T H E   E L E C T R O N

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CONNECTING AND CONVERTING MOBILE USERS

As the world of digital communications continues to grow, more companies are shifting their marketing investments from traditional marketing activities like print advertising to emerging digital strategies including email, social, and mobile marketing. This trend was particularly evident at this year's Internet World event reported in the last issue of *The Electron*.

For companies trying to keep up with the changing environment and making strategic marketing decisions the path forward is often unclear, with a plethora of communication channels now available.

In a new guide entitled 'Connecting and converting Mobile Users' Lyris Limited have attempted to explain how it is possible to leverage the explosion in mobile devices to improve email marketing ROI.

According to Lyris the main part of the mobile email challenge is the fact that the content is being viewed on a much smaller screen than the more familiar expansive desktop monitors, and the key to successful email marketing to mobile devices is anticipating the formatting and technical differences between phones and computers and designing for both. The technical and design needs for creating mobile email marketing campaigns are listed as follows:

(i)   Mobile email subject lines (to be concise because as little as 15 characters of the subject line may be visible)

(ii)   Mobile email formats (mobile platforms show 20 to 40 characters per line as opposed to 60 to 80 for a computer monitor)

(iii)   Optimisation of pre-headers (optimising the valuable top text space with pre-headers and making the first header a mobile-friendly link)

(iv)   Ensuring the email works without images (as images lead to longer load times on mobile devices)

(v) Keeping mobile copy short (as the average email recipient spends only 15 to 20 seconds looking at an email and even a message as short as 12 KB risks being cut out half way through)

(vi) Performing platform tests (the most successful email marketers know that testing how emails render on different email platforms is an important part of email marketing success)

They then move on to the subject of designing websites for mobiles:

'Statistics show that marketers are quickly beginning to understand the importance of a strong mobile website. A 2008 Dot-Mobi study showed a universe of only 150,000 mobile ready websites, but the same study conducted in 2010 reported that the number of mobile ready websites had increased 2000 per cent to top 3,000,000 mobile websites. Suffice it to say that a mobile-friendly website is quickly becoming the rule and not the exception.'

Many of the rules for creating mobile versions of emails also apply to creating mobile-friendly web pages and the advice is:

(i) Test call to action across a variety of mobile devices and ensure that it is user-friendly from the email through the conversion goal

(ii) Focus on building mobile pages on the most important content first

(iii) Test all mobile pages for potential issues with accuracy, rendering and navigation on mobile devices

This leads on to testing and tracking considerations, which include:

- Asking subscribers to update their preferences and determine their format of choice (desktop, mobile or both) and targeting mobile-only users with tailored offers

- Identifying mobile users through a preference centre and test sending emails to ascertain what timings generate the highest conversions

- Testing shorter subject lines for mobile, targeting a maximum length of 15 characters

- Testing offers that don't require a full graphic image

- Testing two versions of a mobile email, one in multi-part MIME format with simple images and one text-only version to ascertain which one generates better results

In their conclusion Lyris state:

'Understanding how to design for mobile devices is the first step to success, but ensuring that the subscriber has a positive experience once they've followed the call onto your mobile website is also important. Focusing your efforts on testing the right elements to improve future campaigns and taking a cross-channel approach that includes mobile, email and social media will ensure your campaigns are able to keep up with the shifting needs and preferences of consumers.'

The paper 'Connecting and converting Mobile Users' is available from Lyris Limited, 232-242 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1AU. Telephone: 020 7630 2961. Email: mweston@lyris.com

SUPERCOMPUTING: SERVICES IN THE CLOUD

With a new financial year and budget cuts placing more pressure on IT managers to reduce IT spend, more organisations are looking to move to hosting providers to realise savings by removing the need to purchase servers.

Servers can be leased from hosted service, eliminating the need to provide storage for them, power them, cool them and provide maintenance for them. This can free up valuable internal resources.

Supercomputing is a service for processing large volumes of data very quickly, something that is not possible on standard CPUs. It is a service that was, until relatively recently, an expensive and exclusive IT operation, but is now available remotely through the cloud computing concept.

The most popular supercomputing services are GPU (Graphic Processing Unit) Cloud Services and HPC (High Performance Computing) services.

GPU Cloud Services are now being adopted by businesses in many different industries and allow users to produce rich media, including 3D rendering and animation packages through the cloud. Until recently the creation of content through these services was expensive as complex software is needed as well as servers that can store copious amounts of data. The necessary equipment (software and hardware) was also needed in-house.

