HP reaches a crossroads

Computer Weekly looks at why the IT giant is overhauling its strategy and what it means for customers and the UK IT industry page 4

Why IT projects fail
A study reveals major IT projects are 20 times more likely to fail than other business initiatives due to a lack of planning page 6

IT’s no gamble
In an exclusive interview, Ladbrokes CIO Mittu Sridhara talks about building a multi-channel business and customer-driven innovation page 7

Making use of BI
In the first of this month’s buyer’s guide articles, we look at how to choose the right business intelligence option for your organisation page 11

Green IT’s business value
We examine how sustainability can not only boost an organisation’s bottom line but also enhance its reputation page 13
Case study: Co-operative

Group cuts costs with desktop virtualisation ahead of office move
As the Co-operative Group (Co-op) prepares to move into its new head office in September 2012, the firm’s IT team is on track to virtualise up to 3,500 desktops and merge some departments to drive cost savings.

computerweekly.com/247601.htm

Matt Scott: Review – HTC Sensation. Sensational, superb or just standard?

After reviewing the HTC Flyer, I’ve got my hands on the HTC Sensation. I wouldn’t say Sense 3.0 is one of the stand-out features of this phone because it has a lot more to offer – it’s the trusty sort of smartphone we’re used to from HTC, but with a few extra twists.

computerweekly.com/blogs/inspect-a-gadget

David Bicknell: Using IT to focus on reducing excess inventory and improving sustainability

A blog post on the Harvard Business Review has raised the issue of inventory, its impact on sustainability, and what IT can do about it. It highlighted organisations’ previous inability to do much about their estimation processes, and what the consequent excess inventory’s impact is on sustainability.

computerweekly.com/blogs/greentech

Adrian Bridgewater: Philanthropy and altruism in software programming

For some reason I’ve been spending an unhealthy amount of time looking at instances of software deprecation recently. As readers will know, this is the process by which certain features are left in software even though they have been superseded and become redundant.

computerweekly.com/blogs/open-source-insider

Mark Ballard: Police ICT reforms evade detection

Home Office plans to make police more accountable will make police IT less accountable, and at a time when IT is becoming in the words of Lord Wasserman, the man behind the reforms, “the key to fighting crime”.

computerweekly.com/blogs/public-sector
DECC invites smart meter IT bids

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) has called on IT suppliers to build the data and communications infrastructure that will enable information to be sent between smart meters in homes and businesses and the yet-to-be-established Central Data and Communications Company which will manage the data. The deal could be worth up to £4.5bn.

The contracts are part of the Smart Metering Implementation Programme which will help customers manage their energy consumption and reduce carbon emissions. The government wants 30 million smart meters in home and businesses in the UK.

In May, DECC put out a notice to IT suppliers informing them to be ready to bid for work in its plan to introduce smart meters. The DECC tender is looking for suppliers to bid for contracts to supply a wide area network; telephone and data transmission services; data transmission services; and IT services - including consulting, software development, internet and support.

ENTERPRISE SOFTWARE
Tesco signs CA Technologies to manage global IT estate

Tesco is using software from CA Technologies for its global IT. Through a £45m deal, Tesco will deploy CA Service Operations Insight, CA Sysview Performance Management and CA Process Automation to manage its IT. The products will monitor Tesco’s mainframe, desktop computers, servers, networks, credit card transactions, suppliers and supply orders.

enterpriseweekly.com/247733.htm

IT SERVICES & OUTSOURCING
IBM offers cloud monitoring to allay security concerns

IBM is tackling business reservations about deploying applications in the public cloud with a hybrid approach that monitors access and manages deployments of applications on both public and private cloud systems. Building on its acquisition of Cast Iron, IBM is providing integration to gain greater visibility, control and automation into IT assets.

computerweekly.com/247721.htm

ENTERPRISE SOFTWARE
Tata Steel moves into cloud with Microsoft Office 365

Indian giant Tata Steel is moving two legacy e-mail systems to Microsoft’s cloud-based Office 365 system across its European business. Tata Steel’s first major shift into the cloud is one of the biggest deployments of Microsoft Office 365 in Europe. Tata’s main operations in Europe are based in the UK and Holland. The migration work has been outsourced to Capgemini.

computerweekly.com/247719.htm

RISK MANAGEMENT
IBM plans to acquire data analytics software suppliers

IBM has announced plans to acquire two data analytics firms. Cambridge-based crime and fraud prevention software maker i2 has more than 4,500 customers in 150 countries. Algorithmics provides risk analytics software and services used by banking, investment and insurance businesses to help assess risk and address regulatory requirements.

computerweekly.com/247763.htm

ENTERPRISE SOFTWARE
Department of Health invites developers to create NHS apps

The Department of Health is calling on software developers to create apps for use by the NHS. Health secretary Andrew Lansley wants software developers to come up with ideas to help patients make informed decisions about their care.

computerweekly.com/247692.htm

STAFFING & TRAINING
Women pull into the lead for salaries in junior IT jobs

Women in junior roles in the IT sector are being paid more than men in the same job for the first time. Research from the Chartered Management Institute shows a female junior IT executive in the UK earns an average £20,730pa compared with £20,686 for men at the same level. In 2010, men working at junior levels in IT received an average of £1,119 more than women.

computerweekly.com/247759.htm
What does HP’s change in direction mean for the UK technology sector?

HP’s decision to buy Autonomy and ditch its PC division has a number of repercussions for UK IT, writes Kathleen Hall

In a major strategic shake-up, HP announced last month it is to ditch its Touchpad tablet range, seek a buyer for its PC division and buy UK software publisher Autonomy for £7.1bn. The move represents the company’s boldest step yet toward software and away from PCs.

In an announcement that took the IT industry by surprise, HP revealed:
- Autonomy has accepted a bid of £25.50 per share, worth £7.1bn - a 64% premium on the software firm’s share price at the time. Autonomy founder and CEO Mike Lynch will make about £500m from the sale.
- HP will discontinue its WebOS devices, including its smartphone and tablet ranges. HP released its Touchpad tablet device in the UK in July, making the product one of the most short-lived in IT history.
- HP will examine strategic alternatives for its PC business, which could lead to the division being spun-off or sold. HP is the world’s leading PC supplier, generating $41bn in revenue in 2010.

The announcements suggest an end to two of HP’s biggest previous acquisitions, sold off in favour of buying one of the UK’s most successful independent software companies. HP bought PC specialist Compaq for $25bn in 2001, and WebOS developer Palm for $1.2bn in 2010.

Through a strategy of acquisitions, HP has become the world’s second largest PC supplier, generating $41bn in revenue in 2010.

Strategic shift
In statements to accompany the announcements, HP CEO Léo Apotheker said clearly that the latest developments are part of a strategic shift to focus on higher margin businesses such as cloud computing, software, and what he called “the next-generation information platform”.

He said Autonomy will remain in the UK but, although the news was well received by the UK tech community, Richard Holway, co-founder of analyst firm TechMarketView, had his doubts.

“Mike Lynch has said he will stay on to head up HP’s software division in Cambridge, but Lynch is an entrepreneur rather than a corporate guy, so I wouldn’t be surprised if he moves on in six months and an American takes charge and moves operations to the US,” he said.

“This means talent will go overseas. It also means we will lose all those entry-level jobs for bright British tech graduates, which Lynch was great at attracting to Autonomy.”

Holway said a geographical move would be bad news for the UK technology industry. “If Autonomy moved, that would undoubtedly impact the Cambridge cluster, which Autonomy was the white heat behind. We need companies that are prepared to stay the course and become the next HPs, Microssofts and Googles - we’ve never been able to do that, and that is why this acquisition is so sad,” he said.

