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News

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The End Is Where We Start From

So now we know. It has recently been confirmed that the creation of two new companies under the Fujitsu brand will involve the disappearance after some 33 years of the ICL brand. The new companies are to be known as Fujitsu Services and Fujitsu Consulting and will operate from 2nd April 2002. They will derive from the closer integration and realignment of ICL, DMR Consulting and other Fujitsu subsidiaries.

Although this marks the end of the ICL name, integration of the business streams within Fujitsu and the worldwide presence of the Fujitsu brand should bring new opportunities. "And to make an end is to make a beginning, the end is where we start from" (T S Eliot).

Fujitsu Services, with headquarters in London, will take advantage of ICL's core strengths to focus on delivering IT infrastructure management and outsourcing across desktop, networking and data centre environments, together with a full range of related services, from infrastructure consulting through integration and deployment, as well as education and training. It will also concentrate on expanding its business in key countries throughout Europe, Middle East and Africa and exploit further opportunities in the Nordic region through a rebranded Fujitsu Invia (currently ICL Invia).

Outline of Services:

Infrastructure Consulting

IT infrastructure-related technical consulting and architecture services.

Integration and Deployment

Management of standard system and application roll-outs.

Supply, integration and deployment of complex, large-scale infrastructure solutions.

IT Outsourcing

Managed services across desktop, networking and data centre environments.

Help desk, hosting services and product support.

Education & Training

Broad range of facilities and education services.

Fujitsu Consulting will comprise the current global operations of DMR Consulting, the applications units of ICL in the UK and Ireland, and the operations of Fujitsu Systems Business of America and Fujitsu Systems Europe. Fujitsu Consulting will have its headquarters in Edison, New Jersey. It will provide a full breadth of consulting and applications integration and managed services delivered with a collaborative approach that helps clients design, integrate and maintain high-impact, strategic business solutions. The current management of DMR Consulting will continue as the leadership of Fujitsu Consulting.

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Editorial

As another year opens AXiS has much to think about. Our group was formed in 1975 under the label "2900 User Group" to provide a forum to discuss issues and take presentations concerned with ICL products and services, significantly focused on Mainframe architectures and of course the VME operating system (then VME/B).

In a few weeks time the ICL brand will disappear under the Fujitsu banner. I feel sure that changes in recent years to the relative sizes and positions of the Fujitsu and ICL logos on the Bracknell office in Lovelace Road have presaged the latest announcement.

What happens to AXiS then? Your Committee has started a survey of user requirements to help fuel plans and proposals for the coming year. Early indications are that many members still judge there to be benefit to be derived from membership but our services need to change to increase those benefits.

One significant suggestion which affects my role as News editor is that AXiS News should be delivered electronically in future. This means either delivery via e-mail or download as a PDF file from the AXiS web site. The later facility has been available to members for the last two years.

So this could be the last paper issue! I would very much like to hear from any member for whom this would create difficulties.

Don Folland
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From the Chairman

Can I first of all welcome two new members to the AXiS committee. We have been joined by Emma Campbell (Gresham) and Alan Frost (Miracle GA) who have been co-opted to the committee. In addition to this we are joined by new ICL liaison, Steve Clarke (VME and Trimetra Marketing) and Teamware liaison, Ken Chilton (OfficePower). Their help and experience is very welcome.

Can I also thank Dave Hewetson who left the committee after the Autumn event. Dave has been on the committee for many years and has worked tirelessly organising both Capacity Management events and conferences.

The first newsletter of the year traditionally contains details of our plans for the year. Although dates and venues are not yet finalised here is a brief outline of events for 2002. When plans are firm details will be published on the AXiS web site.

There will be a one-day spring meeting at a new venue in late May, with a two-day Autumn conference in early October. Both Trimetra and Application Development Focus Groups will be arranging meetings. Interest has been expressed in forming a group to discuss Web-enabled Services; if you are interested in this please let us know.

We recently carried out a sample survey of our membership. If you participated in this may I thank you for your contribution. If you have not but would like to influence the direction the group takes please get in touch with a member of the committee, your views are valuable to us.

