004, the taskforce came back with the recommendation that there was great potential to exploit grid, particularly in the UK's strongest industries – financial services, pharmaceuticals and life sciences in general, as well as digital media creation,' he says.

Intellect, together with the National e-Science Centre, won the contract to set up IECnet, which is governed by an advisory council with members from all parts of the industry, including Oracle, IBM, HP, Intel, BT and Microsoft.

Osborne is quick to dismiss potential claims that IECnet is simply a promotional vehicle for vendors.

The DTI has invested more than £250m in the development of grid computing in the UK

'I do represent a constituency in some respects,' he says. 'But my argument is that I am balanced, because I represent them all. I am trying to be objective, and the vendors are all very supportive in me being objective.'

The fundamental belief driving IECnet is that the majority of UK chief information officers (CIOs) do not realise the potential business gains from implementing grid technologies.

And Osborne's role as part of IECnet is to educate CIOs about possible grid applications.

'I would like to build a vibrant community of CIOs and IT directors who can learn about grid computing and help inform where we need to go with our programme of events,' he says.

But the question remains, why exactly are UK businesses failing to grasp the potential of grid?

The answer, according to John Starling, principal consultant at Deloitte, is that there is a lack of exactness about what defines the technology.

'We believe that the different labels associated with grid computing have led to confusion about its uses and applications,' he says.

Even Osborne, the man appointed to the task of promoting the technology, seems reluctant to be drawn into the debate about what defines grid.

'The definition of grid is dreadful, and I am doing my best not to add another to the pile,' he says.

'But, broadly speaking, grid means that at some level you are harnessing all your computing resources and using them more broadly than just for the application for which they were bought.'

There is a lot of work still to do in making a strong business case for grid and, as Osborne admits, it is early days.

Even when businesses understand what grid can do for them, there is still a general perception that the complexities of implementing the technology may outweigh any potential business benefits.

A recent survey by consultant Deloitte showed that many UK CIOs believe grid would add a new level of complexity to their infrastructures, just as there is a major drive for simplification.

But Osborne is emphatic that grid can solve the IT director's problem of complexity.

'You can see this continuum that runs all the way from the discrete PC that you bought and locked in a room, to all computers all knowing about each other and being able to schedule work in sensible ways everywhere,' he says.

'Grid is a stage in that direction, and a stage beyond networked computing.'

Standards are where it comes together, says Osborne.

'I would like to build a vibrant community of CIOs and IT directors who can learn and help inform where we need to go'

'Several of the members of my advisory council are actively involved in the standards process,' he says. 'They are developing standards and open source applications to meet those standards, too.'

But as Malcolm Atkinson of the National e-Science Centre recently told a CIO conference: 'You have to be brave enough to do things without standards.'

The issue then, says Deloitte's Starling, is that technology leaders should be asking what new business models grid computing may enable the company to explore.

And to that end, Osborne is keen to build a community of interested CIOs and IT directors.

'I would like to think we can build an active community that will sustain itself once the DTI funding runs out in three years,' he says.

After all, as he points out: 'You can't change the world with a million quid.'

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2141717

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Case study ◯ Markit

Grid technology helps Markit handle database

FINANCIAL asset valuation specialist Markit chose grid computing to satisfy database scalability demands.

Founded in 2000, the company collects more than a million asset prices daily and handles a 50 per cent annual growth in information.

Chief technology officer Mike Bedford says the fundamental foundation of Markit's business is the company's database.

'Database scalability and reliability are imperative to meet the demands of our growing customer base,' he says.

To meet those needs, the company chose an Oracle grid computing infrastructure. Bedford says the results were almost immediate.

'Testing of Oracle's 10g database resulted in our data processing becoming between four and 10 times faster; satisfying report demands improved by 75 per cent and web site downtime was virtually eliminated,' he says.

Bedford says Markit's business plan always aimed to make use of grid technology.

'There are still more things we can do with the database cluster, and we will be making more use of it in the future,' he says.

Bedford says the company has plans to use its improved data processing power to offer a number of value-added services to customers.

'We are now able to turn data into information by combining it with other data and news,' he says.

This is not something that Markit would have been able to do before it implemented a grid infrastructure.

Grid has given Markit far greater control over its data, and Bedford is keen to emphasise that potential to other users.

'The technology is here and you can start making business use of it now,' he says.

'Grid is taking database clustering to the next level.'

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As broadband becomes a part of everyday life, organisations from businesses to schools are finding that it can transform the way they operate. **Jessica Twentyman** reports on the technology's impact

Case study ◯ Longfield Comprehensive School

Where Gordon Brown's classroom of the future is already a reality

Longfield pupils have broadband access to multimedia learning resources

CHANCELLOR Gordon Brown set out an ambitious vision in his 2005 Budget address for the classroom of the future, where computers and electronic whiteboards would replace blackboards and chalk.

At Longfield Comprehensive School in Darlington, a co-ed comprehensive school attended by more than 900 children, that vision is already a reality.

Longfield has spent £300,000 during the past 12 months placing PCs in every classroom.

It has also given pupils and teachers broadband access to multimedia learning resources and interactive teaching aids, via telecoms provider Easynet.

Dave Hunton, assistant head teacher at Longfield, says the investment reflects the school's confidence in the belief that technology is a vital tool in engaging today's children.

'At one time, IT was taught in an IT suite – it was an isolated discipline,' he says. 'That has changed in recent years and IT's influence now extends into practically every area of learning and education.'

Longfield's IT resources have grown from a single computer room and a handful of PCs around the school's library and technology rooms, to five computer classrooms, each with 30 terminals.

An additional 150 networked PCs are located around the school, including at least one in each classroom. In all, Longfield provides an average of one PC for every three pupils.

Every classroom also boasts an interactive whiteboard linked to the internet via the broadband connection.

Easynet's broadband service is available to Longfield via the Northern Grid for Learning, a consortium of eight local education authorities (LEAs) in the north east of England.

The provider supplies the 24/7 broadband connectivity for the service via its Middlesbrough point of presence.

Longfield's investment in broadband has enabled teachers to transform the learning environment, opening the doors to a wide range of multimedia content, such as the BBC's lesson plans, which contain resources including video clips, interactive maps and animation.

Teachers also have access to the British Pathé News archive, with 3,500 hours of digitised newsreel footage, and the Audio Networks music library, which contains 60,000 music samples and clips, provided through the Darlington LEA web site, supported by NetMedia Education.

The network of whiteboards is underpinned by BoardWorks, a teaching system with 7,000 PowerPoint presentations, covering every subject in the National Curriculum. Teachers' notes can be captured, stored and handed out to pupils after the class.

Technology's influence even extends to the playing fields of Longfield. Following its attainment of Special Sports School status for its athletic achievements, Longfield has installed specialist software from Dartfish Technology.

The software records and analyses athletes' movements, helping children to hone their technique and set themselves targets. Teaching staff also use broadband to access the school's single administration system (SIMs).

SIMs enables staff to access student records and register student attendance online six times a day.

It also provides a single system for gathering data and commentary on student performance for assessment and reporting to parents.

'Broadband is a vital tool in providing students and teachers with innovative learning resources that really help teachers get their message across, while entertaining and engaging the students as well,' says Hutton.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2140163
www.computing.co.uk

Case study ◯ OutSec

Broadband is key to providing a fast, cost-effective service

RICHARD and Vanessa Phillips, the husband-and-wife team behind Norfolk-based outsourced secretarial service company OutSec, are enthusiastic supporters of broadband.

So much so that they were active participants in a local campaign to bring the technology to their local area, some nine miles south of King's Lynn.

Their commitment to the cause is hardly surprising: without broadband, OutSec would struggle to exist.

The company uses the high-speed technology to receive dictated sound files from clients, such as lawyers, doctors and other professionals who need transcription services.

But it also delivers those files to an international network of experienced temps who transform the audio files into text format, editing and amending the copy where necessary.

OutSec's network of self-employed virtual temps relies on broadband because it allows them to work from home and to choose their own working hours.

The 80 workers are located around the world in different time zones, and can consequently deal with tasks requiring a rapid turnaround from UK clients on a 24-hour basis.

Broadband can enable home businesses to provide a highly responsive service

One OutSec secretary, based in southern France, works from a barn that she and her husband are restoring. Another temp plans to emigrate to Australia and still work for OutSec.

For many clients, says Vanessa, OutSec's business model represents an opportunity to free up a cost area in their businesses.

'Many are thrilled to be able to hand over administrative tasks to a trusted third party at a reasonable price, as and when they need to. Before, the only real option was to go to the expense of employing their own PA,' she says.

High-speed links provided by BT Business Broadband enable OutSec to provide a highly responsive service.

Vanessa says the network addresses most of the key issues surrounding data transfer that plagued older mechanisms.

'Transferring sound between two companies or locations presents all sorts of challenges. If you transfer dictation tapes by post they get delayed or, worse still, lost forever,' she says.

'Electronic sound files are better – but these files are still quite large, so they can cripple email systems and are prone to viruses and so on.'

OutSec's solution was to develop a software system, FileManager, that enables clients to log on to a file transfer protocol area on the OutSec web site.

With a password, clients can upload sound files captured on digital dictation devices for transcription over a broadband link.

Homeworkers, meanwhile, download those files from the system and type them up on their own PCs.

Both groups work via an easy-to-use interface accessed via a standard browser.

Richard says OutSec, which is growing at five per cent a month, has a business case that rests on what broadband delivers: 'the ability to quickly, easily and cheaply transfer sound files from clients,' he says.

Using the DSS sound file standard, says Richard, a 10-minute dictation can be captured in a 1MB file

Such a file might take many minutes to upload using a dial-up connection. On standard broadband, that time is cut to between 15 and 20 seconds – and Richard says you can reduce times even more using a faster broadband link.

'Broadband has been at the heart of our success. Without it, our growth would have been a lot slower,' he says.

'Teleworking would have been less cost- effective and we couldn't have provided the levels of service that keep our clients happy and win new business.'

Further reading
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A European directive could affect commercial sites featuring moving images, says **Pamela Whitby**

EU targets web's image-conscious

DOES your company have moving images on its web site? Does it advertise alcohol, tobacco or anything that might be bought by children? Could its email facilities be used to transmit or relay moving image material?

If so, it might be time to join the rapidly growing band of industry representatives that has spent the past few months lobbying against European Commission proposals to revise and modernise the TV Without Frontiers (TVWF) Directive of 1989.

David Harrington, leader of regulatory affairs at the Communications Management Association (CMA), an organisation that represents the interests of UK communications managers, says the proposals in their current form could affect not only IT suppliers, but any company that has

'There have not been any serious problems with the existing arrangements, so if it ain't broke why fix it?'

a web site for the general public, and consultants who advise content and service providers.

Proposals to revise the Directive can be traced to 11 July. As European businesses prepared for the summer break, the Commission released six issues papers for consultation.

The papers outlined wide-ranging plans to establish basic rules that would apply to all audio visual content, such as the protection of minors, human dignity, advertising and right of reply (*see box below*).

The existing TVWF Directive applies only to services under the traditional broadcasting umbrella, defined by the Commission as 'linear'.

Under the proposed new directive, the web would be extended to non-traditional or 'non-linear' services, and would include those delivered via mobile or the internet.

'That means 3G content and content on the internet, as well as e-magazines and newspapers,' says Harrington.

Although the scope of the regulation is unclear, it could potentially affect the content on many – if not most – commercial web sites.

Interested parties had until 5 September to comment, with the objective of having a first legislative proposal by the end of this year.

The proposal would be followed with a new Audio-Visual Content Directive, expected at the end of 2007.

European Union (EU) member states would then be obliged to implement the Directive by 2010.

The first leg of the legislative process, therefore, is now over, and the response has largely been hostile.

And industry bodies, such as the CMA, Broadband Stakeholder Group (BSG) and technology industry association Intellect, are keen to raise awareness about the proposals before it is too late.