HP’s long game
“I think Léo Apotheker has lost the plot. I find it difficult to see how this fits in with HP’s other software initiative,” said Holway.

Quocirca analyst Clive Longbottom agreed. “Apotheker has come in from a software company [SAP] and has consequently looked at HP as a software company. I don’t think that is something HP is, has been or ever will be. Its history in this particular area has been abysmal. To then suddenly hand big chunks of its core market to competitors seems ludicrous. Dell in particular must be killing itself laughing,” he said.

“HP needs to look at the type of organisation it wants to be. It couldn’t have gone forward as it has been, but opting for continually big change instead of building on what works is its mistake. And these announcements will really hack off most of its channel,” Longbottom said.

Ovum analyst Tim Jennings believed the shock announcements could impact HP’s credibility as a predictable strategic IT supplier.

“This is potentially very bad for HP, as enterprise and public sector IT executives feel that predictability is a critical trait for major technology suppliers, and HP continues to reinforce the impression that it is unpredictable,” he said.

He suggested enterprise and public sector IT managers should use this period of disruption at HP as an opportunity to drive bargains in product and service procurement projects.

More acquisitions are likely if HP is to make this change in direction work, Jennings said. “If HP is looking to Autonomy as an engine for growth, it will need further acquisitions to broaden its coverage. It will need to be on an aggressive acquisition trail and will have to plough ahead with its software growth. This is a massive change management exercise. One can compare it to IBM’s, which took about 10 years,” he added.

The deal will bring strong search and analytics capabilities, and a deep and broad portfolio of e-discovery,

“I think Léo Apotheker has lost the plot. I find it difficult to see how this fits in with HP’s other software initiatives”
archiving and records management offerings to HP, said Brian Hill, security and risk analyst at Forrester. But he predicted the transition for both HP and its customers is unlikely to be smooth.

“While this purchase holds promise, I am sceptical about how it will translate to near-term and mid-term advantage for enterprise customers focused on risk management, the wisdom of its overall strategy, and the potential to help HP move into enterprise software. Which is also the reason why Autonomy’s change in ownership is a success story,” he said.

But Ovum analyst Nick Dillon said HP’s acquisition could be a good move for HP. “From a business perspective there are dozens of reasons for HP to acquire Autonomy. We believe this is a great strategic move by HP. Autonomy is top of the league in enterprise search and getting there in e-discovery, content management and, latterly, structured information. “Buying Autonomy moves HP into the big league of enterprise software suppliers alongside IBM, Microsoft, Oracle and SAP,” he said.

What next for UK IT? Quocirca’s Longbottom said it is important not to overlook the impact this acquisition will have on the British technology sector. “The UK is still as dynamic as ever in terms of the ideas coming out. We have a good enough infrastructure to allow organisations to get off the ground, but we generally don’t have the capacity to allow them to flourish. The only direction they can feasibly go to build the market is west,” he said.

But Ovum’s Jennings said we shouldn’t overlook smaller players which are very innovative in the software market.

“Where the software industry has traditionally been US-centric, I think over time we will see China and Asia-Pacific become increasingly stronger players. It is important for the UK economy to make sure it supports innovation in software, even if we don’t grow major companies,” he said.

So where does this leave ARM and Sage, the last two globally significant UK-based technology companies?

“Both are vulnerable - ARM in particular, because it has so many partners and we have always thought a company such as Microsoft or SAP might buy Sage,” said TechMarketView’s Holway. “Although the jury is still out about the wisdom of its overall strategy, there is no denying that Autonomy is a successful company and has the potential to help HP move into enterprise software. Which is also the reason why Autonomy’s change in ownership is a shame from the UK tech industry’s perspective.”
**IT STRATEGIC PLANNING**

**Just say ‘no’: How to save your IT project – and career – from failure**

IT projects are 20 times more likely to fail than others, due to unpredictable changes in scope, writes Karl Flinders

Major IT projects are 20 times more likely to fail than other business initiatives because project managers are ignoring unpredictable events by focusing on the average performance of previous IT projects when planning.

A study by Oxford University’s Saïd Business School found IT project leaders are risking the future of their organisations – as well as their own careers – by neglecting to take into account the variability in the success of previous projects.

The research analysed 1,500 global projects worth a total of $245bn, with an average cost of $170m. It found large IT projects are, on average, 27% over budget and take 55% longer to complete than originally planned.

But Alexander Budzier, a PhD student and one of the Oxford University researchers, said such statistics are not as bad as they seem: “If you compare the spectacular IT project failures, these figures are very small.”

He said analysis of major projects in the construction industry, such as road and bridge building, showed similar results. But IT planners are focusing on the average performance of previous IT projects and ignoring potential disasters.

**Ignoring the unpredictable**

As a result, IT projects are 20 times more likely than other projects to spin out of control. Troubled projects are putting an early end to the careers of senior executives and could put companies out of business, say researchers. The study found such IT projects have high-impact outlying events which cannot be predicted.

Budzier said the cost over-runs come at the end of these projects and catch project managers by surprise.

He said these projects, which are impossible to predict, go 197% over budget on average, and take 68% more time than expected.

He said the research did not reveal major disparities in industry sectors but there were some in the project types. For example, the risk of cost over-runs in hardware infrastructure projects is low, whereas in bespoke software projects it is high.

Budzier said the problems arise in high-risk projects because the requirements change. “These scope changes are introduced after the contract is signed,” he said.

**How to manage project risk**

To avoid risky projects, Budzier said companies must ensure the scope of projects remains stable and that every decision in the project is based on business benefits. He said only 20% of the projects analysed the business benefits of decisions.

Budzier said project managers or project owners have four opportunities to reduce risk:

- Carry out a benchmarking study;
- Projects should not be under-priced at the start, which often happens as project leaders seek approval or suppliers try to win contracts;
- Project lengths and complexity should be reduced; and
- The right experience must be brought in to run projects.

He said the IT industry could take a leaf out of the construction industry’s book: “In construction they have identified who the master builders are and they need to do this in IT projects.” Budzier adds that the research showed similar results for UK public and private sector IT projects.

**Critical analysis of change**

Robert Morgan, director at sourcing broker Burnt-Oak Partners, said almost all IT projects experience changes in scope: “This is what causes projects to fail. To prevent this you need good project management that will say no to changes unless a business case is given for a change.”

He said scope changes are inevitable as projects move forward. “As they go along, the business becomes more and more educated about the system’s functionality. As a result, pressure is put on project managers to make changes,” said Morgan.

The problem is that IT projects are extremely complex and business users do not understand how a change will impact on other parts of the business or systems, multiplying costs and introducing delays. “If you have a weak project manager, they will give in to changes and this will lead to over-runs,” said Morgan.

He said it is often difficult for a project manager to refuse a request from an executive such as the CFO, particularly as many project managers are contractors.

Changes in scope add costs directly and have knock-on effects. A contract signed between EDS and the Inland Revenue saw costs rise 135% from about £1bn to £2.4bn between 1994-2000. These increases in costs were partly due to new work and projects (£533m).

**more online**

News: Failed IT projects demolish big businesses and careers computerweekly.com/247681.htm

News: FireControl project failed because of EADS contract computerweekly.com/247202.htm

News: Large government IT projects subject to new controls computerweekly.com/246168.htm

“If you have a weak project manager, they will give in to changes and this will lead to over-runs”
Taking no chances on Ladbroke’s IT

With expanding digital products spanning web and mobile platforms and a retail estate the size of Tesco’s, Ladbrokes CIO Mittu Sridhara tells Angelica Mari he is the last one to take a punt on the company’s IT infrastructure.