Harold Cloutt

Dates for the Diary 2002

12 May Deadline for copy for AXiS News Vol 8 No 2

At the time of going to press dates for main events in 2002 are not confirmed. See 'From the Chairman' above

Watch the Events page on the AXiS web site:
<http://www.axis.org.uk/diary.htm>

Outline of Services:

Consulting Services

Management and technical consulting services, including benefits realisation, business intelligence and change management.

Integration Services

Business process and transaction definition.

High-level design, detail design, coding, testing, etc.

Implementation of application packages.

Enterprise Application Integration.

ERP implementation, documentation, training and coaching.

Managed Services

Application Portfolio Management (including application outsourcing).

Application-related helpdesk support.

Computing promotes ICL's passing

The popular IT journal, Computing, is celebrating “the passing of a legend as we wave goodbye to a once proud flagship of the UK IT industry – ICL.” They want there to be a proper send off and so have established on their web site a page to carry news and analysis surrounding the demise of the ICL brand. URI: <http://www.computing.co.uk/Specials/1129101>.

And if you have any stories to share from your experience with ICL or from within ICL then Computing would be pleased to hear from you. E-mail to icl_reunited@vnu.co.uk. Stories published so far can be found at the following URI: <http://www.computing.co.uk/News/1129350>. Even AMSU/AXIS gets a mention!

“The power of community in action” through the web

Modern local government is arguably a British invention. Like another British invention, football, it has been going through hard times in its home country for a long while. Like football, local government is now showing signs of revival in Britain. In this new century those of us associated with local government (half of the membership of AXiS) may see our industry again leading the way, and particularly in some aspects of use of ITC and the Web.

A conference in Camden Town Hall in December focussed on web support for “**citizen involvement and local partnership**”. Support for this kind of activity is an intriguing challenge for ITC departments, and significantly different from those

which the private sector faces in handling “customers” and (for example) “suppliers”.

Whitehall (and Brussels) are very worried that **citizens** show very little interest in government, and that direct action (like blocking petrol depots) is taking over as a method of dealing with problems from voting or lobbying your MP or councillor. Funding is becoming available (initially through exploratory schemes like Pathfinder) to get people more involved with the business of government, and the web is coming forward as a main medium to

“Public services are the power of community in action. They are social justice made real.” Tony Blair, 2 Oct 2001

help people understand and express their views to government.

At the same time the number of agencies and organisations that have a bearing on the well-being of the local community is growing. Whitehall has told local government that it should take a leadership position in enabling all these organisations to work together for the good of the community. Local government should no longer see itself as the exclusive provider of a particular set of services to the citizen and local business. Instead, it should take the position of an innovative lead **partner** in getting the best deal for the local community from the organisations serving it. Again, the web can provide the home medium for co-ordinating these partnerships.

At the conference, speakers from two UK local authorities and one from Sweden spoke alongside people from the ITC industry. There was much talk of web community and the particular problems of providing sophisticated web services for people from outside your organisation, alongside talk of the “people problems” of managing a successful web community (a bit like running a pub?) and of consulting the public in a way that actually gets their attention.

Alasdair Mangham spoke for “Camden Connect”, one of those bright new departments that is showing a new more responsive but also more innovative and assertive face of local government. Camden is a miniature of some of the challenges facing the UK. It is in the top 5 knowledge economy boroughs in the UK, and in the 20 most deprived and the top 10 most unequal. Over 100 languages are spoken. Surely here there are opportunities to bring community capabilities to bear on community problems, and surely the local authority is in a good position to help bring this about.

Alasdair told the conference about the Community Strategy which records the objectives agreed between the local authority and principal local agencies like the police, health service, university, and the voluntary sector, and about how ITC will support this strategy. He told us about some of the forty projects under way under the banner of “community governance in the information age”. The Camden Community web system will offer web homes for Camden’s more than 3,000 community groups.