In a recent joint statement, BSG and Intellect described the proposed regulation as 'totally unworkable and an attempt by the Commission to regulate the internet via the back door'.

To back up their argument, the two organisations took a straw poll of senior executives from across the industries likely to be affected, including the telecoms, technology and new media sectors.

The results showed that 82 per cent of executives believed the proposed new directive should be put on hold.

Just over three-quarters of executives had concerns that the proposals were likely to inhibit the growth of the content and new media market in Europe.

Ilsa Godlovitch, regulatory affairs manager for the European Competitive Telecommunications Association, believes that the new directive will only duplicate areas already covered by the ecommerce directive.

'As far as we know, there have not been any serious problems with the existing arrangements, so if it ain't broke why fix it?' she says.

At September's EU broadcasting conference, Antony Walker, Intellect's director for the knowledge economy, said the Commission should stop the rollout of the directive in its tracks – and begin the consultation process again.

Opposition to the directive has gathered momentum since the issues papers were forwarded in July.

And, given the criticism, the Commission's Information Society Directorate General – which has been driving the proposed changes forward – has been forced onto the back foot.

Speaking at a recent broadcasting conference in Liverpool, EU commissioner for information society and media Viviane Reding said the Commission does not want to over-regulate use of the internet.

But she also emphasised how industry's use of technology has changed dramatically – and how it will continue to do so. Reding said the policy-making process should reflect ongoing change.

While arguments for the potential cost of implementation will cut little ice, the Commission has indicated that fact-based arguments will be considered seriously, especially if there is any economic data linked to the experiences in other markets, such as the US.

It also views the UK's relative success with self-regulation or co-regulation as positive.

But the call to arms continues – and the key now is to ensure that arguments from all players likely to be affected are properly formulated before concrete regulations are set up.

Those proposals are to be formulated in the coming weeks and presented to the European Parliament and Council by the end of the year.

Reding: policy-making process should reflect ongoing change

What the proposals could mean

The European Commission hopes to establish basic rules applicable to all audiovisual content services, whether delivered by mobile, internet or any other means. Traditional broadcasting-type services – defined as a schedule of programmes rather than on-demand content – will be subject to extra obligations.

The proposed basic rules are:

Protection of minors

All content providers will be required to stop minors looking at harmful content, particularly pornography or gratuitous violence. Defining the terms will be left to each member state.

The current proposal is that countries should be required to take appropriate measures to protect minors by, for example, encouraging co-regulation or self-regulation, as well as introducing systems of filtering, age verification, labelling and content classification.

Minimum qualitative obligations regarding commercial communication

Restrictions on the advertising of tobacco and alcohol, which currently apply to broadcasting, would be extended to all audiovisual content.

Identification of commercial communications

All advertising and sponsorship must be clearly labelled in a manner appropriate to the medium.

Many new media businesses are likely to be less concerned, because such content providers usually try to maintain a distinction between their own brand and those they advertise.

Right of reply

The Commission wants to extend the right-of-reply obligation in the first directive to all audiovisual content.

This means that anyone whose interests or good name have been damaged by the assertion of incorrect facts should have a right of reply.

Such an extension raises questions about whether this right can be enforced among the millions of sites on the internet, whether web hosting companies are responsible for all the sites on their servers, and who will fund a body to adjudicate in disputed cases.

Masthead requirements

All audiovisual material must clearly identify the content provider so customers can make contact easily.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2142578

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Bryan Glick talks to Cisco UK's chief, Duncan Mitchell, about the networking company's future

Cisco looks to IP and mobile technology for future growth

Mitchell: mobile technology is very powerful

CISCO Systems was one of the companies whose name became synonymous with the growth of the internet and the dot com boom.

Its dominance of the router market means the supplier will always be best known as a networking company.

But the vendor has been broadening its offerings in recent years to include areas such as storage, security and data centres, as well as trying to exploit the growth of IP communications in business and government.

Computing talked to Cisco UK managing director Duncan Mitchell about the company's future plans.

What are your customers saying are their biggest technology challenges at the moment?

Looking ahead to the next 12 months, be it in large or small organisations, consumer businesses, in the private or public sector – there is a huge demand for people to deploy better IT and drive productivity gains through changing the way people work and the structure of what organisations do. That is good news for us all.

The UK is still not competitive globally. As a nation we fall a long way behind the US in overall productivity, and in work-per-hour productivity behind France and Germany, regardless of what is happening in emerging economies such as China and India. We have to become more productive.

There is a general recognition from government and industry that better use of IT is one of the key issues.

Sometimes that means we need better skills, or sometimes we just have to get on and do it, but people are saying they want to deploy bigger and better IT projects to improve productivity.

In Cisco, we are just coming off the back of a mobile technology pilot. I find that very powerful. It is changing the way I am working. Mobility offers a huge opportunity for companies.

And users are also refreshing infrastructures that were deployed in advance of year 2000 – all the deployment that went on in the UK was huge, and that's now six or seven years old.

Large or small, irrespective of industry, across a diverse mix of technologies, there is a huge opportunity for IT.

What sort of projects are those customers investing in?

We recently held a roundtable with Cisco chief executive John Chambers involving 17 board-level executives from our customers. A large percentage of them said they were going to be spending more money on IT, and were interested in improving customer focus through the use of technology.

When you look at IP contact centres and IP telephony, they want to get to a position where consumers dial in with a specialist question that is easily routed to a specialist who can answer it. They want to do things such as helping customers who ring in and want to speak to an actual branch, not a call centre.

In retail finance, for example, banks are looking at refreshing their branch infrastructures to have IP telephony, IP contact centres, unified messaging, and all of these facilities that make everybody in that organisation feel as if they are in front of the customer. With IP video conferencing you could sit in a branch in a remote rural area, and still have face-to-face access to a specialist sitting in London or elsewhere.

People want to make their networks increasingly intelligent and powerful for what they are trying to do as a business, so that wherever you are in the organisation the network will reach you. I saw a demonstration recently with one of our investment banking clients of an IP trader terminal. If a trader is away from the desk they can have a PDA with functionality to talk to people and record it for audit purposes, even though they are on the move. Wherever you are, the network is in touch with you in some form.

Some of these technologies require a major change to working practices to fully realise the benefits. How are those companies dealing with this cultural change?

If you look at the rate of broadband deployment – it has reached more than eight million homes now. People at home are starting to adopt a web-focused way of working in their own lives. Most people are becoming more comfortable with doing things on the web or on a laptop or on a desktop. That makes a big difference.

The process of IT-enabled change isn't going to stop – it will accelerate. We need to make sure we give people the skills they need to make best use of technology – there is nothing more stressful than being expected to use IT when you don't understand it.

Another part of the challenge is building an etiquette of how you use technology. In a 24/7 world you could be connected and on email all day without sleep. That doesn't make sense. There has to be personal choice and common sense about the urgency of communication and the right medium to use.

'We need to make sure we give people the skills they need to make best use of technology – there is nothing more stressful than being expected to use IT when you don't understand it'

But also, remember that people coming out of education and into the workforce now are very tech-savvy. They arrive at employers and expect IT to be there. They are often a catalyst for their organisation.

I recently met with a group of graduates recruited by Cisco who have just gone out into the field across the company. None of them are anything other than tremendously excited about working in an environment packed full of technology. They will be pushing us ever harder.

What sort of company will Cisco be in five years' time?

That is a long time in our industry. We believe that the network becomes an ever-increasing asset to any company. The concept of the intelligent information network means having an infrastructure where you have the ability to be very flexible because the infrastructure allows you to do pretty much anything.

For example, it does not matter which office you are in, you can log into a phone, use wireless or wired connections – that is pretty powerful. If you start to bring in things that were traditionally not on the network, such as storage and server virtualisation, or application-oriented networking, that makes the network increasingly the focal point of the IT environment. These are all opportunities for us.

It's about flexibility, being customer-focused, outward-looking, sensitive to what is happening in the market, and trying to look for change.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/213859

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Business starts to rethink

More companies are bringing IT services back in-house, reports **Mark Samuels**

BACK in the more predictable days of outsourcing, UK companies dealt with problematic technology and business processes by pushing them out to an IT service provider.

Businesses used specialists such as Capgemini and EDS to manage technology for perceived benefits, including improved efficiency and value for money.

But as scepticism grows about the strengths of outsourcing, more and more businesses are considering their sourcing options.

Computing revealed in July how financial services provider Prudential is bringing part of its outsourced IT operations back in-house (*Computing*, 7 July).

Prudential's move follows a number of other companies, such as Cable & Wireless and JP Morgan Chase, that have also decided to look towards insourcing.

Some 64 per cent of firms have now brought an outsourced service back in-house, according to consultant Deloitte.

And rather than the double-digit expansion of recent years, analyst Gartner expects the outsourcing market to grow by just five per cent annually in the next few years.

The analyst also predicts that four out of five outsourcing relationships will be renegotiated during a contract.

As they renegotiate, IT directors will begin to consider the relative strengths of a range of options, such as outsourcing, insourcing, offshoring and internal supply sourcing.

Michael Dean, director of membership at the National Computing Centre, recognises that businesses are looking at a far broader selection of sourcing alternatives.

Nottinghamshire County Council has awarded new IT contracts worth up to £20m

He says the big rush to outsource, which started in the 1990s, might have been driven by a desire to cut costs. But for many organisations, cost is no longer the most significant benefit.

'Outsourcing has matured and, over time for many clients, perceived cost savings can be eroded by increased management time and poorly envisioned contracts. The high cost of outsourcing is also cited as a major disadvantage for many sectors, including retail, wholesale and construction,' says Dean.

'In an uncertain market, clients now need to remain flexible, and are looking to outsourcers for access to specialist skills, guaranteed service levels, and to focus on core business areas.

'All of these are strategic and pragmatic uses of external resources, allowing the clients to pick and choose the options that are best for them. Interestingly, only six per cent of organisations outsource all their IT.'

Nottinghamshire County Council recently awarded a series of seven new IT contracts, together worth up to £20m.

The high cost of outsourcing is cited as a major disadvantage for many sectors including retail and construction

The contracts, which are set to run for two years with possible two-year extensions, cover areas such as PC supply, hardware maintenance, software licensing, network infrastructure and IT cabling.

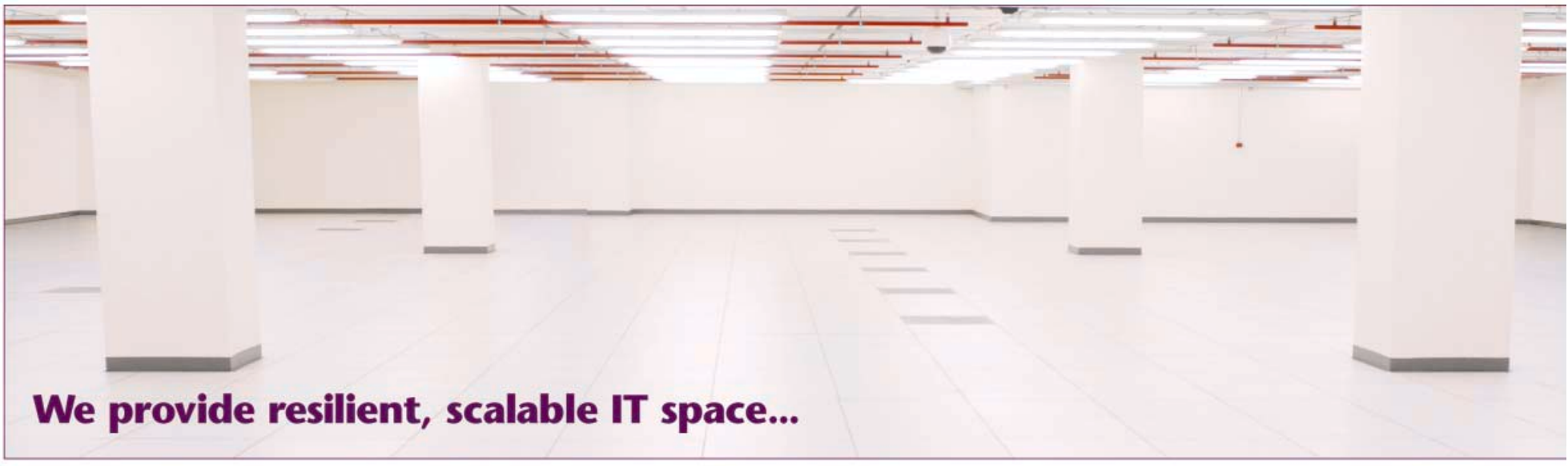
The five companies were chosen from a list of 49 original applicants. And successful contractors ranged in size from Computacenter and SCC to a number of smaller, Nottinghamshire-based firms including Computerland, XMA and Cranton Electrical Company.