Mittu Sridhara is no gambler when it comes to IT strategy. The global CIO of betting group Ladbrokes leads the technology supporting an operation that takes over £15bn in stakes a year across a retail estate comparable to Tesco, with over 2,000 outlets in the UK alone.

Since joining Ladbrokes in 2008, Sridhara has focused on creating a joined-up team and operation that operates across in-store, web and mobile channels. That required a significant effort around underlying processes such as portfolio management, development and delivery to provide a better foundation for a multi-channel business.

A complex portfolio
Apart from its shops, Ladbrokes also has a significant web and mobile presence — and everything happens in real time.

“Our customer-facing platforms are a combination of multi-channel retail combined with a trading platform and a content delivery platform all synchronised together, in real time,” Sridhara told Computer Weekly.

“Our product range is about four times that of an average multi-channel retailer.”

As well as a real-time games, Ladbrokes streams live sports coverage across platforms with live betting odds for each event, which are traded and managed across various channels and geographies.

Understanding the company’s round-the-clock activity lies a platform stack of about 360 applications and a wide range of third-party providers. Some of the company’s key suppliers are GlobalDraw, Sapient, OpenBet, Aditi, HCL, HP, IBM, Endeaca, Hybris, Oracle and BT.

The retail system at Ladbrokes is a combination of in-house and outsourced applications, largely based on Microsoft technologies. Its web and mobile platforms are mostly based on open-source software.

The latest addition to the gambling company’s IT portfolio is a trading platform based on off-the-shelf middleware provided by Tibco, with the front-end and trading algorithms delivered on a system based on Microsoft Silverlight.

Key areas of focus
In illustrating the breadth of IT projects rolled out across Ladbrokes in recent months, Sridhara points to the gaming platform introduced across the entire retail estate in under four months. Another example is the sector-leading search capability using tools provided by information management specialist Endeca.

“Over the last 12 months, the focus has been around improving our web, mobile and retail platforms while improving usability and our customer experience,” the CIO says.

“In parallel, we have been building several components of our multi-channel platform and working on our trading platform to improve the delivery of our sports betting products.”

The company’s new core trading platform was delivered earlier this year and Ladbrokes has handled transactions around the Wimbledon tennis championships on the new set-up. Additional sports are now being introduced to the system.

The mobile offering has also been improved in the number of applications and the range of devices, including support for Android, iPhone and Blackberry handsets.

In the next two years, Ladbrokes plans to extend the range of products on the new platforms.

“A lot of that is about focus and doing one thing at a time. We will update all our platforms and work with our partners and in-house team to deliver as we have over the last 24 months,” says Sridhara.

Customer-driven choices
As new platforms are introduced, Sridhara’s team is also retiring some systems, but the company has opted against a “big-bang” consolidation and prefers to concentrate on customer requirements.

“We prioritise what the customers need to see and what we need to do to make that happen,” says Sridhara.

“As a result of that focus, we ended up consolidating or retiring applications as part of that drive to deliver a multi-channel offering and increase revenue. We do not have time to just do consolidation for its own sake.”

Ladbrokes buys off-the-shelf software when possible and changes systems according to needs, but this depends on the business application. For example, the IT chief mentioned that while the firm’s trading system is unique, back-end systems such as ERP are not customised at all.

Strong partnerships
As with applications, Ladbrokes employs a blended model for IT infrastructure which entails in-house and outsourced services. Systems are run in-house while hosting and some of the underlying infrastructure development and support is outsourced.

The company uses HP, BT, OpenBet, Ardena and other companies for these activities as well as offshore provider HCL, which Ladbrokes has been testing more recently.

Systems that don’t require high-level security, such as videoconferencing, sit on a private cloud provided by Google. Within the private cloud set-up, the firm benefits from greater scalability and uses this for some other applications that are demand-heavy.

Ladbrokes works on innovative processes in close proximity with its partners. According to Sridhara, a lot of innovation - which is also guided by a strong customer-centric thinking - has taken place around the web, particularly on contextual navigation and search.

“Very few websites have a strong search capability that lets users navigate very effectively. And we are looking at each of these areas and looking to deliver results in a short, sharp and efficient manner over the next year,” Sridhara says.

This is an edited version of the interview. To read the full text, click on the link below.

more online
CIO Interview: Mittu Sridhara, global CIO, Ladbrokes computerweekly.com/247643.htm
CIO Interview: Alastair Behenna, technology director, Telecity Group computerweekly.com/247613.htm
CIO interview: Billy Waters, IT manager, Yo! Sushi computerweekly.com/247433.htm

ComputerWeekly.com
Daily news for IT professionals at ComputerWeekly.com
Jobs vs Gates: whose vision is winning?

Steve Jobs, who moved from CEO to chairman of Apple last month, is one of the very few technology leaders who can genuinely be described as a visionary, a much over-used word in the industry.

A visionary is someone who can visualise a future and work out how to get there, regardless of the doubters, distractions and failures along the way, remaining convinced, essentially, that they are right all along – and who then delivers that vision.

There are plenty of people in IT described all too quickly as visionary. At any one time, you can find dozens of creative company executives with a vision. But the visionaries are the ones who, years later, are proved right. Being a visionary is a long-distance race, not a beauty contest.

The visionary that Jobs has most in common with is not a modern technologist, but Henry Ford, the giant of the early 20th century car industry. Ford famously said: “If I’d asked customers what they wanted, they would have said ‘a faster horse’.”

Jobs is the same; driven by the belief that his vision of the future was right - it’s only in the last 10 years that he has really been proved correct. Apple will continue to flourish because Jobs has yet to achieve the entirety of his vision, and as chairman he will still be there, health permitting, to continue that direction.

Compare and contrast with Microsoft.

The Seattle giant was driven from inception by Bill Gates’ vision of a PC on every desk and in every home, and of software becoming a revolutionary force. He was right, he achieved his vision, despite doubters, distractions and failures along the way.

Today though, Microsoft has become a collection of very good products, supported by a world-class global marketing and product distribution network. But what is its vision of the future?

Gone are the decades of bad feeling between Apple and its great rival, perhaps one of Jobs’ legacies will be the perspective that it brings to the post-visionary Microsoft.

Byte Night 2011: Why size doesn’t matter for CSR

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) was, before the economic downturn, the buzzword of the moment. For many companies it was simply a glossy marketing term to be spewed out. For others, it was at the heart of their business and a great way of showing they cared. However today, as the recession continues, CSR has pretty much fallen off the agenda for most businesses.

Nevertheless, I’ve come to realise CSR doesn’t need to come at a cost; rather it should be a benefit. The advantages CSR offers are clear - and not just for large enterprises but to smaller companies too. As well as providing a feel-good factor, it is a great way to develop a good reputation among peers and attract new recruits. CSR provides invaluable PR and great networking opportunities for business within their industry.

It is not to say that CSR should be seen purely as a means to benefit business; ultimately, it is about philanthropy and being able to give something back.

A few years ago I found myself sleeping under the stars in the open air in a winter night in London. Far from romantic, it was cold, wet and miserable, despite our sleeping bags, umbrellas and cups of tea. My colleagues and I were pledging our support for Byte Night, the IT industry’s sleep-out event which raises money for Action for Children, a charity that works with the UK’s most vulnerable children. The event involves more than 700 people sleeping out across the country and this year aims to smash last year’s total of £550,000.