To support these projects Camden has partnered with four other London Boroughs as well as people like Age Concern and the RNIB and technology vendors to develop Aplaws (Accessible Personalised Local Authority WebSites). Aplaws uses open source web technology where possible (based around J2EE) and will itself be an open source project. [Open Source Software (OSS) looks to be getting some approving nods from Whitehall and Brussels, and presents an interesting challenge to the business models of IT suppliers. For more on the UK government attitude to OSS try <http://www.govtalk.gov.uk/>.]

Ifor Jones, Head of Consultation at Brent, spoke about “renewing local democracy through community consultation”. Ifor had just returned from giving a similar presentation to a local government conference in Barcelona. One of the enablers behind the current renewal of local government is EU support for projects that bring together partnerships across Europe. [Did I say “join local government and see Europe? The thought never occurred to me.]

Brent have extensive consultation with their citizens, and have come to the conclusion that they must go online as one way to reach them. Ifor quoted one Brent resident: “I go to work early and I come home late. When I’m home I eat, watch cable TV or go online... I’ve not got the time or interest in going to any community events.” Brent operate BRAIN (Brent Resource and Information Network), and are working towards on-line voting in local elections.

Gail Watt told the conference about the experience and plans of Kista, the “Silicon Valley” borough of Stockholm. Kista face similar challenges to Camden, and have extensive local partnerships to address these challenges. Gail dashed back to the hotel after the conference to connect to the web to supervise a regular webcast of a Kista council meeting, one of Kista’s many initiatives to use the web to support their community. These include a move to web-supported physical planning (inevitably, they call this SimCity), a free internet portal supported by local business, and a web-based “citizen parliament”, and web-based distance learning for Kista citizens. These projects bring together local business, local education establishments, and local citizens in what Gail called the community’s “Golden triangle”. Need a challenge to stretch you beyond your current ITC skills? Become a social entrepreneur, like this man.

David Brake of Howard Rheingold Associates (a consultancy in the human side of virtual community) took us into some of the people challenges involved in web support for community. He told us that the social rules we might observe in hosting a dinner party have their equivalents on the web, and of the importance of employing a human host for a place on the web. He reminded us not to identify the net with geeks- “wired residents recognise almost three times as many neighbours [as non-wired], talk with twice as many, and have invited 1.5 times as many to their homes”. The web helps build local networking, and thus builds the strength of the local community.

The conference was sponsored by Teamware, an outgrowth of Nokia and ICL which you may identify with groupware (TeamOffice, OfficePower) but whose main focus now is on web support for communities. Ken Chilton and Peter Stoye showed how Teamware’s Plaza product can be applied to the support of a local community. Non-technical groups can set up their own private spaces. Every participant can have his or her own “interactive business card”, which can be your

personal presence on the web that can provide more information and access to your own group. As a member of a group, you can go beyond this card to get to know someone by what he or she has done- it is possible to search across all activities for the contributions of another member.

My own presentations to the conference addressed the opportunity and challenges of using the web to support citizen participation and local partnership. I pointed out how the web can lower the barrier to local participation for the most active (and so sometimes most valuable) local citizens. I talked about the advantages as well as disadvantages of a web meeting-space when compared with a physical room, and advised using a portfolio of communications methods but based around a "home" on the web. I warned about the danger of introducing too much direct citizen participation in democracy (bringing a danger of the tyranny of the majority).

All of the presentations from this conference are currently available on the Teamware website (www.Teamware.com - follow Events to 11 Dec 2001 Camden).

The conference attracted many councillors and

senior local government officers (directors and assistant directors) and people with interesting non-ITC titles (chief strategic services officer, sustainability co-ordinator, New Deal Manager, Public Consultation Manager, E-Envoy). There was much enthusiasm. I remembered my early days in IT, in which we were enthusiastic about the technology but at first had a hard job connecting with real needs. Here was similar enthusiasm, but as much from potential users as technical people. Maybe, I thought, this web community stuff is worth following.

About the author



Paul Kingston was a founder member and long-time ICL/Fujitsu representative on the committee of OPERA, the OfficePower user group. Early in his ICL career he was a junior member of the New Range Organisation that defined the 2900 series and VME, alongside Conway Berners-Lee the father of the inventor of the World-Wide Web. The centre of his work for his current employer Teamware is the potential of the web to support groups of people working together while separated by distance or the pressures of diary.