Neil Marriott, the council's IT infrastructure manager, says that he is delighted with how the procurement has gone.

'We really do believe we have achieved best value for Nottinghamshire, and we have some very good companies and partners on board who will take all our delivery of IT services through for the next two to four years, depending on how they perform,' he says.

It appears, therefore, that users are becoming more and more demanding and selective. Richard Punt, head of consultant Deloitte's strategy practice, recognises that the UK is set for a fluid sourcing market.

'I think there is a reasonable number of companies that have outsourced IT for a long enough time to find out whether it has worked out or not,' he says.



the outsourcing option

'A lot of people are starting to realise that IT is more of a core competency than they thought it was. Many are beginning to realise that they should not have done deals in the first place, and we will see companies continuing to insource.'

Prudential UK recently completed a benchmarking exercise to determine the level of service and value for money offered by a Capgemini data centre outsourcing deal.

The financial specialist subsequently decided to create a data centre to insource management of its mid-range systems.

Prudential is drawing up plans for the internal data centre, which could be used to run global business applications. 'This demonstrates our confidence in managing our own IT arrangements,' says John Worth, chief information officer (CIO) at Prudential UK.

Deloitte's Punt believes more companies will start to demonstrate similar confidence. However, he recognises that drawing up plans for insourcing can be problematic.

'People have to acknowledge that one of the big challenges of making insourcing happen is if you are working on non-core processes again,' says Punt.

Many people are beginning to realise that they should not have done deals in the first place

'There are lots of issues to consider at the transition point; customers might be having a vulnerable relationship with their vendor, but they need to fully evaluate all the possibilities.'

Outsourcing, says Punt, often looks like a good idea at contract inception, but many companies are now far clearer about what they expect to get back.

But Martyn Hart, chairman of the National Outsourcing Association ➔

Case study Thomas Cook

Flexibility is the key to successful outsourcing

THREE years ago, the UK arm of Thomas Cook was undergoing a thorough review of its processes. As part of a strategic decision to centralise and rationalise its IT, the travel company decided to outsource its technology.

As part of the centralisation, Thomas Cook signed outsourcing deals with Accenture and Pink Roccade, now part of IT service provider Getronics.

Three years on – and in line with outsourcing best practice – Thomas Cook has renegotiated its contract with Accenture.

Carl Dawson, IT director of Thomas Cook, says the key to such control is establishing the right kind of contract with your outsourcing service providers.

'There is a lot of flexibility in the Accenture contract, and IT makes up probably a third of the contract – the rest is HR and finance,' he says.

'Within the IT part, there is flexibility in terms of normal change controls to the contract – but there is also flexibility in whether we want to change the service that is being provided, whether that is putting things in or taking things out.'

Dawson says the travel company has started to look at a broader range of sourcing options, including insourcing and offshoring.

'I like to retain control of an IT department. The original outsourcing deal was done for the right reasons but now we keep that under constant review,' he says.

'We took the first step – where we centralised IT, human resources and finance – and three years into that contract, we have taken the second step, where half of that shared service centre is moving out to Bangalore.'

Thomas Cook has decided to insource some project management, whereas before that capability was all run by Accenture.

Dawson says Thomas Cook is looking at a broader range of sourcing options, including insourcing and offshoring

'It can be quite difficult to have one supplier managing some of your other suppliers,' says Dawson.

'That was sometimes quite a challenge, and it required lots of Thomas Cook intervention to referee between these companies.'

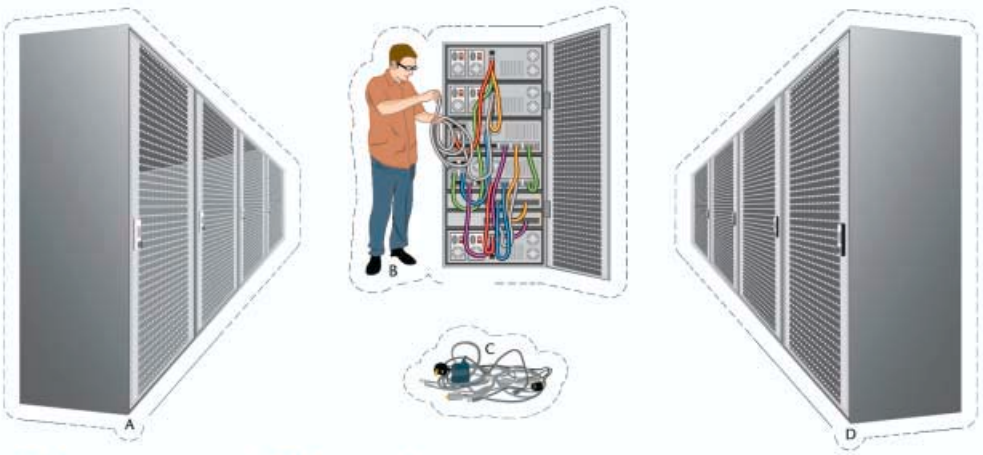
Dawson envisages that future initiatives on the infrastructure and application side will be managed by Thomas Cook.

'We will be absolutely responsible for delivering some of those projects to the UK business, rather than having a supplier do that,' he says.

The travel company recently increased the size of its in-house team, recruiting project and programme managers, as well as infrastructure specialists, to manage possible forthcoming projects. It now has an internal technology team of about 30 people.

'There was originally a very clear decision that Thomas Cook would retain responsibility for contract management and strategy. So while the suppliers would be there to help us deliver it, it was Thomas Cook's responsibility to work with the business to decide what it wanted to take forward and how,' he says.

'What we have really done is enhance that a little bit and have more control and ownership of project delivery in-house.'



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➔ (NOA), says there are still benefits to be had.

'Outsourcing is still a growing market, and most commentators believe that business process outsourcing (BPO), in particular, is set to increase in popularity over the coming years,' he says.

Sourcing advisory specialist TPI suggests that BPO will grow by 8.6 per cent in 2005.

Another area of outsourcing that continues to grow is offshoring. Some 42 per cent of CIOs believe offshoring presents an opportunity for development, according to recruitment specialist Harvey Nash.

Hart says more companies are also looking at how sourcing can be used to manage an internal supply chain to create tighter service level agreements. Despite the growth of insourcing, therefore, companies are still using a broad range of sourcing options.

'Outsourcing works because of economies of scale,' says Hart. 'And if businesses can run IT internally, they would not be looking towards external sourcing in the first place.'

Three years ago – as part of a strategic decision to centralise and rationalise – travel company Thomas Cook decided to outsource its technology in deals with Accenture and Pink Roccade.

Carl Dawson, IT director at Thomas Cook, says the real benefit of the strategy was forcing the centralisation of the company's different departments.

'If you try to do that by running your systems in-house, you never enforce the processes that you want as part of a professional IT department,' he says.

'You still get people operating as they did before, and the concept – from an in-house team – around things such as service level and management that you want from an IT department is very difficult to do when you're trying to do it from scratch with people who are used to doing what they want to when they want.'

Dawson has been in technology management for over a decade.

During his time with EDS, he worked on an Airtours travel account, where the services provider was running the holiday company's IT infrastructure and reservation systems.

About four years ago, Airtours decided to insource its technology, and offered Dawson, who was still working for EDS, the position of operations director.

'It was an opportunity to centralise everything and consolidate the business's infrastructure,' he says.

Dawson stayed at Airtours for two years, consolidating systems at the company's new head office in Rochdale, before being offered the top job consolidating technology at Thomas Cook.

If businesses can run internally they would not be looking towards external sourcing in the first place

'The decision was made to centralise IT, human resources and finance three years ago. One of the ways to get to that end is to outsource, because you enforce that strict division between the business and the back-office process,' he says.

'The intention was to allow a professional company, such as Accenture, to come in and put its service level agreement procedures and frameworks in place, whereas a company internally would probably struggle to do that.'

Three years on – and with Thomas Cook investing in technology – Dawson is considering his sourcing options.

With increasing numbers of companies looking towards in-house provision, it would make sense to look carefully at how the technology department is managed.

Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2139430

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www.computing.co.uk

Creating a standard

THE British Standards Institution (BSI) recently announced that it is developing the world's first standard to help businesses cope with multiple sourcing arrangements.

The BSI is developing the framework in collaboration with Partnership Sourcing, an organisation established by the Confederation of British Industry and the Department of Trade and Industry to promote the building of relationships in business.

The standard will cover all types of sourcing relationships, including outsourcing and insourcing, and Frank Post, the BSI's marketing director, says it will provide solidity for UK companies.

'Outsourcing has become a normal way of conducting business,' he says. 'The standard will help businesses map out these relationships.'

The standard is at the consultation stage, involving businesses, regulators and academics, and BSI is aiming for publication in about 18 months.

'The framework will be the embodiment of best practice,' says Post.

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© Lenovo 2005. All rights reserved. 1. Selected models. Optional 8-cell system battery and extended life battery required for up to 8 hours. 2. Price quoted is for a ThinkPad R50e (P/N: UR0S3UK). 3. Price quoted is for a ThinkCentre A35 (P/N: PN3A1UK). 4. Price quoted is for ThinkPad R50e (P/N: UR0S7UK) and Microsoft® Office™ Small Business Edition 2003 (P/N: 30R5242). 5. Next business day. 6. Price quoted is for ThinkPad X41 (P/N: US265UK) and Microsoft® Office™ Small Business Edition 2003 (P/N: 30R5242). 7. Customer Replaceable Unit. 8. Price quoted is for ThinkCentre A51 (P/N: VLE7KUK) and Microsoft® Office™ Small Business Edition 2003 (P/N: 30R5242). 9. User set-up required. 10. Rescue & Recovery is pre-installed on all new ThinkPad notebooks and ThinkCentre PCs and is available as a free Web download for existing ThinkPad users. 11. Based on internal test conducted by IBM, comparing the shock a hard drive can withstand in non-operational state (Active Protection System in use) and operational state. 12. Access Connections is pre-installed on all new ThinkPad notebooks and is available as a free Web download for existing ThinkPad users. †Microsoft Office Small Business Edition 2003 (P/N: 30R5242) is proprietary to ThinkPad and ThinkCentre and is installed by your reseller. Contact your reseller for full terms and conditions. *Lenovo estimated selling price. **IBM Global Financing is offered to business customers only and subject to status. There is a minimum order size of £1,500 exc. VAT. Lease rental based on 48 months (16 quarters) and payable quarterly in advance. Rates quoted valid for September 2005 and based on average deal size. Rates may vary depending on deal size. To request a leasing quote, visit ibm.com/financing/uk/successlease or call our IBM Global Financing hotline on 0870 240 1048. Offers are for business customers only and are subject to availability. Prices are excluding VAT and delivery. Prices were correct at the time of going to print and are valid until 31st October 2005. Prices vary according to configuration. Offer excludes any other promotion or special conditions. **Lines are open 8.30am–6pm Monday to Friday.**