Byte Night is an example of the genuine appetite for active participation in charity in the IT community. Even during the economic downturn, support for the event has grown every year.

However, you may ask how one person in a start-up company can have the time or the manpower to get their business involved in charity? I asked myself the same thing when I launched my own company, but I was determined to maintain support for Byte Night and started to look at how others incorporated charity into their professional work.

It appeared that it was easy enough to give something back once you had made your money or were part of a large well-known corporation. However, I wanted to get involved straight away.

So I set about giving myself the target of one day per month, the equivalent to 5% of my working time, to be spent on charitable projects. Byte Night provided the perfect opportunity to help fulfil this new goal. I contacted James Bennet, co-founder of the event, and asked if I could become a member of the Byte Night board, which he kindly accepted.

At first I was unsure of what I had to offer Byte Night but it soon became apparent that everyone can contribute. Charities are crying out for the business skills we use every day at work, from people management and supply chain management to communications. And, as a member of the technology profession, it struck me early on that as both individuals and as a professional community, we could make a real difference.

Most of us who take part in Byte Night have regular access to emerging technology and mature IT services; but there are many within the UK who don’t even have access to basic services. As a result, they are suffering academically, financially, professionally and socially.

Through Byte Night, IT is empowering people to make a difference. Byte Night allows the IT industry not only to prevent youth homelessness through fundraising and financial donation, but also to discuss how the IT industry as a whole can make long-term changes to those who need it most. The reality is every company, no matter how small, can do their bit and make a significant difference; it’s just a matter of making the time.

If sleeping out for one night prevents one teenager from sleeping rough, that’s good enough for me.

Editor’s blog
computerweekly.com/editor

Mike Barrett is a director at Compound Media and a member of the Byte Night board
Apotheker’s best ever decision

CW readers give their views on HP’s £7bn acquisition of Autonomy and plans to divest its PC business. Read the full story online

Robert Morgan, Burnt-Oak Partners
How little the US stock market understands about what most European pundits call “the world’s hottest technology company”, Autonomy’s acquisition by HP deserves to be hailed as the best decision ever made by Leo Apotheker and the HP board. The second best decision ever was the announcement that this transaction, combined with the sale of the PC business, should insulate HP investors from the worst of the current economic and technological downturn for at least a couple of years to come.

I applaud the Autonomy acquisition even though ownership will leave the UK (which saddens me greatly) but the 50% premium paid by HP is not unreasonable in light of the extreme “intelligence” of the Autonomy solutions and the fact that HP will have an absolute imperative to drive to justify the dilution. While Leo Apotheker carefully predicts difficult quarters, I doubt it could have survived the competition as China’s education, economic and engineering infrastructures recover from a hundred years of anarchy and those of the West spiral into recession because we have forgotten how to earn a living.

The messages for those who wish to see government policies turn round the UK are very mixed.

HP will simply fail to compete with the likes of Google or Amazon
Richard Stephens
The recent announcements to drop out of the handheld, mobile and PC sector, and the eye watering $1bn offer for the UK software company Autonomy, saw HP’s shares fall 20% on the US stock market. It all points to a deep, unnatural desire by successive CEOs at HP to be “cool” — perhaps to be cool like Apple. Yet the world’s largest IT corporation has never been a pioneer in anything cool and no matter what its marketing advisers say, it will always fail at being what it simply has not got in its DNA. HP is brilliant at corporate IT services (dub but solid) and both commercial and domestic print technology where for decades the company has enjoyed amazingly successful results from inkjet sales and of course sales of consumables - yes, those amazingly pricey ink cartridges and paper.

I watch with shock and frustration when I see HP stretching too far and trying to lead the market in areas the organisation can neither manage well nor really fully control.

HP keeps going into markets it cannot win or lead in and it struggles to compete with dynamic and stylish brands that will always attract the leading trend-setting buyers. Personal products in IT and telecommunications today are entirely a numbers game and getting into cloud-based data services in the end will become another price-led war where HP will simply fail to compete with the likes of Google or Amazon. And all this time, while HP has been pouring cash into lost causes, it is taking its eye off its natural and easy business. Solid, corporate but profitable business may not be very cool — but HP’s shareholders will prefer it that way.

IT staff of the future will only work for one of three companies
Mark Wright
I think there are going to be only a few large companies running the show in the future. So many buy-outs these days mean only a few dominate the market.

MessageLabs went to Symantec; Sun went to Oracle; EDS went to HP. I can see a world when if you are an IT worker, you will only work for one of three companies.

British companies all too ready to sell out to Silicon Valley
Mike B
There is an apparent ongoing trend whereby the founders of British computer and software companies are all too ready to sell out to the big boys of Silicon Valley, in order to become multi-millionaires in the process. The main problem is that we Brits were too slow in getting any sort of technology industries off the ground and, as a result, the Americans and Japanese now totally dominate this sector. If British institutions fail to invest in this sector, those people working in Cambridge, Reading and other technology parks will all be employed by foreign companies such as HP, Microsoft, Sony etc.

Mixed messages for UK government policy makers
Philip Virgo
HP/EDS as the world’s largest and most mature open-source/cloud operation after IBM, adds Autonomy as the provider of engines that are transforming not just information processing operations but also the business models of its largest and most profitable customers, and now spins-off the PC hardware operations as a distraction. The strategic vision makes very good sense.

Whether that vision will be successfully implemented is to do with culture, leadership and implementation. The new management teams of Ferranti and GEC had similar “vision” when they made the “terminal take-overs” that destroyed both. Lou Gerstner’s “vision” was, however, implemented and transformed IBM, making it fit for the 21st century.

It is sad for those of my generation that nothing is left of the old Hewlett-Packard other than the initials. But I doubt it could have survived the competition as China’s education, economic and engineering infrastructures recover from a hundred years of anarchy and those of the West spiral into recession because we have forgotten how to earn a living.

The messages for those who wish to see government policies turn round the UK are very mixed.

HP will simply fail to compete with the likes of Google or Amazon
Richard Stephens
The recent announcements to drop out of the handheld, mobile and PC sector, and the eye watering $1bn offer for the UK software company Autonomy, saw HP’s shares fall 20% on the US stock market. It all points to a deep, unnatural desire by successive CEOs at HP to be “cool” — perhaps to be cool like Apple. Yet the world’s largest IT corporation has never been a pioneer in anything cool and no matter what its marketing advisers say, it will always fail at being what it simply has not got in its DNA. HP is brilliant at corporate IT services (dub but solid) and both commercial and domestic print technology where for decades the company has enjoyed amazingly successful results from inkjet sales and of course sales of consumables - yes, those amazingly pricey ink cartridges and paper.

I watch with shock and frustration when I see HP stretching too far and trying to lead the market in areas the organisation can neither manage well nor really fully control.

HP keeps going into markets it cannot win or lead in and it struggles to compete with dynamic and stylish brands that will always attract the leading trend-setting buyers. Personal products in IT and telecommunications today are entirely a numbers game and getting into cloud-based data services in the end will become another price-led war where HP will simply fail to compete with the likes of Google or Amazon. And all this time, while HP has been pouring cash into lost causes, it is taking its eye off its natural and easy business. Solid, corporate but profitable business may not be very cool — but HP’s shareholders will prefer it that way.

IT staff of the future will only work for one of three companies
Mark Wright
I think there are going to be only a few large companies running the show in the future. So many buy-outs these days mean only a few dominate the market.

