

## Article Archive 2002

### December 2002 - Sleigh Bells and Whistles

It's that time of year when we review and chart anything and everything. Being aware that IT related events would never come high in a popular vote for the '100 Best Things that have happened to me in 2002'; I thought that the best way to illustrate the ups and downs of the IT year would be to put the whole thing into context using a real life case study. The one that I chose was the 'Business Process Re-engineering of Santa Inc Head Office Operations - North Pole' - seasonally relevant, I thought...

### December 2002 - Tactical Magic

Have you noticed that much business terminology and planning seems to revolve around military style issues of strategic objectives and tactical solutions? This does make a lot of sense, in that military campaigns at a high level can certainly be seen as the most extreme form of 'competition'. But, in lifting these principles from their military roots are we distorting them outside their original context? Let us examine the original definitions back within their home territory...

### November 2002 - Creeping, Crawling and Standing in the Headlights

I have been watching the progression of the replacement for Wembley Stadium from a £150m to a £750m development. I'm sure, sitting behind the scenes, there is a frustrated Project Manager saying 'what do they expect if they keep adding new bits like a running track - who said they wanted a running track when they started?' He would most certainly refer to this as 'scope creep' or a continual change in the requirements. To follow the football analogy through - 'moving the goalposts'...

### October 2002 - How Broad is your Band?

In recent times, there has been a seemingly endless advance in the performance of computers, and this has necessarily been matched by a parallel set of advances in telecommunications. Although the last century has seen a steady increase in the rate at which we are able to communicate information using electrical or optical means, the growth of the Internet over the last decade has served to accelerate these advances, as well as to bring them into the public eye...

### September 2002 - Sheep in wolfs clothing

I have been very struck in recent weeks by the pictures of shell shocked looking executives of failed companies such as Enron or World Com in handcuffs facing up to the consequences of a bit of creative accounting. There is no doubt about the severity of the losses that have occurred, but did these sheepish looking individuals deliberately set out to commit frauds on a grand scale?...

### August 2002 - Every day I get a little bit better

The old joke about quality standards in manufacturing is that having a quality system doesn't mean that you make a good product, it simply means that if it's bad at least it's consistently bad. Often the need to meet quality standards is driven primarily by marketing concerns and on the shop floor it is at best seen as a necessary evil. The process which is all about being able

to prove that business activities follow a standard pattern, can add a layer of bureaucracy which is both costly and stifling.

July 2002 - Building on experience... IT is growing up

At a recent government computing conference in the UK one of the speakers explained how his service - a heavy user of Information Technology not unconnected with law enforcement - was adopting a radically new approach to the procurement of business systems. In the 1980's (he said) they had gone for large-scale bespoke systems, this had not been entirely successful; in the 1990's they went for 'best of breed packages' and integrated them, also a qualified success. Learning from these experiences the new approach was a component-based strategy based on Foundations TM of good database design...

June 2002 - Telecoms - 'Backbones & Economics'

It is fair to say that the world of telecommunications is teetering on the brink of something - exactly what sits on the other side of this brink is open to debate. Vodafone announcing the biggest loss in corporate history at a trifling £13.5 billion has only served to emphasise this...

May 2002 - Sticks and Stones...

Will words never really hurt me? I am sure that libel lawyers would argue that words can be very damaging indeed given the right circumstances. This is particularly true if you put things down on paper as your potential opponent has a tangible item which can be used against you. Similarly, the written word is a potent force in enabling all types of transactions through our daily lives...

April 2002 - Packets and Pieces of String

Convergence is a word you see a lot in the IT and telecommunications press, apparently it is inevitable, or maybe it has already happened, alternatively it could just another bit of tech stock hype? In this context convergence is a term which broadly encompasses the coming together of data and voice based communications. The first significant manifestation of this is the Internet itself which is a data network which, because it can run over the existing telecommunications infrastructure, has spread into hundreds of millions of homes and businesses in just a few years...

April 2002 - How well do you do IT?

How good is your IT? Does it contribute more to productivity or cost? Do your staff have the skills or inclination to make the best use of the facilities provided? Can e-commerce make a worthwhile contribution to your bottom line? Working in the field of IT it is increasingly clear to me that as an industry we place too much emphasis on selling our wares and not enough on providing our expertise at a business level. The fact is that whilst IT can make a huge impact on productivity, these gains can be stubbornly elusive in practice. The big payback is always just over the horizon. The cause of this frustration is simple enough, it is the cumulative result of insufficient business know how (or focus) within the IT community and a lack of technical understanding, and consequently, confidence at a management and decision making level within client organisations...

March 2002 - Web Services - just a spin-off from the Big Bang

I have a theory about the Internet which parallels it with the evolution of the universe. Many scientists believe that the universe started with the big bang, and since that single moment at

the beginning of time the universe has been expanding. During the early stages of development of the universe, it was a turbulent 'soup' of particles lacking distinct structure and any tangible form. As it expanded it cooled, and galaxies, stars and planets formed, with the planets orbiting the stars, and the stars making up the galaxies. The Internet as we know it started as a small-scale research project, and ever since it was made available to the commercial world, it has been rapidly expanding and developing. In the early days of the Internet, it was populated with ever changing ideas, technologies and concepts, but with few concrete systems or applications that could be depended on to provide a reliable service...

February 2002 - Paper Monsters

Mention the word "documentation" in relation to software projects and you can see the fear in the faces of the most experienced programmers. This apprehension probably derives from years of experience of being presented with poorly thought out, ambiguous and badly written documents and the inevitable consequence of fraught software development projects...

January 2002 - Accessing the virtual world

The Internet provides exciting new opportunities for global communication, exchange of information and a means of contact for everyone. Or does it?..