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Network Utilities

Diary

Softworld Accounting and Finance
12–13 October
NEC, Birmingham
Europe's leading software event for the accounting and finance profession brings together more than 70 leading software providers under one roof. Delegates can attend free vendor case studies and learn about the key business challenges facing industry through the independent masterclass and briefing sessions.
www.softworld.co.uk/af

Softworld HR and Payroll
12–13 October
NEC, Birmingham
Europe's leading software event for the HR and payroll community brings together more than 40 suppliers under one roof, offering free vendor case studies. Delegates will be able to learn about key business issues, share their knowledge and network with industry peers.
www.softworld.co.uk/hrp

Business Performance & Project Management (BPPM)
12–13 October 2005
NEC, Birmingham
BPPM focuses on project management. This forum will home in on the skills and technologies available for the real end user – the project and programme manager. Vendors will also present case study material in a new solutions centre on the showfloor. Once again, the event is co-located with complementary Softworld events.
www.bppm.com

Forrester Research Financial Services Forum Europe 2005
13–14 October
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, London
Forrester analysts will present up-to-the-minute research on financial services and European executives will share their companies' best practices. Whether you are looking for advice on business, marketing or IT management, this event will provide the answers to issues facing financial services firms.
www.gigaweb.com/events

***Computing* Awards for Excellence**
16 November
Battersea Park Events Arena, London
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Online Information 2005
29 November – 1 December 2005
Grand Hall, Olympia, London
Online Information is an essential forum and meeting place for international information professionals, knowledge managers, librarians, academics, publishers, information users and IT professionals and vendors. Leading online industry commentators, consultants and professionals, top academics and key vendors explore the major issues that have shaped the industry, and determine the key trends facilitating developments for the future.
www.online-information.co.uk

Content Management Europe
29 November – 1 December 2005
Grand Hall, Olympia, London
This content management event showcases the leading providers of enterprise and web content management solutions to the public and private sector, incorporating free exhibitions and a comprehensive seminar programme.
www.cme-expo.co.uk

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3: DELL POWEREDGE 2500
5: SUN E280R
2: HEWLETT PACKARD RP5470
2:HEWLETT PACKARD RP2470

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COMPAQ PROLIANT ML330E SERVER
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SUN V880R 4 CPU
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DIGITAL VAX 4000 SERVERS.

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BCS Belfast Branch
11 October. 7pm. Autumn Seminar: professionalism in IT. Malone Lodge Hotel. Visit: *www.bcs.org.uk/branches/belfast*

BCS West London Branch
11 October. 7.45pm. 'Overdue – Over Budget – Over and Over Again?' Economist, June 2005. Could Prince have helped?' Bridge Hotel, Greenford. Visit: *www.bcs.org.uk/branches/wlondon*

BCS Bristol Branch
11 October. 7pm for 7.30pm. Security. The Hawthorns Hotel, Clifton. Visit: *www.bristol.bcs.org.uk*

BCS Kingston & Croydon Branch
11 October. 7pm for 7.30pm. Kingston University. 'Business Rules Management and BPM: who's managing YOUR rules?' Visit: *www.bcs.org/BCS/Groups/BCSBranches/EtoK/KingstonAndCroydon*

Project Management Specialist Group Autumn School 3
11 October. 7pm. 'Business continuity and crisis management.' Barclays, Canary Wharf. Visit: *www.bcs.org/proms-g*

BCS Birmingham Branch
11 October. 6pm for 6.30pm. 'Information Security, a Bird's Eye View.' Tally Ho Sports & Conference Centre, Birmingham. Visit: *http://birmingham.bcs.org/prog.htm*

Health Informatics (Northern) Specialist Group
11 October. 6.15pm for 7pm. 'Evidence-based E-Health for Better Patient Care'. Weston Building, University of Manchester, Sackville Street Campus. Visit: *www.bcs-nmsg.org.uk/*

Business Information System Specialist Group
12 October. 6pm for 6.30pm. 'Invisible Architectures and the links to Business Processes.' Denton Wilde Sapte, London. Visit: *www.tlaconsultancy.co.uk/bcsbis/bisthisyear.php*

BCS West Yorkshire Branch
12 October. 6.30pm. Solaris 10 – a Solaris engineer's personal perspective. Hotel Metropole, Leeds. Visit: *www.westyorkshire.bcs.org*

BCS Chester & North Wales Branch
12 October. Virtual Reality. University of Chester. Visit: *www.bcs.org/BCS/Groups/BCSBranches/AtoD/Chester/default.htm*

Advanced Programming Group
13 October. 6pm. The History of the Software Industry. BCS, 5 Southampton Street, London. Visit: *www.bcs.org.uk/siggroup/advprog/*

BCS Leicester Branch
13 October. 6.30pm for 7pm. inTrust Project – a study into the level of trust in intranets. Queens Building, De Montfort University Joint with IEE & CMI. Visit: *www.leicester.bcs.org*

Configuration Management Specialist Group
17 October. 9.30am. Resistance is Futile – Satisfy your Compliance Auditor'. The Davidson Building, London. Visit: *www.bcs-cmsg.org.uk/events*

BCS Essex Branch
18 October. 6.30pm for 7pm. Voice over IP (VoIP). APU, Chelmsford. Visit: *www.essex.bcs.org*

Computer Arts Society
18 October. 6.30pm. System Simulation, Covent Garden, London. 'A Farewell to the CACHe Project. Computer arts in Britain to 1980. Reception and reports on the three-year project at Birkbeck.' Visit: *www.ssl.co.uk/content/map*

Project Management Specialist Group Autumn School 4
18 October. 7pm. 'Business continuity and crisis management.' Barclays, Canary Wharf. Visit: *www.bcs.org/proms-g*

Information Risk Management and Audit Specialist Group
18 October. 9.30am. Full-day. IS governance and anniversary celebration. BCS, 5 Southampton Street, London. Visit: *www.bcs-irma.org/events.htm*

BCS
18 October. All day. International Sections Day. BCS, 5 Southampton Street, London. By invitation only
19 October. All day. Branches Congress. BCS, 5 Southampton Street, London. By invitation only

Sociotechnical Group
19 October. 6pm. Social software and knowledge sharing in the enterprise. Westminster Business School, Marylebone Road, London. Visit: *www.sociotechnical.org/conferences.htm*

BCS Berkshire Branch
19 October. 7.30pm for 8pm. 'Computer Arts.' Palmer Building, Reading University. Visit: *http://berkshire.bcs.org.uk*

BCS Cheltenham & Gloucestershire Branch
19 October. 7.30pm. 'How Military Information Systems are Used in Conjunction with War Planning Tools and Scheduling.' University of Gloucestershire, Park Campus. Visit: *www.bcs.org.uk/chelt/images/map.jpg*

BCS North London Branch
19 October. 'IT's China.' Visit: *www.nlondon.bcs.org*

BCS Newcastle upon Tyne and District Branch
19 October. 7pm. Computer Forensics. Newcastle upon Tyne. Visit: *www.newcastle.bcs.org/Forensics.php*

BCS South Yorkshire Branch
20 October. 6pm for 6.30pm. 'Longhorn – why do we need it?' Hallam University, Sheffield. Visit: *http://bcs.shef.ac.uk*

Specialist Groups' Assembly
25 October. BCS, 5 Southampton Street, London. By invitation only. Email: *jstephens@hq.bcs.org.uk*

BCS Bristol Branch
25 October. 7pm for 7.30pm. Presentation by Message Labs. Provisional. The Hawthorns Hotel, Clifton. Visit: *www.bristol.bcs.org.uk*

BCS Annual Meeting
26 October. 5.30pm. BCS, Davidson Building, 5 Southampton Street, London. Visit: *www.bcs.org/bcs/awards/events/bcsagm*

BCS Aberdeen Branch
27 October. 7pm for 7.30. 'Challenge IT – Pub Quiz.' Brentwood Hotel, 101 Crown Street, Aberdeen. Visit: *http://aberdeen.bcs.org/*

BCS-sponsored conference
27 October. 1.30pm. IT Skills Management & Professionalism in Public Administration Conference. Lancaster House, St James's, London. Visit: *www.bcs.org/itskillsconference*

BCS Manchester Branch
27 October. 6.45pm. 'Modelling and Simulation of Tsunami in Relation to Possible Protection and Defences in Thailand.' University of Manchester. Visit: *www.bcsmanchester.org.uk*

BCS London (Central) Branch
27 October. 6pm for 6.30pm. 'Computer Animation – Dr Who and the Advance of the Software.' The Davidson Building, London. Visit: *www.londoncentral.bcs.org*

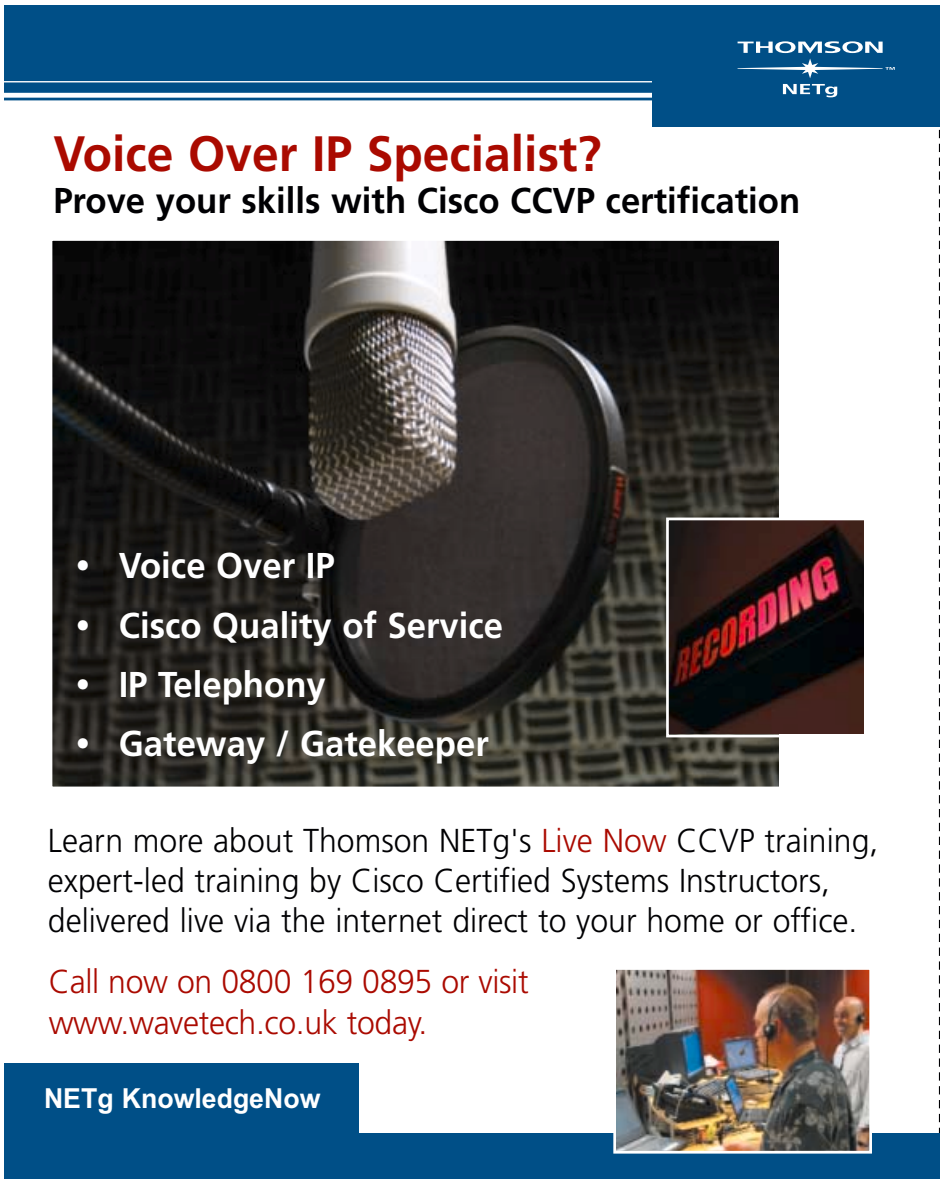
Elite Group
27 October. 8am. Breakfast Briefing with Bill Gates. Central London. Open to Elite Group members only. Visit: *www.elite.bcs.org/events/index.htm*