MessageLabs went to Symantec; Sun went to Oracle; EDS went to HP. I can see a world when if you are an IT worker, you will only work for one of three companies.

British companies all too ready to sell out to Silicon Valley
Mike B
There is an apparent ongoing trend whereby the founders of British computer and software companies are all too ready to sell out to the big boys of Silicon Valley, in order to become multi-millionaires in the process. The main problem is that we Brits were too slow in getting any sort of technology industries off the ground and, as a result, the Americans and Japanese now totally dominate this sector. If British institutions fail to invest in this sector, those people working in Cambridge, Reading and other technology parks will all be employed by foreign companies such as HP, Microsoft, Sony etc.
The most comprehensive security services around.

Dell SecureWorks offers the most complete range of world-class information security services.

A full breadth of Managed Security, Counter Threat Intelligence, and Security and Risk Consulting.

Consistently awarded for quality and service, our security services have the flexibility to integrate into even the most complex environments.

So you get a tailored service that fits your needs, whether that’s full outsourcing, co-management, monitoring or automated correlation and reporting.

And because Dell SecureWorks is a vendor-neutral provider, your technology solution will be the one that’s best and most cost-effective too.

Just choose which services are best for you.

For more information, please contact us on 0131 718 0700 or email UKenquiry@secureworks.com

Visit us at: www.secureworks.com/uk
How to make business intelligence tools work for your organisation

BI tools can report essential, timely data but care must be taken to select the right system, writes Clive Longbottom

The last few years have seen a flurry of activity in the business intelligence (BI) market. Firstly, the old-style approach of reporting against data in a relatively static manner was put under pressure by users demanding something a lot more flexible, where they did not need to approach the IT department every time they needed to create a report. Then, the big suppliers decided they needed BI tools they could control, rather than embedding a copy of a standard engine (generally Crystal Reports) into their systems. IBM acquired Cognos and SPSS, Oracle bought Hyperion and SAP took over Business Objects. Some smaller suppliers got in on the act - relative newcomer Spotfire went to Tibco, the middleware supplier.

This flurry of activity presented issues to many users - if they were running a heterogeneous environment, how rich would the functionality of one supplier’s BI engine be against another, competitive supplier’s systems? Would bringing Cognos into an Oracle environment be a foot in the door for IBM to try and move the organisation over to DB2?

The market for independent BI providers soon began to fill up - suppliers such as Information Builders, Panorama Software and Tableau Software have all let users know there are alternatives available to whatever they may be using to date. The largest remaining independent supplier, SAS Institute, continues to dominate as a specialist BI supplier.

Cloud-based computing is giving greater reach to many of these suppliers. Spotfire has provided a hosted version of its software for many years and Panorama - through a partnership with Google - offers its capabilities as a BI software-as-a-service (SaaS) offering.

Open-source BI tools

But the biggest problem remains the cost of BI. If a business’s main asset is its information - its intellectual property - BI needs to be widespread. JasperSoft and Pentaho both have community editions of their BI software free to download and implement.
Business intelligence case study: Cheyne Capital

Cheyne Capital, a hedge fund management company, has replaced SAS with Tableau business intelligence, to speed up reports for its traders, writes Cliff Saran.

Over the last three years the IT team at Cheyne Capital needed to provide reporting across multiple systems to provide traders with greater business insight. However, due to the nature of its business, producing reports needs to be done quickly and efficiently.

Jan Uygur, CTO of Cheyne Capital, said the company wanted to hand over reporting to the business, rather than leaving reporting as a purely IT function. “Since the downturn we have strived to be more efficient. We were using SAS previously, but it is a big heavy tool.”

This meant the company had to use the SAS environment and extract data into a SQL Server database. “We wanted to make reporting much lighter,” says Uygur.

SAS needed a lot of developers, with three to five people involved in developing reports. The downturn led to a reduced IT team, forcing the department to rethink how to produce reports more cost-effectively.

Faster reports were necessary as the trading desk asked IT for applications. As an interim step, Uygur says: “We gave traders reports. When traders need something, we have to give them a solution quickly.”

Cheyne Capital has realised portfolio managers need to interact with instant data and up to date analysis, rather than being presented with static reports that can’t answer questions. The hedge fund company is using Tableau Software to deliver reports in a way that it can work with the numbers, delve deeper and see the information in the way staff want - grids, graphs and in the form of an infographic illustration.

Sheel Bhatiani, deputy head of IT at Cheyne Capital, said the department had previously used wireframes to develop reports, which were then presented to users. Tableau is more interactive. It provides a graphical designer, allowing an IT person to sit on the trading desk and collaborate with a trader to build the report, making changes on the fly.

Cheyne Capital plans to adopt Tableau Software’s 6.1 version with potential use on tablet devices, making the data accessible for portfolio managers on the go.

Choose the right BI system

When it comes to choosing the right BI direction for your organisation, Quocirca recommends the following as basic pointers:

- Is a single supplier solution important to you? If so, look to the tools from the incumbent (e.g. IBM, Oracle, SAP), but negotiate hard around existing contracts. On the whole, this will tend to restrict you to a smaller number of active BI users, with the capability to distribute the reports from the analysis.
- Do you want an independent BI system that can work across a more heterogeneous system? Look to the remaining independents or semi-independents such as SAS Institute and Tibco Spotfire. These may still be expensive at a per-seat level, but will often come with tools to manage deep domain expertise areas, such as oil and gas, pharmaceutical and finance data analysis.
- Can you provide your own systems support, and are you in a position to enable a suitable number of support staff to build up their own knowledge of the chosen system? If so, then community editions of BI tools may meet your requirements. This would provide the most scalable BI system - but you need to watch out for any lack of functionality that may be in some community editions.
- Do you want a fully supported system, but also want broad adoption capabilities? Then look for supported versions of open source tools, or for commercial systems that do not charge on a per-user basis.

For many, it will come down to a hybrid solution - but certain key areas must be born in mind:

- Everyone must be analysing the same information. Different BI tools looking at different information silos do not provide business intelligence - it gives chaos.
- One person’s great BI tool is another’s incapability to see the results. Bar and pie charts may be pretty easy for everyone to understand, but not all data is well suited to bar or pie charts. Heat maps, spider charts, geo-data representations, bubble charts and all other media may have meanings for certain people, but do not assume that any one way of viewing data will suit everyone.
- Look for tools that enable the user to change the visualisation method to one that suits them best. If multiple BI tools are chosen to give different viewing capabilities - see the point above regarding information silos.
- "Live" reports have pros and cons. Web-based output which allows users to see the analysis of the live data is great, unless what was required was a snapshot in time. Make sure that the differences are understood, and the right reports can be run against the right data.

More online

Premium content: Seven trends to change business intelligence computerweekly.com/246819.htm

Premium content: Seven trends to change business intelligence computerweekly.com/247487.htm

Premium content: Seven trends to change business intelligence computerweekly.com/247541.htm
Opinion remains divided over the economic recovery but many organisations are seeking growth – whether aggressively or opportunistically – while others remain cautious on investments. A common goal must be to review and potentially re-allocate resources and investment, either to cut costs or release funds for new priorities. From an IT perspective, that translates into making sure IT investments are made in the right places and realising that sometimes elusive goal of measuring tangible value from IT.

Business expectations of IT
Research among business and IT executives in 2011 reveals high expectations of IT and some clear imperatives (see panel, the role of IT in the business, page 14). New technologies are rated almost side by side with budget and cost-reduction as the leading drivers of changing demand for IT. Were further evidence needed, investing in IT is seen as the third highest opportunity for 2011, while risks relating to new technologies has risen to fifth position in 2011.