HPC services are more specifically geared to the financial sector enabling extremely large volumes of quantitative data to be processed very quickly. In this particular industry, where time and statistical analysis are crucial, a service that does not cut into the IT budget significantly and processes complex calculations quickly is essential. HPC is therefore important as it improves the speed of financial modelling and potentially has a major impact on business performance.

One of the organisations that is at the forefront of these developments is Peer 1 Hosting, who currently have 18 data centres across Europe and North America, which are connected by a supernetwork consisting of 15,000 miles of fibre connectivity. They provide both GPU Cloud Services and HPC through a range of companies

including xcelerit, Azinta, bluegfx (a company that offers cutting edge technology in the 3D and video industry) and Microsoft.

Amanda Dunn, Peer 1 Hosting GPU/HPC and Partner Manager EMEA commented:

"The new trend of supercomputing moving to the cloud will be highly beneficial for many businesses. Small businesses will be enabled with access to supercomputer, which means that they can now compete with their larger rivals."

Peer 1 Hosting, who are currently investing £10 million in a second UK data centre, may be contacted through Peer 1 UK Limited, The Quay, 30 Channel Way, Ocean Village, Southampton SO14 3QG. Telephone: 0800 840 7490. Email: terry_connor@hotmail.com

DEVELOPMENTS IN NEUROMARKETING RESEARCH

Neuromarketing research is a key component of amplifying engagement, along with customer experience research, brand research and user-centred design.

One of the organisations that is a t the forefront of developments in this area is One to One insight, who have developed a unique patent pending algorithm known as the Quantemo Engagement Index (QEI), which provides a single quantitative measure of engagement.

Quantemo helps brands understand how consumers engage with them by measuring an individual's perceptual, pre-cognitive and cognitive emotional responses when interacting with products, interfaces, advertising etc. Data collected from these modalities is captured real-time and displayed via the Quantemo Player, a robust data analysis dashboard. This data is then processes through the QEI.

As specialists in applying innovative research methodologies to achieve business objectives One to One insight invite interested parties to contact them at One to One, The Media Centre, 3-8 Carburton Street, London W1W 5AJ. Telephone: 020 7886 8241. Email: joutlaw@onetooneglobal.com

NEW SOFTWARE HELPS MANAGE CUSTOMERS SIMULTANEOUSLY

New software designed to help organisations to improve their relationships with online clients and maximise their website conversions by targeting hot leads or clients showing abandonment behaviour patterns has been launched by start-up company Wisaforce.

According to Forrester Research 'Making proactive chat works':

- 57 per cent of web users are very unlikely to abandon their online purchase if they cannot find quick answers to their questions

- Average order value for customers who have been in contact with an online advisor improved on average by 30 per cent

- There is a 15 t0 20 per cent conversion rate for visitors who have engaged with an online advisor

- 44 per cent of web users mention that having their questions answered by a live person while shopping online is one of the most important features on a website

The new Wisaforce solution allows companies to track visitors as they browse their website, helping them to understand traffic patterns and how web users interact with their website. All browsing data can be seen on the monitoring panel in real-time including:

- Pages viewed in the website

- Length of time on site

- Data entered in online forms

- Shopping cart content

- Any custom data the company needs

Visitors are dynamically allocated to the operators according to their availability and specialisation and with a unique multi-chat facility (patent n 2 934 938 'real time collaboration: web site traffic monitoring) several customers can be managed simultaneously.

The web user can request to be called back by one of the company's advisors with Wisaforce either bridging the call for the company using an IPBX, or sending the employees a notice that a customer is requesting a call. This can be particularly relevant for complex products and services

The software can monitor specific behaviour, such as click-through paths and time on a page, and apply rules to trigger proactive invitations to these pre-qualified leads whilst the 'observe' feature allows companies to see how visitors browse their website. Wisaforce state:

'We capture mouse moves, click and keystroke. The whole process is completely transparent to the end user and does not introduce bias to the research. By viewing a direct copy of what the client sees, the analyst can quickly identify abandonment points and realise A/B testing.'

The technology is 'applet free', making it compatible across devices, operating systems and browsers, such that an operator can co-browse and chat with an iPad user. The multi-co-browsing technology is also download free for the user and does not leave any trace on the user's computer. Wisaforce state:

'Our key innovation is the fact that, if a user has opened several windows, the system recognises that the different windows are used by the same user.'