Open Source Specialist Group
27 October. 6pm. 'Open Source Software Quality in Practice.' Southampton Institute. Visit: *http://ossg.bcs.org*

Parallel Processing Specialist Group
27 October. 10am-4pm. Grid-use and evolution. BCS, 5 Southampton Street, London

BCS Seminar
31 October. 5.30pm for 6.15pm. IT Governance. Visit: *www.bcs.org/events/governance*

Visit the full BCS diary at www.bcs.org/BCS/Awards/Events/BCSEventsCalendar/. It is advisable to confirm venue and date with the organisers before attending an event. Diary Editor: Helen Boddy (01793) 417577, helen.boddy@hq.bcs.org.uk



Information for the courses page should follow our usual format – course category, title of course, venue, date, price, organising company/body, telephone number. Unless the information is presented in this way, we regret that it cannot be included. For details on how your courses can be included, contact John O'Grady on (020) 7316 9373

Security

Fundamentals of Cryptography and Key Management Trust in Gloucestershire, various dates available, price from £600, organised by Kryptosec (01453) 860537

Fundamentals of Data Security and Electronic Trust in Gloucestershire, various dates available, price from £600, organised by Kryptosec (01453) 860537

Physical Security, Terrorism, BS7799, BCM, PAS56, Risk, M_o_R, DPA, FoI and IT Courses at your office, you choose the date. Fees from £600 per course/team for 10 staff. To book contact Assetz Training *training@assetz.com* (0845) 230 0313. Visit: *www.assetz.net*h

Forensic Aspects of IT Security in Oxfordshire, providing the essential foundation knowledge to handle a potential computer crime scene, various dates available, organised by Vogon International (01869) 355255 *www.computer-forensics-training.com*

Networking

Cisco CCNA Weekend Bootcamp in Milton Keynes on 29–30 October, 12–13 November, 26–27 November and 3–4 December. Hands-on experience configuring Cisco routers and switches, price £397 + VAT, including all materials and post-course support, organised by Networks Incorporated (01908) 263335. Visit: *www.networksinc.co.uk* to access your free 'How to Pass Your CCNA' ebook

Implementing, Managing & Maintaining a Windows Server 2003 Network Infrastructure (MOC2277) in Leeds on 10–14 October, price £533, organised by Leeds College of Technology (0113) 297 6459 *www.lct.ac.uk/networkingacademy*

Planning, Implementing, Managing & Maintaining a Windows Server 2003 Network Environment – For an MCSE Certified on Windows 2000 (MOC2297) in Leeds on 31 October–4 November, price £533, organised by Leeds College of Technology (0113) 297 6459 *www.lct.ac.uk/networkingacademy*

Managing & Maintaining a Windows Server 2003 Environment (MOC2273) in Leeds on 14–18 November, price £533, organised by Leeds College of Technology (0113) 297 6459 *www.lct.ac.uk/networkingacademy*

WiFi Technologies & Wireless Networking, in Leeds on 31 October–4 November, price £495, organised by Leeds College of Technology (0113) 297 6459 *business@lct.ac.uk* or visit: *www.lct.ac.uk/networkingacademy*

Cisco CCNA Exam Preparation Bootcamp in Leeds on 5–9 December, price £520, organised by Leeds College of Technology (0113) 297 6459 *www.lct.ac.uk/networkingacademy*

Implementing & Managing Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 (MOC2400) in Leeds on 12–16 December, price £533, organised by Leeds College of Technology (0113) 297 6459 *www.lct.ac.uk/networkingacademy*

Support

Microsoft Certified Desktop Support Technician (MOC2261/2262) in Leeds on 7–11 November, price £565, organised by Leeds College of Technology (0113) 297 6459 *www.lct.ac.uk/networkingacademy*

Cisco PIX Firewall Configuration (Intensive) in Leeds on 21–22 November, price £195, organised by Leeds College of Technology (0113) 297 6459 *business@lct.ac.uk*. Visit: *www.lct.ac.uk/networkingacademy*

Microsoft MCSA, four-week course covering any Microsoft + CompTIA training. Various dates available, price £4,495 (special offer £3,495), organised by C2U Solutions (08456) 442266 *pr@c2usolutions.co.uk*

Implementing and Supporting Microsoft Windows XP Professional (MS2272), various dates and locations available, price £1,395 (special offer £995), organised by C2U Solutions (08456) 442266 *pr@c2usolutions.co.uk*

Implementing, Managing and Maintaining Windows Server 2003 Network Infrastructure (MS2277), various dates and locations available, price £1,399 (special offer £995), organised by C2U Solutions (08456) 442266 *pr@c2usolutions.co.uk*

Managing and Maintaining a Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Environment (MS2273), various dates and locations available, price £1,395 (special offer £995), organised by C2U Solutions (08456) 442266 *pr@c2usolutions.co.uk*

Audit/Asset Management

iInventory (previously LANauditor) in Hampshire. One-day course for iInventory, various dates available, price £200 + VAT. Course covers upgrade, deployment, report generation, licence reconciliation and configuration. Contact: *training@ensignuk.com* (01264) 336336 or visit: *www.ensignuk.com*

Software Testing

ISEB Foundation Certificate in Software Testing in Bristol on 17–19 October, price £800, organised by QBIT (01702) 290558 *www.qbit.co.uk*

ISEB Foundation Certificate in Software Testing in Edinburgh on 21–23 November, price £800, organised by QBIT (01702) 290558 *www.qbit.co.uk*

ISEB Foundation Certificate in SoftwareTesting, various dates and venues available, discounted price £760, organised by e-testing (020) 8387 1701 *www.etesting.com*

Business Intelligence

Monarch training in London on 19–20 October and Bristol on 9–10 November, price £395 + VAT, organised by Datawatch Europe (01752) 241460 *www.datawatch europe.com/training.shtml*

Linux

Linux System Administration delivered at client's site anywhere in the UK, price from £94 a day, organised by Tuxaco (01844) 351162 *www.tuxaco.co.uk*

Introduction to Linux in Leeds on 24–28 October, price £495, organised by Leeds College of Technology (0113) 297 6459 *www.lct.ac.uk/networkingacademy*

Linux VoIP in Leeds on 30 November–1 December, price £250, organised by Leeds College of Technology (0113) 297 6459 *www.lct.ac.uk/networkingacademy*

XML and Web Technologies

XML Summer School at Wadham College, University of Oxford, price £995 for five days, £395 for two days, £195 for one day, programme tailored to suit your needs, plus optional seminars *www.xmlsummerschool.com*

Software

Planning a Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 Organisation [MOC 2008] and Upgrading from Microsoft Exchange Server 5.5 to Microsoft Exchange 2003 (MOC 2009). Live, instructor-led online training, in multiple three-hour sessions over two weeks, organised by HP. For price and information visit: *www.win 2003training.net/hp/exchange.htm*

Project management

PRINCE2 Practitioner, in London on 10–13/14 October and 7–10/11 November. Four-day course, optional exam on fifth day. Price £995 + exam fees + VAT, organised by Inspirandum (01305) 822799 *info@inspirandum.com*

Storage Management

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Cineworld Cinemas acquired UGC Cinemas in 2004 making us the second largest cinema operator in the UK. There are plans to open three new cinemas in the next year. Our cinema and central information systems are developing to support our expanding and challenging business requirements. As a result, we have created this new position of Manager Systems/Business Analysis.

This is a pivotal role in an exciting new environment. The key objective is to support the business in the use of IT applications, analysing and resolving functional and technical issues. Proven project management skills are essential, taking ideas from conception through to implementation including budgeting, risk management and training. You will be expected to resolve business challenges with creative solutions, often working in areas where there is no precedent.

Your natural confidence and organisational ability enable you to motivate and lead successful project teams on both strategic and hands on levels. These skills are supported by your broad understanding of process, data and systems and you must also have expert knowledge of business applications and the way they are used. Experience of financial and reporting systems would be an advantage.

The culture at Cineworld Cinemas is informal, vibrant and innovative. You should be comfortable communicating at all levels of the business in both technical and non-technical arenas; this is an environment that encourages openness and challenge and promotes business involvement at all levels.

HOW TO APPLY

If you feel you fit this profile and can contribute to our business, please send a CV and supporting comments to Lucy Jones at lucy.jones@cineworld.co.uk by Monday 3rd October 2005. Alternatively by post to Cineworld Cinemas, Power Road Studios, Power Road, London W4 5PY.

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The Internal Audit team operate to a set of challenging and demanding standards with dynamism and professionalism. A vacancy for a Senior IT auditor exists within this team. The role, which refreshingly allows empowerment for individuals to complete their annual audit agenda, will provide variety and challenge to both personal and professional development. With exposure to key players across the business, the ability to communicate ideas and implement recommendations will be fully supported.

With over 8000 staff the scope for career development is impressive and the candidates expertise will be enhanced through the variety of audits undertaken and understanding the systems used. This challenging position provides a significant opportunity for the right candidate to make this rewarding, business critical position his or her own.

The successful candidate will have a minimum of 2 years experience in performing technology related audits, and preferably be QiCA or CISA qualified. The candidate will also have knowledge of planning techniques, possess strong analytical and business skills and be a confident and credible negotiator.

For a confidential discussion, please contact
our recruitment partner, Simon Barry, on 0121 712 7810
or email: sb@accountancymatters.com

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Supporting the Director for IT, you will take full responsibility for the implementation of the infrastructure strategy while providing continual improvement and innovation. Attaining cost effective solutions supporting development, groundbreaking projects and IT services delivery this role gives the opportunity to build a robust environment upon which this organisation will grow. Outside of the tactical day to day duties, this role will require the successful candidate to play a major role in driving the IT strategy forward. This will include supporting significant growth in certain areas and the fulfilment of a large scale consolidation programme.

Success will be achieved by the timely development of key aspects of a new infrastructure platform to provide maximum flexibility and durability in the businesses delivery capability. Working as part of a team of highly skilled individuals you will lead through your own demonstrable hands on track record in the building and implementation of key areas such as Desktop, Network, Server, Storage and environmental technologies. Your ability to manage, communicate and influence senior management will pave the way for a career in one of the largest information and technology dependant corporations in the world.

The role demands clear technical and operational management skills, the ability to make decisions and coach others in a fast moving technology environment. The successful candidate will need to provide strong people and technical leadership and have at least 7 years experience working within large scale infrastructure department. You will have an in depth knowledge of the majority of the technical disciplines found with a modern Data Processing environment (WINTEL, Wide and Local Networks, Security and Mid-range especially IBM iSeries).

To apply, or for a confidential discussion please email your CV with salary information to: simonraitt@xecsearch.com quoting reference sr0785cp in all correspondence. All enquiries will be dealt with in the strictest confidence. For a confidential discussion please telephone 07973 203076.