The message and demand is clear - IT is needed, but it needs to develop its skills in some very specific areas and new technologies are expected to be part of that response.

Develop the right areas
In 2010, a global survey of business leaders revealed that, despite a challenging economic environment, organisations were continuing and increasing activity on climate change and sustainability (see panel, climate change programmes, page 14). Yet it was clear from comments and responses from survey participants that, despite clear business drivers, increasing budgets and planned initiatives, organisations were struggling with execution.

Sustainability has a key role to play in the economic recovery and the future, not simply in response to global or national regulations but also to revenue opportunities and customer demand, and to be competitive in emerging and developing markets.

Bringing sustainability and IT together via green IT has already achieved some notable successes. One example is that of the search for significant and immediate cost savings during the recession. This accelerated the adoption of new technologies to enable virtual meetings and collaboration, to reduce large travel costs. Many organisations captured tangible and measurable business value delivered by those investments in cost savings and contribution to sustainability targets. And these benefits resulted directly from collaboration between business and IT on sustainable IT-enabled business processes.

Those organisations which have already recognised the business potential and imperative of climate change and sustainability, and have a programme in place, should revisit their plans now to take stock, review the business drivers and objectives, and set objectives and targets. Those who have only targeted changing demand for IT. Were further evidence needed, investing in IT is seen as the third highest opportunity for 2011, while risks relating to new technologies has risen to fifth position in 2011.

The message and demand is clear - IT is needed, but it needs to develop its skills in some very specific areas and new technologies are expected to be part of that response.

Develop the right areas
In 2010, a global survey of business leaders revealed that, despite a challenging economic environment, organisations were continuing and increasing activity on climate change and sustainability (see panel, climate change programmes, page 14). Yet it was clear from comments and responses from survey participants that, despite clear business drivers, increasing budgets and planned initiatives, organisations were struggling with execution.

Sustainability has a key role to play in the economic recovery and the future, not simply in response to global or national regulations but also to revenue opportunities and customer demand, and to be competitive in emerging and developing markets.

Bringing sustainability and IT together via green IT has already achieved some notable successes. One example is that of the search for significant and immediate cost savings during the recession. This accelerated the adoption of new technologies to enable virtual meetings and collaboration, to reduce large travel costs. Many organisations captured tangible and measurable business value delivered by those investments in cost savings and contribution to sustainability targets. And these benefits resulted directly from collaboration between business and IT on sustainable IT-enabled business processes.

Those organisations which have already recognised the business potential and imperative of climate change and sustainability, and have a programme in place, should revisit their plans now to take stock, review the business drivers and objectives, and set objectives and targets. Those who have only targeted changing demand for IT.

Research among business and IT executives in 2011 reveals high expectations of IT and some clear imperatives (see panel, the role of IT in the business, page 14). New technologies are rated almost side by side with budget and cost-reduction as the leading drivers of changing demand for IT. Were further evidence needed, investing in IT is seen as the third highest opportunity for 2011, while risks relating to new technologies has risen to fifth position in 2011.

The message and demand is clear - IT is needed, but it needs to develop its skills in some very specific areas and new technologies are expected to be part of that response.

Develop the right areas
In 2010, a global survey of business leaders revealed that, despite a challenging economic environment, organisations were continuing and increasing activity on climate change and sustainability (see panel, climate change programmes, page 14). Yet it was clear from comments and responses from survey participants that, despite clear business drivers, increasing budgets and planned initiatives, organisations were struggling with execution.
Managing green expectations
There remain a number of misconceptions about sustainability, some of the more common being:
- It is expensive to implement
- It relates simply to saving the planet and is not a business issue
- It is driven by compliance
- It is just about energy savings
- It is just about the datacentre
- It is just about what goes on in IT

So a primary focus for business and IT is to jointly ensure a clear and consistent understanding of sustainability and its business value.

This means an integrated approach, and a framework to bring IT and business together to assess the current state, agree a realistic target state, and a plan to achieve that with measures. However, sustainability is still a relatively new, evolving and complex subject, and for many the journey and route are unclear, so awareness and communication plans are key to success.

What IT brings to sustainability
Firstly, IT has the opportunity to lead by example in demonstrating its understanding of the subject and the opportunities to apply new technologies. It can deliver against the organisation’s sustainability objectives in its own IT lifecycle activities and articulate benefits in terms of business value.

Secondly, IT can bring a structured process, language and framework to bring IT and business together. The IT Capability Maturity Framework (IT-CMF) from the Innovation Value Institute provides this structure. The framework achieves this by providing the structure to jointly assess the maturity of current capability and what is important, to set improvement targets and the roadmaps to get there and measure success.

The IT-CMF is based on recognising the capability building blocks that exist for an individual IT process to deliver value. Maturity levels - from 1 (initial) through to 5 (optimising) - are described for each building block, allowing an organisation to set targets relevant to them and delivering value specific to them.

There are nine capability building blocks for green IT under four categories of:
- strategy and planning;
- process management;
- people and culture;
- governance.

Importantly for green IT, the IT-CMF recognises that the scope and value of increasing maturity has to be defined specifically for green IT as a relatively new and evolving capability. However, it also recognises that corporate sustainability and green IT goals influence other core IT processes and capabilities - sourcing, innovation, and portfolio management to name just a few - and that ultimately success means embedding sustainability into other business and IT practices.

Using the IT-CMF to assess the maturity of green IT in organisations revealed the category that receives most focus and activity initially is process management. In process management, IT operations and lifecycle, which includes procurement, design, run and disposal, is typically the first to be addressed.

IT-enabled business processes is typically the second priority, with the implementation of technologies to enable green IT success being the most frequently cited example. Business and IT stakeholders typically agreed that, while significant progress had been made in both those areas, much more remained to be done, as well as a need for a significant increase in awareness and communication.

Climate change programmes
- Over two thirds of organisations already had a climate change programme in place.
- The top driver of these programmes was energy costs, closely followed by changes in customer demand and new revenue opportunities.
- 70% of organisations planned to increase their investment in climate change and sustainability between 2010 and 2012; top investments listed were investing in energy efficiency, development of new products and services, and transparency in corporate reporting.

They also found recognition of achievement was often less than expected, because of insufficient attention paid to other building blocks of objectives, people and culture. This resulted in organisations missing out on valuable support because of this lack of awareness and understanding, and tangible objectives and measures. An unexpected benefit of assessing green IT using the IT-CMF was that discussing the green IT building blocks of alignment, objectives, measurement and governance, prompted a wider discussion of IT and resulted in additional insights on priorities and how to focus investment and action.

In summary, the contributions of IT and sustainability to economic recovery and competitive advantage provide an excellent opportunity for CIOs to use green IT as an enabler to engage in dialogue and respond to business expectations of IT to play that significant role in managing future economic and business trends.
Adobe Systems is the dark horse of the software suppliers. Its product portfolio stretches way beyond the ubiquitous portable document format (PDF) standard, popularised by its Acrobat software.

Adobe generated an eyebrow-raising $3.6bn of revenues in 2008, and $2.9bn in 2009. It has an enviable market position that covers consumer and business web technologies, web design and application development, business process management (BPM), collaboration tools, web analytics, online marketing and security.

The company stands as a possible takeover target for Microsoft. Apple – once a long-term friend – has turned enemy, and it has trudged through a decade of patching products that have become a target for hackers.