Forging relationships

The Challenge

UEF is the UK's largest supplier of forgings to the European automotive industry. Of its six sites, the two at Bromsgrove and Kidderminster have numerous forging lines, which enable UEF to handle a wide diversity of work. UEF was part of British Steel until 1997 when it was the subject of a management 'buy in'. With most of its production exported and the high strength of the pound, UEF's new management team faced a severe challenge. The situation required careful investment to improve productivity and identify ways to cut costs.

As part of the 'buy in' arrangement, UEF kept its ICL VME-based financial and manufacturing scheduling systems with their existing outsourced IT service. The service and contract, while suited for a company the size of British Steel, did not however fit UEF's needs. Senior managers were also keen to migrate the separate financial and manufacturing business systems into a single, modern Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) application. It was 1997, Y2K was also an issue and

UEF decided that its vision of moving to ERP needed to be taken in stages.

Robin Welsby, Group Purchasing Director, UEF who also has executive responsibility for IT takes up the story: *"It has been my experience that significant change is best achieved by breaking a problem down into manageable steps. Our first challenge was to address any issues associated with Y2K. It therefore made sense to stay with our existing outsourcing arrangement until the contract expired in February 2001. Our vision was to move to an application service provider-based (ASP) ERP solution. To ensure a smooth transition the chosen ASP needed to understand our business and legacy environment. It therefore made sense to migrate our existing VME applications to a service provider who could, over time, assist in the transition to ERP. This long-term vision ran alongside a short-term management imperative to reduce IT costs by half."*

Robert Woolley, IT Manager, UEF explained the first steps: *"We undertook market research on how much the services we needed would cost. We had a track*

record of working with ICL and trusted the company. It made sense to approach ICL and explore the options. It was through this discussion that ICL reintroduced us to Miracle GA. Again, we had previously worked with some staff from Miracle. Old synergies and levels of understanding seemed to naturally reform themselves. Combining our own capabilities with those of ICL and Miracle may not have been what we had initially envisaged. It did however produce a solution that ideally fitted our short-term situation and longer term goals."

The Solution

The migration proposal presented to the UEF Board in February 2001 made clear business sense. It incorporated both technical and financial aspects and relied on teamwork. The financial solution developed with ICL and Miracle meant that all costs were structured as lease fees and monthly fees.

ICL would take primary responsibility for moving the existing applications to the new operating environment and for sizing and supplying an ICL *Trimetra* system that would achieve the technical and financial goals.

UEF staff would focus on migrating the day-to-day operating procedures from the large data centre machine to the smaller, yet dedicated *Trimetra*. Miracle would take responsibility for hosting and running the VME applications. Other parties were also involved in upgrading UEF's local and wide area networks. The aim was to cut costs and to position UEF to move seamlessly to an ASP-based ERP.

The Benefits

The project was designed to reduce UEF's IT costs by half and to position UEF to take advantage of ERP. In October 2001, this was achieved to cost and on time.

Considerable technical expertise was required to uncouple applications from a very large mainframe, which is running multiple applications, and transfer them to a much smaller, dedicated system without loss of end user performance. ICL undertook the task of sizing the new system. Too little capacity would compromise enduser performance whilst too much would increase cost. The sizing was particularly challenging with regard to the Millennium financial application. Finding the correct balance depended on a continuous interplay between ICL, UEF and Miracle.

Miracle GA, from its Liverpool datacentre, which operates a full 24x7 service, was to be responsible for the day-to-day running of the applications on the dedicated *Trimetra* system. Miracle staff also provided advice and expertise to ensure UEF's business critical applications had robust operating and data security procedures, and that new networking met operational needs.

UEF worked with the existing outsource provider to unpick the day-to-day procedures from that of the other applications running on the larger system. UEF also took time to brief internal application users on the plans. Care was taken to set their expectations at a reasonable level.