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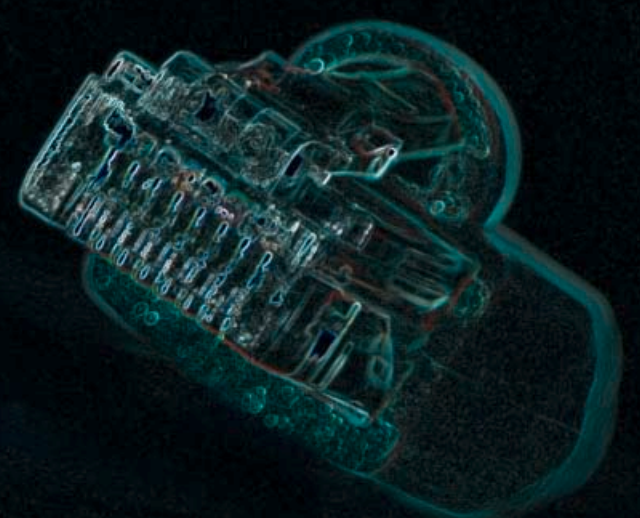

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We are currently recruiting for a number of world-class clients - clients that pride themselves on being at the forefront of SAP technology and offer the career prospects that only organisations working on the most challenging and innovative projects around can provide. We have summarised a selection of them below, although clearly we cannot do justice to each of these jobs in just one line of text!

SAP Solutions Consultants

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Applications Management

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SAP Basis Management Consultant
SAP HR Management Consultant
SAP Senior Consultant - HR/PY
Master Data Management/MDME

Implementation Consultants

PS Senior Consultant
SAP Basis Managing Consultant
SAP BW Senior Consultant
SAP CRM Managing Consultant
SAP FI/CO Senior Consultant
SAP HR - Compensations Management
SAP HR ESS/MSS Senior Consultant
SAP HR Managing Payroll Consultant
SAP Portals Senior Consultant
SAP Project Manager
SAP XI Senior Consultant
Senior PM - CS Consultant

For more information about these outstanding opportunities (including the flexibility afforded in some of our client's employment models and what the term 'senior' might mean), please call the advising consultant Mark Atkinson now – he can be contacted on 01923 225581. Alternatively, please email him at mark_atkinson@ers.co.uk and he will call you at a time convenient to you.

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GUI Experts

Extensive GUI exp. on Unix/Linux/Windows. Qt toolkit exp. a plus. 3+ years exp.

Compiler/Interpreter Developer

Know Compilers and Interpreters. Extensive C/C++. 3+ years exp.

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MIS Support Assistant

Circa £20,000 pa for the right person!

HTA is a lively Architectural Practice based in Camden Town, London.
We design beautiful, sustainable and eco – friendly places to live, work and enjoy, a business we like to call 'Placemaking'.

We are seeking an exceptional person to assist the Systems Manager with the maintenance of HTA Management Information Systems (MIS) and carry out related administration. Highly skilled in IT systems you will be a key player in producing project management reports and maximising systems. You will assist to guide the business closer to its vision through the production and communication of accurate reports, and the continued development of core IT planning systems.

The Role:
- Directly reports to the Systems Manager, you will be responsible for operating and maintaining MIS software.
- Collate and gather a range of specific data and produce reports accordingly
- Monitor and process weekly and monthly reports interacting with Senior Staff
- Provide technical support and training on project management software

The Person
- Excellent IT and technical skills – Experience of Database development, Advanced Excel, Access, MS Project, and VBA.
- Experience and confidence to provide technical support, training and troubleshoot
- Committed to your professional development
- A keen eye for detail
- Analytical thinker, logical and strong problem solving ability

If you have the skills and the experience that we are looking for please send a covering letter, and your CV to recruit@hta-arch.co.uk by 28th October 2005

HTA is an equal opportunities employer

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ERP & CRM Specialists
Package £32–50+k pa

Our client is looking for ERP specialists to take on a range of high profile client-facing roles at various levels. These roles require Senior Analyst Programmer / Team Leader / Business Analyst skills combined with experience in one or more of the following platforms:

SAP / ABAP — **This is our clients largest area of ERP practice**

Oracle / Peoplesoft — **This unit now covers Oracle Apps, Siebel, Peoplesoft & JD Edwards**

In addition to the core SAP & Oracle practices, our client is keen to hear from those with the following skills: Broadvision, Walker, Vantive, Clarify, ATG Dynamo, Tibco, Plumtree, Fidessa, Chordiant, Navision, Great Plains, Globus, Cognos, PowerHouse. Sage L200/500, VISION+, Tuxedo, Seebeyond, Webmethods.

You must be adaptable and prepared to accept assignment to a range of sites throughout the UK and EU. The salary you command will be linked to your experience and skill set. Applicants with Datawarehousing, or Banking / Insurance sector exposure may be offered higher level packages of up to £65+k pa + bonus. As a minimum, our client requires:

* **40+ months experience if you are a non-graduate**
* **12+ months experience if you have an IT degree**
* **24+ months experience if you have a degree in a subject other than IT**

For an application form, e-mail your CV referencing '800' in the subject and with address and contact details to applications@OxfordPeople.com

Our client has a strong focus on the effective management and use of IT, they provide products and services to purchaser and supplier organisations of all sizes and sectors. Due to rapid expansion, they now require a Senior Manager to push their Construction Sector Programme forward.

Sector General Manager

Based North West

Reporting to the Managing Director, you will establish the strategic direction of the Programme which is focused on a core membership group. You will ensure that the relationship between members is satisfactory, produce monthly management information and recommend any changes needed to the Programme. Ideally with a Business Degree and experience in IT, you will use your knowledge of construction or civil engineering to target both business development and industry engagement in the Construction sector.

This will include:

- Management of the entire Programme
- Ensuring the continuing quality, style and content of events and publications to support core groups
- Producing Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) that contribute to the Management information "dashboard"
- Managing external facing components (with assistance) of the Membership Programme

An excellent communicator with strong leadership skills, you will be capable of managing change and driving the business forward. You will be required to travel around the UK and will therefore need a full clean driving licence.

To apply, please email your full CV and salary details to Nick Robinson, Response Manager at: sectormanager@eurorscg-riley.co.uk or send to Euro RSCG Riley, Richmond House, Lawnswood Business Park, Redvers Close, Leeds LS16 6RD.

EURO RSCG RILEY

Excellent Opportunities

www.west-midlands.police.uk/recruitment

West Midlands Police are the second largest metropolitan police force in the country. Covering an area of 347 square miles with a population of 2.6 million. We employ approximately 12000 personnel spread across 120 sites.

The Information and Communications Technology Services Department (ICT) are dedicated to providing an innovative and cost efficient infrastructure, service and support function that enables West Midlands Police to make our communities safe and secure.

Due to an increase in our establishment, we require a number of specialists who are equally enthusiastic within their field and flexible in their approach to work and the ever-changing environment.

Computer Officer - Applications Development

Central Birmingham
£20,874 - £26,868
Post Ref: B3101SS107

There is an opportunity in the ICT Services department for a computer professional to work within 'Applications Development'.

Reporting to a Project Leader the successful candidate will be working as part of a project team and also on an individual basis. Principal responsibilities will involve developing, implementing and supporting new and existing applications.

Ideally, we are looking for someone with a broad functional and technical background, and with recent experience of Oracle's applications environment. Amongst the desired skill set is, Unix, PL/SQL, SQL Plus, Oracle Discoverer 4i, Oracle Forms 6i and Oracle reports 6i. Additionally, knowledge of XML and web development techniques would be advantageous. Previous applicants need not apply.

IT Specialist

Central Birmingham
£25,392 - £28,266
Post Ref: B3194SS001

You have the opportunity to work in the second largest metropolitan police force in the country as an ICT Specialist. The West Midlands Police force covers an area of 347 square miles with a population of 2.6 million. It employs approximately 12000 personnel spread across 120 sites.

The West Midlands Police has an excellent reputation in and outside the policing community and the ICT department is proud of being one of the enablers of that success.

We require an ICT Specialist who is equally enthusiastic within their field and due to the nature of the work must be flexible in your approach to work in an ever changing environment. You must be qualified to MCSE level and already have experience within the desktop environment to include NT 4, Win 2000, XP, printers, data and telephony and all associated hardware.

Experience of CITRIX Client and server is essential.

Senior Computer Officer (Systems)

Central Birmingham
£32,424 - £36,573
Post Ref: B3101SS031

The West Midlands Police ICT Department manages a wide range of servers from enterprise class UNIX servers to small Windows Servers.

A new post has been created in the small but busy Systems section for an experienced, flexible Systems Administrator.

The person sought will have five years experience of supporting windows and Unix servers, and will specifically be experienced with Windows 2003 Server, Windows NT4 and Solaris. Knowledge of HP hardware would be an advantage.

The successful candidate will be capable of working independently or closely with the rest of the team as requirements dictate. Previous applicants need not apply.

Senior Computer Officer (Database Administrator)

Central Birmingham
£32,424 - £36,573
Post Ref: B3101SS061

The Information and Communications Technology Services department (ICT) is looking to employ a permanent DBA to join a progressive team, responsible for the support and development of the forces advanced corporate oracle databases.

The successful candidate will be a dynamic, enthusiastic and flexible individual, capable of working well in a team environment.

Duties will include fault fixing, performance tuning, integration, upgrades, configuration and maintenance of Oracle application servers with sound skills gained in a traditional DBA role (min number of 1-2 years) of administering and performing maintenance of Oracle RDBMS,V8 onwards.

They will preferably be educated to degree level and have demonstrable experience of PL/SQL skills and working in a UNIX environment.

Should you wish to apply for any of the positions advertised, application forms and job descriptions may be downloaded or obtained via ICT Services Administration on 0121 626 8225 (24 hours voicemail). Closing date for all of these positions is Tuesday 18th October 2005.

Application Forms and Job Descriptions available from:
www.**west-midlands.police**.uk/recruitment

Reducing crime - making communities feel safer

The transformation of the council is being delivered through the nationally recognised, award winning team of managers and officers within Lambeth's e-Government and IT Services division. The team is now expanding to meet the ongoing challenges of the council, to deliver genuine improvement in service delivery and efficiency - across all service areas, in partnership with other local authorities, central government and the broader private and public sectors. We are looking for individuals with a commitment to transforming the way local government works.

Lead Business Transformation Manager

£60,854 – £64,738 pa inc.

You will be responsible for managing Lambeth's dedicated team of Business Transformation Managers and Officers, building on completed and ongoing Business Transformation initiatives. Co-ordinating across departments, developing effective working relationships within and between teams, and ensuring the delivery of core business benefits, you will have extensive understanding of business processes and of delivering "step-change". We expect proven team leadership, organisational and planning skills, the ability to influence at top tiers of the organisation, and a commitment to enhance the in-house Business Transformation capabilities of Lambeth as a whole. **Ref: CED/453 ***

Project Manager

£47,065 – £51,720 pa inc.

Managing large scale corporate and departmental projects across Lambeth, you will have a proven track record of delivery in e-Government and IT. With a structured approach to project management, the ability to manage complexity and risk, and a strong understanding not only of new technology but of how it is applied to deliver business solutions, you will bring a focused and proactive approach to realising the goals of the transformation programmes. **Ref: CED/455 ***

Project Officer

£29,930 – £32,890 pa inc.

As a project officer within the e-Government team at Lambeth, you provide not only key support to the Project Managers but form a core part of solution delivery, with individual responsibility for a range of people, process and technical activities within the project team. You will have a good understanding and hands-on experience of supporting a structured project environment, combined with an enthusiasm for working on business problems and contributing to the development of leading edge IT solutions. **Ref: CED/457 ***

Junior Project Officers

£20,934 – £22,668 pa inc.

At the entry level there are two opportunities for well motivated graduates with solid business understanding, IT experience and a desire to become involved in creating excellence in public service delivery, to work within existing project teams on the delivery of key council projects. **Ref: CED/459 ***

Business Transformation Managers

£53,734 – £59,048 pa inc.

Building on a deep understanding of the key business areas of the council, and able to operate at every level of the organisation, you will not only identify opportunities but plan, develop and manage the implementation of business and IT solutions across an entire council department. Working in partnership with departmental stakeholders and the rest of the organisation, managing a team of resources and a portfolio of projects (large and small), you will be responsible for delivering not only improvement in individual service areas but the strategic priorities of the council as a whole. **Ref: CED/454**

Business Transformation Officers

£34,202 – £37,585 pa inc.