More information may be obtained from Wisaforce, Lincoln House, 300 High Holborn, London WC1V 7JH. Telephone: 020 7092 6619. Email: Fanny.dolo@wisaforce.com

MEASURING AND MANAGING ONLINE REPUTATION

The emergence of Web 2.0 has led to an abundance of interactive websites which have increased the speed at which online information is spread. A single personal opinion can sometimes go beyond a close circle of family and friends, for example when shared with an online community, and can quickly gather pace and influence to an extremely large number of people. The sentiment can no longer be controlled by the companies themselves. Internet users are increasingly taking the power away from the companies.

Companies are very aware of the impact that the 'buzz' technique has had as a marketing tool, allowing companies to monitor and measure their online image in real time by following the buzz that exists around their brands and products.

BuzzWatcher measures activity on Web 2.0 channels (social networks, video platforms, RSS feeds, blogs, etc.) in real time. It can also be used to obtain a vertical-based approach thanks to the classification of different articles into categories such as sport, politics, economy, high-tech etc.

BuzzWatcher does not require any tagging, nor does it need to be installed – all that is required is to declare the keywords that are to be monitored such as brands, products, competitors' brands and products, business sector, or a particular theme. It is also possible to declare any complementary channels or channels that are specific to a named business area.

Suppliers AT Internet, a leading independent web and mobile analytics solution provider, state:

'BuzzWatcher monitors channels, indexes the contents of these channels, and extracts information from them which corresponds to the keywords that you have previously selected to monitor. In addition to the data available on the dashboard, the analysis provides detailed information on the different channels and sources, customisable to your needs. All of this analysis can be filtered by keyword and/or by channel in order to focus on a specific issue. The semantic analysis can further enhance the results by adding the context of people, places, companies and related concepts to the general analysis.'

In addition to Buzzwatcher AT Internet also supply:

- Analyzer (real time web analytics for websites, mobile sites and intranets)

- ChannelOptimizer (multi-channel attribution engine, and converted access sequence measurement tool)

- Observer (monitoring the performance and availability of web servers)

For more information contact AT Internet Limited, Gilmoora House, 57-61 Mortimer Street, London W1W 8HS. Telephone: 020 3178 5356. Email: david.brown@atinternet.com

QUALIFICATIONS IN ELECTRONIC MARKETING

For those looking to enhance their qualifications in the field of electronic marketing The Institute of Direct Marketing (IDM) is pleased to announce the following qualifications:

- IDM Diploma and IDM Certificate in Digital Marketing

- The new IDM/London South Bank University Masters in Digital Marketing (MSc)

- The IDM Award in Data Management (the essential new qualification for all businesses using customer data)

- The IDM Award in Email Marketing

The IDM Certificate in Digital Marketing is intended primarily for those whose responsibilities include actually implementing digital marketing campaigns. The Diploma in Digital Marketing is intended for those with a solid grounding in digital marketing and an understanding of the topics studied for the Certificate and tends to attract senior marketers charged with planning, commissioning and managing digital integrated campaigns. Both the Certificate and the Diploma may be studied online, intensively or by day release in London. The fees for the Certificate are currently £2,395 plus VAT (£1895 plus VAT online). For the Diploma it is £2,950 plus VAT (£2,350 plus VAT online).

The Masters in Digital Marketing is designed for those who have already obtained the Diploma and requires attendance at London South Bank University. Fees for this are currently around £4,800 (£3,600 for those with both the Certificate and the Diploma).

The IDM Award in Data Management contains wholly original practical materials never before assembled in one course. It is suitable for data professionals (including database and data managers; data protection officers; marketing professionals with responsibility for data collection, storage and use; agencies, suppliers and vendors' staff; and IT and other professionals who influence, coordinate, amnage or direct data policies, systems and processes. It is particularly recommended for professionals in the public sector such as the N.H.S. and local government. The fees are currently £345 plus VAT with discounts for multiple students for the online course.

The IDM Award in Email Marketing is designed for those responsible for planning and implementing email marketing campaigns and is currently priced at around £1,450 plus VAT.

Further information about the qualifications is available from The Institute of Direct Marketing, 1 Park Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0AR. Telephone: 020 8977 5705.

DOMAIN NAME INDUSTRY REPORT PUBLISHED

Nominet, the organisation responsible for the management of the .uk Internet registry, has announced the publication of the Domain Name Industry Report for 2010.