As Robert Woolley explained: *"The goal was to halve costs and position us for a transition to an ASP-based ERP. We did not expect that the applications would run quicker on the dedicated, yet smaller system. Yet to our delight, users have seen an improvement - an unexpected benefit of the UEF, ICL and Miracle GA partnership."*

The Implementation

Like any major project, there were potential risks. The migration needed to be completed within six months. Otherwise, UEF could incur large operational charges from their existing service provider. Other risks included a cost overrun and the potential complexity of organising multiple suppliers.

Robert Woolley continued: *"ICL, UEF and Miracle were all clear about their common goal, why it needed to be achieved in six months and where it fitted into our vision for ERP. We agreed terms of reference. Everybody understood what was to be delivered and who was to deliver it. There was a noticeable lack of finger pointing. When an issue arose, everybody got on and sorted it out."*

One of the first tasks for the team of ICL, UEF and Miracle staff to undertake was a risk analysis and to develop suitable contingency plans. This also involved Miracle in 'shadowing' the existing operational activities in order to gain a significant knowledge of the critical procedures. Thus, the experience within the teams ensured that the plans were challenging yet achievable. Even when external business issues caused disruption three months into the six-month project, the effective communication and partnership amongst all parties saw them through to timely completion.

As well as providing a team of technical experts, ICL appointed a dedicated project manager who provided a single point of contact for UEF and acted as a bridge between UEF's business needs and ICL VME migration experts.

The Expertise

The project was completed on time and to cost in October 2001. Robert Woolley summed up the experience in a few words: *"We are completely satisfied with the way the project has been completed. I would like to pay particular attention to the way ICL and Miracle have, under both time and cost pressure, placed customer care high on their agenda."*

ICL News

Better support for forgotten mobile workers

ICL believes that it is important for organisations to improve the level of support for mobile devices, such as laptops, PDAs and mobile phones, if employees are to benefit fully from mobile working strategies. It is suggested that four in five mobile workers are not gaining access to the same level of technical support that their desktop colleagues currently benefit from. Following research conducted by Benchmark Research for ICL in July 2001 involving some 200 UK managers, ICL has produced ten tips to help IT departments better support their mobile workers.

1. Face the facts

Mobile devices are almost certainly being used in your organisation, whether with your knowledge or not. Most PDAs are being purchased by individuals, rather than companies, but are used for essential business matters, such as managing diaries, accessing e-mails and keeping contacts in order.

2. Find the facts

Accept the fact and put a plan into place. Start by finding out who uses mobile devices, what types, where and for what purpose they are used. What type of support is needed. You should involve your employees in this process.

3. See the big picture

Support for mobile workers should be considered as part of the overall IT infrastructure and not an added extra. When deciding on what devices are used and support needed, do this in the same as systems for office based workers.

4. Understand the mobile worker

A mobile worker needs the same degree of support as a desk-based worker, even if this should require more thought on service delivery. Essential services must include access to helpdesks, asset management, procurement and hardware support. Try to minimise the risk of the mobile workers feeling alienated from the office based mainstream.

5. Data is vulnerable

Data is vulnerable, probably more so outside the office, and security must be a priority. Devices can be lost or stolen. What then happens to the data on these devices? Is it in the wrong hands and will your network be vulnerable? Issue guidelines to mobile workers that ensure that they understand how to protect themselves and the company from security breaches and hackers.

6. One size does not fit all

The proliferation of different devices means that what works for some users will not meet the needs of others. The simplest solution in assessing user need is to ask and listen.

7. Budget wisely

Support cost can vary considerably, and what might be expensive but essential for one business may be needlessly costly for another. Take a hard and honest look at what you require and ensure your business knows what it costs and why.

8. Talk is good

When rolling out a mobile IT strategy, ensure that you understand the benefits and communicate them properly. Not everyone will be excited by new technologies; many are in fact resistant particularly if they do not understand the benefits that their use could bring.

9. Education, education, education

Training must have a major role. Initial research suggests that typically, only 10% of software application functionality is properly used. An educated workforce is able to maximise the investment made in mobile devices and their support, as well as less likely to drain support service.