At the heart of the Business Transformation team, you will use your understanding of business process re-engineering and project management techniques, working as part of a team and alongside departmental and IT specialists. Taking ownership of key workstreams, you will have an excellent understanding and extensive experience of working on projects and of designing, building, testing and deploying business process and IT solutions in a customer-focused business environment. You will combine good communication and people skills with a structured, analytical and delivery-focused approach to business issues. **Ref: CED/456 ***

Data Communications Officers

£28,202 – £30,991 pa inc.

Your broad understanding of IS concepts and practice, and detailed knowledge of communications concepts and applications, complement your familiarity with desktop, database and operating systems software, telecommunications protocols, network traffic analysis, and the planning and management of networking systems. If this environment sounds like heaven, and your above-average interpersonal skills are in evidence when dealing with others, you will fit well in our Technical Services (Network) team. **Ref: CED/468 ****

IT Services Manager

£61,799 – £65,744 pa inc.

You have the ability to make, and to take responsibility for, sound and far-reaching decisions on major technical and service delivery issues. Your in-depth commercial and technical expertise is complemented by a high level of the people management and leadership skills needed to handle innovation and change. Clear longer-term vision is aligned with future demands, strategic direction and external influences. **Ref: CED/465 ****

Senior Server Support Officer

£31,797 – £34,941 pa inc.

Your proficient control and management of ICT assets is underpinned by your broad knowledge of ICT infrastructure, and installation, testing and commissioning of equipment and software. You have a systematic, disciplined and analytical approach to tasks that enables you to safely plan and control your own work. You create effective working relationships while providing technical advice and using your diagnostic skills to resolve technical faults and problems. **Ref: CED/466 ****

Applications Support Officers

£28,580 – £31,407 pa inc.

With proficiency in software tools that automate or assist in the development process, you will provide applications and systems maintenance/support to ensure the seamless operation of the Council's ICT systems and business processes. You are well equipped to investigate, diagnose and resolve faults/problems, carry out tests and planned maintenance, and provide accurate advice. Able to manage your own workload, you also have a clear commitment to the team ethos – we are looking specifically for Officers to join our Systems Integration and Applications Support teams. **Ref: CED/467 ****

e-Government & IT Services

As London's fastest improving council, Lambeth is delivering fundamental change in the way it does business and interacts with customers. This is your opportunity to get involved with the transformation of public service delivery in local government.

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Programme Administrators

£27,717 – £29,169 pa inc.

Combining a strong understanding of how projects and programmes work with excellent administrative skills, this is your chance to join a dynamic and innovative team, supporting, tracking, controlling and maintaining all aspects of project and programme management across e-Government and IT. **Ref: CED/458 ***

Systems Administrator

£20,934 – £22,668 pa inc.

With a responsible attitude to caring for equipment and other assets, you have the skills to administer and operate hardware and software to support the delivery of the ICT service. An accurate and conscientious record keeper with good communication skills, you have good knowledge of PCs, telephone systems and associated networks. Your customer-oriented approach means you are committed to securing the best possible service and outcomes for your customers. **Ref: CED/469 ****

For an application pack please call the Lambeth recruitment response line on 020 7926 7000 (24 hrs) quoting the appropriate reference, or request the pack by email from lambeth@wdad.co.uk

Completed applications to be returned to:
Recruitment Services,
8th Floor, Phoenix House,
10 Wandsworth Road,
Vauxhall, London SW8 2LL.

Alternatively, return by email to: recruitment@lambeth.gov.uk

Closing dates:
*** 5pm, 13 October 2005**
**** 5pm, 20 October 2005**

Visit our website:
www.lambeth.gov.uk

Lambeth

Lambeth aims for quality services and equal opportunities for all

Archbishop Tenison's School
55 Kennington Oval
London SE11 5SR

NETWORK MANAGER
Salary: from £27K.

An enthusiastic, committed Manager is required to oversee the School's network.

Duties include the management of new projects, contributing to the strategic management of ICT within the School, and day-to-day maintenance of the School's network.

Communication and organisational skills are essential. Experience of working with RM is desirable.

Further details and an application form are available from David Mortimer, Clerk to the Governors, on 020 7735 3771 x 205 or e-mail d.mortimer@ats.lambeth.sch.uk

Closing date for applications: Friday 21st October 2005.

Choose something better. Choose Derbyshire

Software Engineer (2 posts)
DCC/05/8508
£20,295 - £27,411 per annum
County Hall, Matlock
We hope to appoint people who take a flexible and structured approach to their work, team players with an ability to work on a range of Software Development projects. Part of the responsibility for one of the available roles will involve quality control, for the Education department content, on websites provided by the County Council. Candidates must have had some experience of programming. The work will involve using Microsoft .NET technologies such as Visual Studio.NET, ASP.NET, C# and ADO.NET. Applicants should have a good understanding of object orientation and knowledge of designing relational databases. Any experience of working with these technologies would be advantageous. Successful candidates will be offered certified Microsoft MCSD.NET training, which will be provided through modular training courses, in between projects.

Application packs for all vacancies are available online at www.derbyshire.gov.uk/jobs or from Call Derbyshire on 08 456 058 058

Closing date: 23 October 2005

We are an equal opportunities employer welcoming applications from everyone.

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

POSITIVE ABOUT DISABLED PEOPLE

DERBYSHIRE County Council
Improving life for local people

For all Derbyshire County Council vacancies see www.derbyshire.gov.uk

Database Support Executive

Location: Godalming
Salary: c£23,000

The interests of WWF become broader by the year. We're actively campaigning on a range of pressing issues, from the conservation of wildlife to the impact of UK consumption on our global environment. What's more, we're renowned for the informed, authoritative and science-based approach that guides all of our work.

Reporting directly to the Database Services Manager within the SRM Division, you will be responsible for supporting the operational management and strategic development of WWF-UK's marketing/contacts database, and provide a range of key database services to the organisation.

The post-holder will have experience in database management and data management tools and techniques, and preferably hold a technical qualification in a computer science or equivalent. Preferably with a good understanding of fundraising and direct marketing processes you will have an analytical mind and be good at problem solving and implementing solutions.

For more information about this opportunity, visit our website at www.wwf.org.uk/jobs.

If you feel you would like to work for an organisation where you can really make a difference please send your CV and covering letter, quoting the reference DBSUPEX to the Recruitment Officer, WWF-UK, Panda House, Weyside Park, Godalming, Surrey GU17 1XR or email recruitment@wwf.org.uk

CLOSING DATE: 12TH OCTOBER 2005

WWF *for a living planet®*

Fighting crime, protecting people

You don't need a uniform to fight crime

Customer Services Manager

£34,086 - £36,573 plus casual car and call out allowances

Headquarters, Old Trafford, Ref no: 084 - Contact: 0161 856 2724

A key member of the Customer Services Unit, you will run our Service Desk and Incident & Problem Management functions. Responsible for the direction and development of 25 staff, you will ensure optimal restoration of service and root cause identification of problems in a complex, 24/7 environment.

With at least two years' experience in Incident and Problem Management, you will have a proven track record of leadership, developing innovative solutions and delivering quality services to a large and diverse customer base. Committed ownership of incidents and problems is essential, as is the ability to pull together teams comprising staff from multiple internal teams and/or third party suppliers to achieve prompt return to service of key systems and the delivery of solutions to optimise availability in the future. Excellent communication skills and experience of a range of management and monitoring tools are also required. The Manager's Certificate in ITIL is desirable.

Shortlisted applicants will be required to attend an assessment centre.

Closing date: 23 October 2005.

For further details of these and other vacancies please log on to www.gmp-recruitment.co.uk

GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE

Greater Manchester POLICE **www.gmp-recruitment.co.uk**

ASTON UNIVERSITY

TAKE THE LEAD IN TECHNOLOGY

Aston University, in the Heart of Birmingham, has combined its traditional roots as an old University with a successful, dynamic and progressive approach to teaching, learning and research. It is recognised as a world leader in its field and has an employment record for its graduates that is the envy of many. Having recently invested over £4M in an award winning network, this is a fantastic opportunity to join the first educational institution in the UK with a fully converged, high-speed IP network. This is one example of Aston's commitment to significant investment in high quality Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and the next phase in now underway. If you are a highly enthusiastic, competent and committed IT professional, this is your chance to join and help shape our new ICT department to deliver the outstanding level of service required by Aston University.

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES MANAGER

£37,558 - £42,573pa, exceptionally up to £45,885pa **REF: L05/117/181**

With a good knowledge of operating environments for hardware, software and communications systems, you will ensure Infrastructure Support Services run smoothly. This function covers such diverse aspects as Network Support, Server Support and Telephony, and the role reports directly to the Director of ICT. Extensive experience in supporting networks and servers is essential, along with at least 2 years' experience of managing a team of staff.

NETWORK SERVICES MANAGER

£32,666 - £39,114pa, exceptionally up to £41,212pa **REF: L05/118/181**

You will have over 5 years' experience of running a multi-protocol based network and using network management systems. This is a lead role in the operational running and strategic development of our fully converged Cisco network, its underlying infrastructure and voice, data and video based services, including telephony.

NETWORK SECURITY SPECIALIST

£30,363 - £35,883pa **REF: L05/119/181**

You will have over 3 years' experience in supporting a multi-protocol based network, which includes experience of using and supporting network security systems. You will ensure that the University's LAN and underlying security infrastructure run smoothly, and be responsible for ensuring that security policies relating to the network are fully implemented.

NETWORK ENGINEER

£22,507 - £29,128pa **REF: L05/122/181**

Qualified to CCNA level you will join the team which ensures the smooth running of the University's fully converged Cisco network and associated external links. You will need at least 3 years' experience of running a multi-protocol based network and using network management systems.

SENIOR SERVER & DESKTOP SECURITY ENGINEER

£30,363 - £35,883pa **REF: L05/124/181**

A qualified Microsoft Certified Software Engineer with at least 3 years' experience in a similar position, you will take a lead role in ICT security implementation, with emphasis on server and desktop pcs. With your experience in managing Microsoft Windows based servers, and knowledge of server and desktop security, you will also provide University staff and students with advice on security problems.

SERVER ENGINEER

£22,507 - £29,128pa **REF: L05/126/181**

A qualified Microsoft Certified Software Engineer experienced in managing Microsoft Windows-based servers, you will have knowledge of other server based operating systems such as Linux and UNIX. You will be a member of the team supporting the development and day-to-day operation of servers, with particular emphasis on security matters.

DESKTOP SERVICES MANAGER

£32,666 - £39,114pa, exceptionally up to £41,212pa **REF: L05/146/181**

Taking a lead role in developing a modern and professional service desk, you will service the support system needs of administrative and academic staff and students, along with managing printing facilities. As well as 5 years' experience in service desk management, we expect a working knowledge of Unix and pc operating systems and applications.

SERVICE DESK MANAGER

£30,363 - £35,883pa **REF: L05/147/181**

The University's Desktop Services incorporates desktop administration which supports teaching, learning and research, pc labs and School & Support Departments. To develop, manage and lead the team responsible for its smooth operation, you should have senior level management experience of running a professional and modern service desk, as well as 5 years' experience of supporting teaching, learning and research in an educational environment.

CUSTOMER SERVICES OFFICER

£22,507 - £29,128pa **REF: L05/148/181**

You will have 5 years' experience in the Windows/UNIX server and desktop environment, and at least 3 years' experience of providing customer-focused desktop support, covering both hardware and software.

ASSISTANT CUSTOMER SERVICES OFFICER

£19,460 - £21,640pa **REF: L05/150/181**

You will have 2 years' experience in the Windows/Unix server and desktop environment of providing customer-focused desktop support, covering both hardware and software.