According to the Report Summary .uk has had one of its most successful years with new registrations at their highest level since 2000, and the decline in renewal rates that was feared in 2009 has not, in fact, happened:

'Renewal rates have settled down to a rolling 12-month average of 69 per cent. It is this consistency in renewal rates along with strong new registrations that has contributed to a 2010 .uk growth rate in excess of 11 per cent.'

Current registrations are averaging around 170,000 per month, which compares with an average of 60,000 a month in 2001.

Analysis of the use of domain names in advertising show that around 65 per cent of adverts contain a website address, with 83 per cent of printed adverts containing a website address as against 61 per cent of television adverts:

'Our analysis covered over 10,000 advertisements, and where a website address was featured, 55 per cent used a .uk address compared to 42 per cent using a .com address. The occurrence of other top level domains was low with only .tv and .org featuring regularly.'

In television advertising, usually it is the longer advertisements that tend to include a website address – 70 to 80 per cent as against 50 per cent of short adverts. Whilst, however, 58 per cent of media spend in television advertising includes a website address, this figure is below the 61 per cent by occurrence or 64 per cent by duration, suggesting that 'premium advertising slots are less likely to feature a website address'.

Advertising .uk websites cost television advertisers £3.1 million as against £2.1 million for .com. This represents 58 per cent of market share where a website address is featured by media spend, a higher figure than by occurrence or duration 'suggesting that .uk advertisers are using more premium advertising slots than other top level domain (TLD) advertisers'.

With newspaper advertising, .uk has a 52 per cent market share as against 43 per cent for .com, and 86 per cent of advertisements contain a website address. In newspaper supplements, however, only 77 per cent of adverts contain website addresses.

Analysis of system use in August 2010 showed that Nominet's three systems (Web Domain Manager, Automaton and EPP) were used by almost 3,000 users. Nominet's usage chart shows that Web Domain Manager is the system used by the largest number of registrars (1,402) as against 1,032 for Automaton and 355 for EPP.

When the number of commands processed is analysed, however, EPP is way ahead at 35,324,323 as against 507,722 for Automaton and 33,626 for Web Domain Manager, showing that 'the users of EPP send a considerably larger volume of transactions'. Nominet point out, however, that EPP commands include administrative operations to establish and maintain a connection that may not be operational or affect domain names directly.

For system usage in respect of operations, including registrations, renewals, data requests and amendments, Automaton does the most processing (81,632,634) as against 4,523,997 for EPP and 33,626 for Web Domain Manager. Automaton list request, however, returns a large volume of domain names without making any actual changes.

This latter set of statistics shows that 'EPP is used heavily by a smaller number of registrars' whilst 'Automaton does the majority of work across the registry'.

Further sections are presented on global domain name statistics and trust and awareness (comparing the attitude of UK consumers to .uk and .com).

The full report 'Domain Name Industry Report 2010' may be obtained from Nominet, Minerva House, Edmund Halley Road, Oxford Science Park, Oxford OX4 4DQ. Telephone: 01865 332 211. Email: nominet@nominet.org.uk

THE GOVERNMENT READY PLATFORM

With increased pressure on budgets and the introduction of the Government's CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme, Greening Government ICT agenda, and the Transformation agenda, government organisations are forever being expected to deliver more for less.

This has prompted specialists in web development and web hosting for large organisations Eduserv to develop The Government Ready Platform, a virtualised hosting environment that allows the rapid creation of new servers. The key features are:

- A shared and secure service dedicated to the public sector

- Flexibility to quickly and cost effectively build new environments for testing and proof of concept

- Low cost licences for software and operating systems in non-live development

- Ability to snapshot services enabling roll back of deployments if required

- Identical infrastructure available for hot-standby disaster recovery

- Facility to provide near real time data replication

- Basis over two data centres to ensure resilient disaster recovery

- Hosting in a new, highly secure data centre that is designed to deliver a Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE) value of less than 1.5

- Quick deployment as a capacity extension to existing infrastructure or for complete migration of servers

The technical specification of The Government Ready Platform is as follows:

- Redundant high availability SANs

- Windows and Linux support

- Expandable architecture

- Industry leading server and SAN technology

- VMware ESX virtualisation technology

- Three independent internet transit points

- Industry leading Firewall and security protection

In particular The Government Ready Platform fulfils the Greening Government ICT agenda which requires server optimisation, appropriate cooling, identification of servers and data disks that are running but not providing services, low voltage servers high efficiency power supply units, re-use of equipment, and data centre auditing. The Government Ready Platform addresses each of these requirements in turn by:

(i)   Converting physical servers to virtual servers (Vmware Distributed Resource Scheduling maximises use of computer resources – CPU and memory – by balancing load across the platform).