Business segments

Nevertheless, Adobe has a large and loyal base of users, particularly in the creative design industry. Half its revenues come from Apple Mac users, many of whom work in this sector. Adobe also has a long list of well-known brands which include Adobe Reader and Acrobat, Flash Player, Dreamweaver, Creative Suite, Flex, PostScript, Photoshop, InDesign, After Effects and ColdFusion.

Adobe has six business segments it describes as Creative Solutions (such as Photoshop and InDesign), Enterprise (web conferencing, BPM and analysis tools), Knowledge Worker (content creation and collaboration), Omniture (online marketing), Platform, and Print and Publishing.

The Creative Solutions segment contributes the largest proportion of revenues to the company, 58% of total revenues in 2009. Adobe is understandably keen to expand it.

But there are also other promising areas of the business. These include rich internet application (RJA) development platforms for creating interactive web experiences, rich mobile content and enterprise-centric RIAs designed for clients or employees to use. Key Adobe technologies here include Flash, LiveCycle Mosaic (which helps create composite user interfaces, or customer portals), and Adobe Integrated Runtime (AIR), an out-of-browser environment for running RIAs that use Flex or JavaScript. (The Twitter desktop app, TweetDeck, runs on the Adobe AIR platform, for example.)

Tom Austin, Gartner vice-president and lead Adobe analyst, says: “Adobe is a broader, more diverse and more capable supplier than most IT leaders realise, but it needs to restore its creative solutions business to its former growth profile to fully fund the growth of its enterprise strategy.”

Acquisition growth strategy

In 2009, Adobe bought online marketing and web analytics specialist Omniture for $1.8bn. It bought Day Software Holding – a provider of enterprise web content management software – for $240m in October 2010. It intends to integrate Day’s software as a product line in its Enterprise segment.

However, the Omniture purchase is more profound, according to Forrester Research analyst Suresh Vittal, because it enables Adobe to offer users content creation tools as well as the ability to measure the commercial impact of that content. Vittal says: “We think this acquisition will launch permanent changes to the online marketing world: customer intelligence and optimisation will move to the head of the class.”

Vittal says the deal creates a closed loop process of development, measurement and optimisation which will make the process of online content creation and marketing far easier and more lucrative for enterprises. Consequently, content publishers and advertisers will benefit from more targeted media campaigns.

“Delivering tools and workflows to track, measure and optimise content at the point of creation, Adobe could ensure marketers exploit content to its highest potential, and empower advertisers and publishers to value and target media consistently.”

Vittal adds that, as Adobe exploits this new area and becomes a game-changer, rival content management suppliers such as Autonomy, EMC and Open Text will themselves acquire marketing automation, web analytics, or social media monitoring firms to improve their analytics, optimisation and execution capabilities.

Enterprise focus

While the Omniture acquisition has taken Adobe into the area of online marketing and analytics, the company is also working to establish itself as a market leader in high-quality user experience technology for enterprise applications. Adobe’s LiveCycle product family is the bedrock of this strategy, which covers enterprise collaboration, content and BPM.

Adobe has built up its collaboration technologies, for example with its acquisition of Macromedia, which gave it the technology for Adobe Connect for web conferencing. This has proved popular in education, training departments and government sectors, including military and defence.

Its acquisition of voice-over-IP (VoIP) technology firm Antepo in 2007 provided a presence platform. This supports a range of leading communications protocols such as Extensible Messaging and Presence Protocol (XMPP), Session Initiation Protocol (SIP), and SIP for Messaging and Presence Leveraging Extension (SIMPLE). Consequently, Adobe is positioned to lead in collaboration, a highly competitive area with major suppliers such as Microsoft, IBM and Google carving out territory.

Adobe has developed LiveCycle Collaboration Service (LCCS), “an innovative and promising platform for embedding Adobe-hosted real-time collaboration and communication in other applications”, according to Gartner’s Austin.

LCCS is strategic for Adobe because it simplifies the development of multi-user, real-time collaboration applications, and offers service-providers the ability to offer their customers a transaction-priced collaboration service, without having to “Adobe needs to sharpen its licensing efforts to make it easier for enterprises to achieve licence compliance”
provide the code and infrastructure themselves, which can be costly. Adobe has produced a BPM suite, which is proving a growth area for the supplier. Adobe’s BPM suite comprises LiveCycle Process Management ES2, which can be combined with LiveCycle Content Services ES2, or a content management server from another supplier.

According to Austin, this suite is a simple-to-use development platform for building composite BPM applications, which provide rich, intuitive customer experiences for employees. Adobe has around 700 users of LiveCycle Process Management ES2, and has developed pre-built process templates and support for industry-specific processes in government, life sciences, financial services and manufacturing sectors.

User collaboration
One of Adobe’s strengths is the way it works closely with product users to incorporate feedback. It also has a reputation for involving customers in the design process, says Forrester Research analyst Andrew McInnes.

He says that, rather than collecting customer feedback and going behind closed doors to craft solutions, Adobe uses a “voice of the customer” approach to involve users in the design process. Adobe uses its SyncDev development process, which includes formal design review sessions with customers. Adobe analyses factors such as the relationship between customer engagement and satisfaction to identify the most important and most problematic areas.

Adobe has also launched an initiative to develop products by incorporating user feedback from its online developer community, Adobe Labs, says Pooja Prasad, social media marketer at Adobe.

The company’s Adobe Labs Ideas website uses multiple interfaces to enable developers to contribute to specific Adobe products, including Adobe AIR, Flash Builder, Flash Catalyst, Adobe Flash Professional, Flex, LiveCycle ES and WorkflowLab.

“The ability to collect and prioritise feature suggestions and feedback has the potential to dramatically improve workflow and increase the productivity of product managers. At the same time it provides real-time customer and developer feedback, in-depth customer insights for improved marketing, and further refines features through community collaboration among peers,” says Prasad.

For developers and users of Adobe products, Adobe Labs Ideas is an incredible opportunity to influence the development of your favourite applications,” he adds. “Popular suggestions collected so far include requests to streamline user interfaces to make programming more intuitive, improved integration of product lines and tips for improved hardware.”

In the one month following the programme’s launch, Adobe Labs Ideas saw more than 20,000 unique visitors, 1,200 registered users and generated upwards of 450 feature and usability recommendations on participating product lines.

Standards wars
Adobe’s primary risk it faces include making long-term investments and committing significant resources in anticipation of customer demand for its products and services. Meanwhile, web design standards continue to develop, with competitive technologies vying for attention. Similarly, mobile devices continue to develop apace, which means Adobe must stay at the cutting edge of web and mobile technologies.

Staying ahead of the curve is one issue for Adobe, but another more pressing one is driving existing web technologies. One hot topic in the web development world is which web technology to opt for. The developer and user communities’ answer could directly affect Adobe’s bottom line.

Adobe’s Flash is currently in a battle with HTML5, which is progressing towards a de facto standard for modern consumer websites. At the same time, Apple until recently locked Flash out of its iPhone and iPad devices, in favour of other technologies. This is noteworthy, considering a huge proportion of Adobe’s creative design users work on Apple Macs. Adobe and Apple have a long history of collaboration. Microsoft Silverlight is starting to grow in popularity as an interactive web technology. Its integration with the Visual Studio development platform is certain to boost its adoption.

However, Google seems to favour Adobe at the moment, with Google’s popular Android operating system supporting HTML5 and Flash, but not Microsoft Silverlight.

Chesnut says Adobe is currently working to improve its licensing models, to increase revenue per user and improve licence compliance, as the supplier depends on new licence revenue.

Cost and compliance problems, he says.