10. Choose partners wisely

Whether you are choosing a company to supply your mobile devices, implement your mobile strategy or provide the ongoing support, choose wisely. Implementing a proper support strategy for mobile workers is complex, due to the number of variants involved. It is vital that you get expertise for your money.

Foreign & Commonwealth Office takes a new £6.3m knowledge service

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has awarded ICL a £6.3 million four-year contract to deliver a global knowledge service to its 14,000 staff in 165 countries. This service is vital to the modernisation of the FCO and addresses its vision of becoming a customer-oriented global on-line organisation.

The knowledge service will enable staff to communicate, share and filter information on a worldwide scale, building relationships between British missions overseas, improving the service given to customers and adding value to the FCO's efforts. For example, personal profiles will allow staff both within the FCO and throughout Whitehall to be alerted, in a format that they decide, about developments in subjects that they have an interest in, cutting down on information overload and ensuring that decision makers have up to date and accurate information. Staff will be able to share their knowledge across the globe using virtual communities, meaning that geography will no longer be a barrier to true team working in the FCO.

The knowledge programme will involve the seamless integration of some thirty information sources. This will be further supported by ICL through a programme of training and cultural change. ICL will also be integrating a number of carefully selected third-party products including Convera RetrievalWare, Documentum and BEA WebLogic.

ICL sells telecoms OSS product business to Intec

ICL has agreed to sell to Intec Telecom Systems the mediation product, SIMS, and interconnect billing product, Prospero.

This agreement enables ICL to focus on providing consultancy, integration and professional services, such as training and support, to the telecoms market by transferring its product commitments. It will further strengthen Intec's leadership in interconnect and mediation as it increases its market share by adding around 35 telecoms companies to its customer base.

ICL has also entered a global distribution partnership with Intec in a drive to continue offering its clients choice and best-of-breed technology. Under this new alliance ICL becomes a strategic Intec partner, able to integrate and support Intec's range of software products including its interconnect and mediation products, InterconnectT and Inter-MediatE.

With over 150 InterconnectT and 120 mediation installations worldwide, Intec is a recognised leader in the Operations Support Systems (OSS) market. The acquisition of the SIMS and Prospero products from ICL enables Intec to add around 35 major operators, such as Omnitel Vodafone and KPN, to its customer base. Intec will provide ongoing support for the ICL products, with a defined migration strategy to next-generation software.

Intec Telecom Systems is a leading worldwide OSS vendor for fixed, mobile and IP/next-generation networks, with more than 240 customers for its products worldwide. Founded in 1997, Intec was listed on the London Stock Exchange in June 2000. Intec is the most successful supplier of packaged intercarrier billing and convergent mediation software, with more installations, and more major telecom operators using its solutions than any other supplier. Intec's portfolio includes:

Inter-venE: telecom fraud management software

Inter-mediatE: convergent mediation solution

InterconnectT: inter carrier billing including CABS and ITU

Maxi-routE: least cost routing solution

Omni-chargeE: billing for all types of non-call telecom services

For more information visit: <http://www.intec-telecom-systems.com>

Web-based Publication System for Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in Finland

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (STM) in Finland has selected Teamware Group to build their new web service on the Teamware PI@za platform. As part of the complete solution also the ministry's publication system will be renewed by using Republica's X-Fetch-based multi-channel publishing tool.

Through the revamping of its web site, STM aims to enhance the usability of the site by improving the functionality and graphic design. The decentralized updating process will be refurbished, and the publication system will be made to meet the latest government requirements.

The new web service is an outcome of the ministry's communications strategy, which emphasizes the importance of web-based communications. It is a remarkable step in networking of the Finnish governmental services and introducing new technologies.

At the first phase the ministry's public web site will be brought to the Teamware PI@za platform, but later on it is possible to expand the system also to intra- and extranet environments.

The new solution will include novel services to be tailored for special user groups, such as visually

disabled persons, and to be used with different browsers and terminal devices. The solution will be hosted on a Teamware server.