DIRECT SERVICES OFFICER (MULTI-MEDIA)

£22,507 - £29,128pa **REF: L05/144/181**

With 3 years' experience in multi-media and related work, including image, video and sound processing, scripting and animation tools and delivery systems, you will be an expert in multi-media technology to support, guide and advise on multi-media and all aspects of computing, including delivering teaching programmes.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

£22,507 - £29,128pa **REF: L05/140/181**

You will have 3 years' experience in ICT and Assistive Technology (AT) and a broad knowledge of AT software e.g. voice recognition, screen magnification, screen readers and OCR, as well as experience of working with people with a range of disabilities. A good knowledge of the application of IT and AT, one-to-one training skills and an in-depth working knowledge of the Microsoft Office product range is required.

ASSISTANT DIRECT SERVICES OFFICER

£19,460 - £21,640pa **REF: L05/141/181**

You will have 2 years' experience of providing customer-focused support of a Windows/UNIX server and desktop environment in an educational establishment. You will provide academic staff, researchers and students with training, assistance and advice on ICT/AV related issues.

DEPARTMENTAL SYSTEMS MANAGER

£32,666 - £39,114pa, exceptionally up to £41,212pa **REF: L05/127/181**

The University's major applications include Financial, Student and Library Systems. To manage them you will need to be an applications expert with 5 years' experience of major systems within Higher Education. You will act as lead technical officer for major applications-related products, chiefly Oracle Database Administration, in which you will need 5 years' experience as an administrator.

APPLICATIONS ADVISOR

£22,507 - £29,128pa **REF: L05/131/181**

You will have 5 years' experience of co-ordinating activities of a large body of users, successfully organising and delivering training, working with external suppliers of ICT products and services, and will play an active role in evaluating and implementing systems.

SYSTEMS IMPLEMENTOR

£22,507 - £29,128pa **REF: L05/129/181**

You will need 3 years' experience in project management, business analysis and supporting services/developments in an academic environment along with 2 years' experience of applications development (including HTML/XML, Flash, Dreamweaver & PHP). You will also have a good working knowledge of database technologies such as Oracle and related technologies e.g. Business Objects.

SECURITY TECHNOLOGY & POLICY OFFICER

£30,363 - £35,883pa **REF: L05/134/181**

With knowledge and experience of managing security aspects in a modern ICT infrastructure (including policy development and setting standards), you will have significant experience in ICT security. You will also provide an advisory and audit role over physical and logical security for firewalls, DMZ, desktop configuration, server and network configuration.

ICT STRATEGIST/RESEARCHER

£22,507 - £29,128pa **REF: L05/135/181**

You will have demonstrable experience of strategy development work and a sound understanding of ICT strategy and its impact on organisational development, along with knowledge of hardware, software, security and communications technologies. As one of the team you will be carrying out research into technology platforms and products, and reporting back on the analysis and implementation implications.

COMMUNICATIONS & FUNDING OFFICER

£19,460 - £21,640pa **REF: L05/136/181**

With I years' experience in project funding schemes and bidding, you will promote and publish information about the ICT Department, ensuring that successes are communicated to stakeholders. Experience of desktop publishing and production of documents is essential.

E-LEARNING SPECIALIST AND FLDC MANAGER

£30,363 - £35,883pa **REF: L05/157/181**

You will need 3 years' experience of applying IT and/or educational technology to teaching, learning and research. You will have responsibility for the day-to-day running and strategic development of our new Flexible Learning Development Centre. With a teaching or training qualification,and experience of training delivery in an academic environment, you will help define the University's strategy in the understanding, development and use of all aspects of ICT in teaching, learning and research.

E-SYSTEMS SUPPORT OFFICER

£19,460 - £21,640pa **REF: L05/158/181**

You will be supporting the University's websites and Virtual Learning Environments, and will have 3 years' experience of web technologies, including 6 months supporting either web sites or Virtual Learning Environments.

Application forms and further particulars are available on our web site: http://www.aston.ac.uk/jobs, or by telephoning: 0121 359 0870 (24 hour answerphone), or by email: b.a.power@aston.ac.uk, quoting the appropriate reference number.

Closing date: 21st October 2005

NO AGENCIES PLEASE

ASTON UNIVERSITY

www.aston.ac.uk

Job of the week
Senior computing officer, Birmingham, to £36,573 **p60**

Centrica seeks new batch of recruits

Utility adds to IT team in transformation programme

Miya Knights

BUSINESS services group Centrica is initiating another round of recruitment to support its £500m IT transformation programme.

The company, which owns British Gas, is looking to fill a number of IT posts, including a data warehousing designer, solution architects and Siebel and SAP analysts, to join those hired since the scheme was launched in March.

'We have some pretty massive change programmes going on in the business at the moment,' Centrica chief technology officer Kirk Downey told *Computing*.

'Filling these roles is part of developing our capabilities alongside the systems we are implementing for the business.'

The transformation programme has been instigated to make Centrica more flexible and competitive, and to reflect business and process change in its IT systems more quickly.

Downey says the recruitment drive is tied into the schedule of transformation work.

'All the hiring we're doing is around areas identified as business-critical,' he said.

'We're doing a significant amount of work with SAP and conducting business intelligence at the moment, on which the business absolutely depends.

'We have a partnership with our non-information systems partners, where our work is part of a shared agenda to respond to Centrica's requirements as best as possible,' he said.

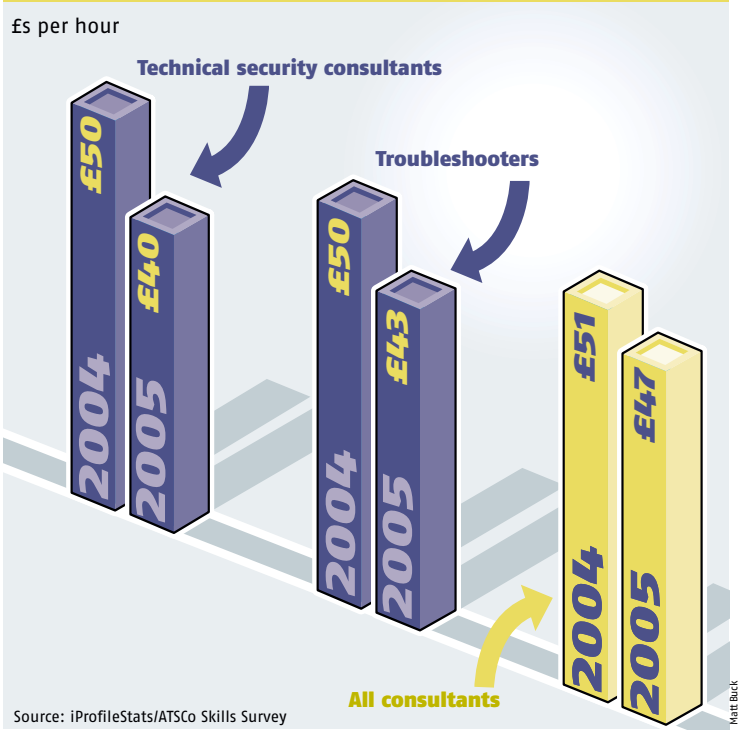
Downey says a buoyant IT skills and recruitment market means now is a good time to find talented people.

The overall recruitment drive is intended to add 300 new people to the 1,100-strong IT team.

Downey says Centrica is almost halfway through the process, and that leadership skills are the most important in differentiating between prospective candidates.

'We have an emphasis on leadership qualities,' he said.

Skillswatch Hourly rates for contract consultants



Further reading
www.computing.co.uk/2071645

miya_knights@vnu.co.uk
www.computing.co.uk

Inside today's Careers: Win £1,000 worth of remote control software – page 50

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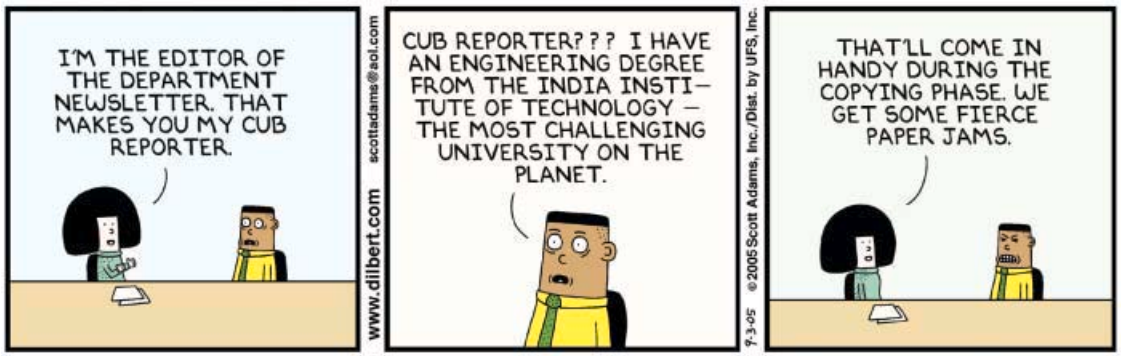

backbytes
back_bytes@vnu.co.uk

We Dig It, but not Eight Days A Week

We have loads of Beatles lyrics to get through. It would perhaps have been wiser to ask you to rewrite songs from a band that hadn't written quite so many of them, but that's our problem.

This week's two: Gary Bartram rewrote *Hey Jude* as Hey spool:

Hey spool/Don't tape it bad/Do a back-up/And make it clearer/Remember to archive it to your drive/Then you can strive/To make it safer.

And Neil Haughton contributes his lyrics to *In My Life*:

There are programs I'll remember/All my life though some have changed/Some forever not for better/Some have gone and some remain/All these lines of code had their moments/With testers and friends I still can recall/Some still work and some are wobbly/On my screen I've debugged them all.

Both of which had us welling up with tears. Can you do better? Eight lines maximum, Beatles song, IT lyrics.

'Is it just my impression, or did The Beatles suddenly become more creative when they moved to Apple?' says Franco, at John Liscombe. Stop. We don't want to get in the middle of that argument.

Stan reminisces about being on the buses

The joy of trolleybuses, episode four.

'I thoroughly enjoyed travelling on the trolleybuses. They were much quieter and more comfortable than trams, with less pollution than buses, and did not use precious oil (invaluable in wartime). In fact, they caused no pollution in towns – any pollution being caused by the increased production of electricity at the power stations,' says Stan Higgins, who rode the buses between 1942 and 1947 when he was in Portsmouth. He reports that the wheel configuration was two in the front and four at the... why are we telling you this?

Others have suggestions for those interested in trolleybuses. Some are even printable. 'I recommend a recuperation holiday in Latvia where this popular form of transport is widely available. Riga has enough colours and numbers to keep the most avid trolley-spotter happy for days,' says a reader signing himself only 'Alun', presumably in case his wife finds out the real reason for their romantic weekend away was to look at buses.

Meanwhile: 'Isn't asking people why they are interested in trolleybuses a bit like asking an alien why they have sex the way they do?' asks Paul Warren.

A treat for the heart

We continue our tribute to that endangered species, the tea lady, with Claire Penn's nomination of June, the tea lady at Heidelberg UK, here pictured with Lucas from tech support, who has done nothing to merit being pictured in Backbytes.

'Not only do we get four cuppas a day, but we also have egg, bacon and sausage rolls in the morning and a selection of sweets and cakes in the afternoon,' says Claire. This was taken last Christmas: Lucas now weighs 26 stone.

Over-wrought by my overdraft

Colin Hollands, at Muraspec, didn't lose a zero on his bank account – if only.

'A few years ago I received a letter informing me that I was in excess of £7.6m overdrawn, and would I kindly bring my account back into credit within the next seven days.'

As a computer operator, this was quite a large overdraft.

'I immediately phoned my bank to question the arrears,' he recalls. 'As I was speaking it dawned on me: the figure that I was in arrears by was actually my account number. The bank representative assured me that I was only £10 overdrawn.'

Can anyone lay claim to a larger erroneous overdraft?

More Backbytes on page 10 and at www.computing.co.uk/backbytes

9 771361 297040 40