One global manufacturer that uses Adobe software was faced with an Adobe licence liability of more than $15m. However, the company applied Product Use Rights (second use and multiple version rights) and successfully reduced its licence consumption across 35,000 devices.

This shrank the company’s audit liability by more than $5m, because “right of second use” allows the same application to be installed on desktop and laptop computers and consume a single licence, while the “multiple versions right” allows multiple versions of the same application to be installed on the same machine and consume only one licence.

Gartner’s Tom Austin says: “Adobe needs to sharpen its enterprise licensing efforts to make it easier for enterprises to buy and achieve licence compliance.”

However, he adds that Adobe is currently working to improve its licensing models, to increase revenue per user, and improve licence compliance, as the supplier depends on new licence revenue.

Licensing complexities CIOs must watch out for

One area where Adobe is experiencing some friction with users is in licensing, specifically the complexity of its licensing models.

“Adobe’s software licensing models are complex and often enterprises find it challenging to comply with its software contracts,” says Vincent Smyth, UK general manager at Flexera Software.

Smyth says there is an inventory and asset recognition issue, because it is difficult to collect and analyse inventory for all computers with Adobe products. For example, Adobe suites, such as Adobe Creative Suite 5, cost much less than the total cost of the individual components bought separately.

There are also management concerns, because the “Product Use Rights” for each Adobe product can differ from product to product and version to version.

To complicate matters further, says Smyth, “Adobe often grants limited use rights to prior versions after upgrades, so customers may have an almost unlimited range of installation footprints that can be extremely difficult to accurately interpret manually.” This can create
Don’t miss FOCUS 11 London

Gain valuable knowledge from McAfee executives, customers and other industry leaders

For more information on FOCUS 11 London please contact Chris Hepple at chepple@techtarget.com.

We invite you to join McAfee this October for FOCUS 11 London Security Conference. You will gain valuable knowledge from McAfee executives, customers and other industry leaders, and also benefit from informative panel sessions and cutting-edge technology demonstrations.

FOCUS 11 London Security Conference offers an excellent opportunity for decision makers, security industry influencers and strategists to network with other professionals, get in-depth security updates, and learn more about today’s most pressing security challenges.

FOCUS 11 London Keynotes

RT Hon David Blunkett MP
Former Secretary of State and Chairman

Jacqueline de Rojas
Vice President, McAfee UK and Ireland

Bennett Arron
Award-winning Writer, Actor and Comedian

Gert-Jan Schenk
President, EMEA, McAfee

Steve Shakespeare
Director, EMEA Enterprise

Nick Leeson
The Man Who Broke Barings Bank

Bryan Glick
Editor in Chief of Computer Weekly

Book Signing
Meet Stuart McClure, Co-Author of Hacking
Diggers and social media: A match made in heaven

More than one million Finns have been unable to resist watching four strangers live in diggers.

Over the past two months, four men have been constantly streaming live video and interacting with their viewers while sleeping, eating and drinking in the diggers. They are only allowed 30 minutes per day for bathroom breaks.

They are not just doing this for the fun of it, oh no; the last man standing wins the £28,000 digger they have been temporarily living in.

One of the contestants, Kimmo Frisk, said: “One guy contacted me through the internet and suggested I come to his house and have fun with a naked cow and a chicken. I didn’t take him up on his invitation.”

Another contestant, Arto Kojonen, said: “Being online constantly, I’ve made a lot of new friends so I don’t feel lonely. I’m having lots of fun – and it’s a great way to meet women.”

This is not the first digger and social media mash-up that has been successful in Finland. Last year, Jukka Mutanen drove a mini digger, with a top speed of 4km/hour, 1,000km across Finland while broadcasting the whole thing live online.

Don’t be surprised if you see a celebrity version of this commissioned for Channel Five next year.

Samsung says Stanley Kubrick invented the tablet

The, erm, gripping legal battle between Samsung and Apple has taken a new twist. The Galaxy S II creator is planning to use Kubrick’s renowned 2001: A Space Odyssey to prove that Apple is not the originator of the tablet computer.

The film, which is over 40 years old, features a tablet-like device, and Samsung is using this as a “prior-art” defence. If Samsung’s claims are taken seriously as firm evidence, proving that the idea existed before Apple’s patent, then Steve Jobs could see his corporation’s patent deemed invalid.

Apple must have been expecting some form of retaliation, albeit probably not classic film related, from Samsung after gaining an injunction that prohibited the Korean firm from selling its Galaxy 10.1 tablet in Europe. This has since been overturned and Samsung is fighting back, sci-fi style.

Social media – don’t moral panic, Captain Mainwaring

Do you remember when England used to be a quiet, uneventful place where nothing ever happened? Then came the scourge of social media, causing our delinquent youth to take to the streets in a collective act of violence. At least that’s the impression you’d get from listening to David Cameron and certain MPs calling for a social media ban.

But it is not just the PM who is determined to stamp out rioters using the internet. A judge has sentenced two men in north-west England to four years in prison for creating a Facebook page calling for a riot that no one, apart from the police, turned up for.

Jordan Blackshaw, 20, from Marston, and Perry Sutcliffe-Keenan, 22, from Warrington, each received four-year sentences for using Facebook to “organise and orchestrate” disorder in the early hours of 9 August. Sutcliffe apparently woke up the following morning with a hangover and removed the page and apologised, saying it had been a joke.

Needless to say, no “massive North-wich lootin’” actually took place.

The disproportionate jail time for these clowns is reminiscent of the notorious Robin Hood Airport tweeter who received a £3,000 fine for tweeting as a joke that he would bomb the airport after it was closed due to snow. Although the authorities could be forgiven for taking the Facebook riot “joke” more literally – and a punishment in this case, albeit less draconian, would be just – there are similarities.

Both of these examples display an extreme anxiety in our criminal justice system about the dangers of social networks – and a pending Daily Mail-style moral panic in general.

Luckily then that MPs didn’t swap expense-fiddling claims on Twitter; phone hacking didn’t occur on Skype; and the bankers didn’t use Facebook to trade sub-prime mortgages – otherwise our society would be in really big trouble.

Oh, wait a minute…

France uses technology to destroy trade unions

Rather than create a Gallic version of Maggie Thatcher to destroy trade unions, the French are experimenting with virtual boarding agents at airports. According to one report, these avatars always smile, don’t need breaks and never go on strike.

Yes an airport in France is trying out a system where avatars are projected onto human shaped silhouettes, which then help customers. Low-cost airlines are creating their own versions. They are programmed to be as unhelpful as possible to remind people how little they are paying for their flights.

Downtime thinks TUPE legislation should be tweaked to ensure that avatars get the same rewards as the workers they replace.

Read more on the Downtime blog
computerweekly.com/downtime
Cloud computing poses an unprecedented business opportunity. With the dynamic mix of integrated public and private Clouds, companies can reap enormous cost savings and agility.

Join us at this free to attend event and you’ll hear how you can build your enterprise Cloud and add value to your business with the help of Oracle Fusion Middleware technologies. You will learn how to:

- Optimise resources and scale mission-critical applications for your private Clouds
- Lower total cost of ownership by taking advantage of hardware and software that is engineered to work together
- Facilitate shared services that span private and public cloud networks
- Adapt applications and compose processes to dynamic business conditions
- Unify security and compliance concerns across public Cloud and on-premise networks

Meet with Oracle experts and your peers to discuss best practices and see how organisations are successfully lowering total cost of ownership and achieving rapid returns by moving to the Cloud.

Places are limited so reserve your seat today!

Via email: Jason.woods@computerweekly.com