Teamware PI@za is a set of ready-made Internet services integrated into a Java based platform. It enables the rapid implementation and easy maintenance of interactive Web sites for a wide range of web community applications. The dynamic Teamware PI@za environment promotes interaction within the community and among its members.

Republica Corp., founded in 1996, concentrates on XML-business. Republica's products enable real-time information exchange between company's information systems, as well as between company and its interest groups. The products facilitate easy and fast integration of these different systems. Republica's X-Fetch Suite consists of embeddable high performance Java software components and a middleware platform for XML based integration of enterprise applications and information systems.

Additional information can be found at the Republica web site www.republica.fi.

Tales of a PC User

Living with upgrades?

When I first encountered PC's they were a nightmare to set up. Do you remember having to tinker with config.sys and the rest? Setting up things like networks required specialist skills. Thankfully, things are a lot easier now and the software is impressive and its installation is, mostly, trouble free. However, new types of problem seem to have emerged.

Like many I was annoyed to hear about the new Goner virus. In order to protect my system I decided to download the latest virus definitions for my anti virus software but my subscription had run out. On attempting to renew my subscription I was informed that the version I had was no longer supported and I needed to upgrade to the latest version. I bought this over the web and tried to install it but this failed because it needed NT Service Pack 6. At this point I was beginning to become depressed. I have had problems with service packs before. They have a habit

of messing up vendor installed software, particularly on laptops. I read the service pack notes on Microsoft's web site which seemed to advise installing it only if I was having problems with the specific bug it addresses, which I don't. I also read all of the known issues including the one which threatened to stop the network card drivers from working. This did nothing to ease my depression which, by now, had deepened. Worse than that, my 2Gb C: drive was nearly full and I really couldn't afford the space.

However, I have some software that resizes partitions but it wouldn't work. I contacted their technical support who said this old version was no longer supported so I bought the upgrade. On trying to install it it demanded service pack 6 as well. My depression deepened.

In the end I bit the bullet. I copied my 16 bit Oracle software, which is about 200Mb to another drive. Unlike some 32 bit programs the 16 bit stuff doesn't mind being copied off, deleted and reinstated. I took a deep breath, loaded the high encryption version of service pack 6 and it seemed to work. After that, resizing the partition and running the antivirus both worked without any problems.

What annoyed me most was the sheer time and effort required to do all of this. It wasn't particularly difficult or expensive. The software only cost a few pounds but it wasted many hours of my time. I was also annoyed that, in order to run the latest application software, I had to expose my system to all of the risks associated with an operating system upgrade. I was also annoyed

that my original software had gone out of date, and therefore out of support, so quickly.

My message to software suppliers is that you should not supply software that is service pack specific. Moreover, if you must bring out new versions so quickly you should aim to support older versions for longer, say for five years.

In the BCS we try to develop standards and codes of practice for the industry. Could we develop codes of practice for software suppliers? Maybe we do already. What do you think.

For those who are interested I used Norton Ghost to back up my C: drive by connecting it to another PC via their parallel ports and creating an image file. This is simple and, based on previous experience, works well. It creates an exact clone of the disk and so backs up, and if required, restores everything exactly as is. I used a RS232 patch panel to create the required cable. If anyone wants to know the pin outs, e-mail me on rupert@harpertec.co.uk and I will put them up on the web site.

I had a dilemma when running the partition software. Should I upgrade my C: drive to NTFS or leave it as FAT? E-mail your opinions to me and we will publish them in aBaCuS.

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Tailpiece

And now for something different. In anticipation of ICL being enveloped by Fujitsu very soon this issue uses the Japanese art of Haiku poetry for a little light reading. Not familiar with Haiku? Its strict rules demand that a poem should have just three lines and only 17 syllables. There should be 5 syllables in the first line, 7 in the second, and 5 in the third. An objective is to deliver a timeless message with powerful insight through the poem's brevity.

Chaos reigns within.
Reflect, repent, and reboot.
Order shall return

Yesterday it worked.
Today it is not working
Windows is like that.

We've had a good run.
Soon we'll be called Fujitsu.
Services 'r us?

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