(ii)   Using 'free-cooling' engineering and server containment to reduce the energy needed for air conditioning

(iii) Making it easier to manage server estates and providing tools that can help understand server use and identify redundant servers

(iv) Using power down capability to move servers to standby in times of limited use – reducing power consumption

(v) Re-using equipment and recycling redundant equipment

(vi) Centralising asset information so as to help identify server usage and provide improved server management

Organisations that have already moved to The Government Ready Platform are the DVLA and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF):

'By moving to The Government Ready Platform the DCSF was able to rduce the physical servers it used by 76 per cent. This drastically reduced its carbon footprint and lowered its costs by 24 per cent'.

Further details may be obtained from Eduserv, Royal Mead, Railway Place, Bath BA1 1SR. Telephone: 01225 474 300. Email: contact@eduserv.org.uk

CASE STUDY: NHS DIRECT

NHS Direct is England's national healthline offering medical advice, information and reassurance to members of the public online and over the phone. In order to keep up with the growing needs of public healthcare, NHS Direct sought to improve its digital services by enhancing the tailored health information it provides to patients online.

The original NHS Direct website had been designed primarily as an information resource to support the main telephone-based healthline service. For the next-generation version of the website, however, NHS Direct had the more ambitious objective of allowing members of the public to interact more with the content so that they could answer many of their queries for themselves, ensuring that the more serious cases were directed to the most appropriate available care. This led to a number of challenges:

(i) Content managers could not easily maintain and update the website as the first-generation website had been developed and maintained using raw code. Even the smallest changes could not be made without republishing the whole website and as a result updates would often be held back due to IT department resources, delaying the updating of essential information

(ii) In order to empower more patients to address their symptoms online it was necessary to have a much deeper insight into the complex web of patient options as they navigate the website so that the service could be fine-tuned over time

(iii)   The overall look and feel of the health and symptom checkers needed to be updated to ensure that they were clear and easy for members of the public to use

(iv)   There was a need to introduce much tighter integration between disparate elements of the website so that the health and symptom checker services could be easily accessed by mobile platforms and could seamlessly direct visitors to other channels such as partner websites

In order to address these challenges complex decision making technology was integrated with Sitecore's advanced Web CMS to create new health and symptom checkers capable of helping more patients to address their symptoms online. Eduserv partnered Sitecore for the development of the new website, following recommendation from InferMed, who supplied the clinical decision support technology Arezzo, which allowed syndicated health and symptom checkers for partner websites, including pharmacies and charities, to be created.

The Sitecore CMS was selected for the following attributes:

(i)   Scalability – allowing NHS Direct to scale to an unlimited number of servers and serve any number of pages or users

(ii)   Flexibility – the architecture of the CMS allowed the NHS Direct website to be easily linked with the clinical decision support tool to integrate features such as the health and symptom checkers

(iii) Functionality – an extensive range of features enables NHS Direct to build attractive, clear and interesting pages whilst at the same time making content management straightforward

(iv)   Usability – the user interface, which uses a familiar Microsoft Office design, makes Sitecore easy for editors to use for both content creation and workflow management

Since its introduction the new online health and symptom checking service has helped to reduce dependence on more costly methods. An enquiry resolved online is a fraction of the cost of calling the helpline or despatching an ambulance, and the new service is now able to provide clinical advice and information to patients that is comparable to a phone line service. Sitecore state:

'The NHS Direct website has received widespread acclaim as an excellent example of a service inspired by innovative thinking and creativity. Last year up to 1.5 million Accident and Emergency attendances and 1.9 million G.P. consultations were avoided through patients' use of NHS Direct's web and telephone services, helping these vital face-to-face services remain available for people who really need them. Based on NHS Direct's standard tariffs, checking symptoms online costs as little as 13 pence per individual transaction - £454.87 less than the ambulance call out or £110.87 less than a patient visiting A and E. Similarly, a G.P. visit accounts to a cost of £32 and an NHS Direct telephone call £16.'

'During the swine flu outbreak, the online cold and flu symptom checker proved particularly helpful to both the public and to NHS Direct. While calls to NHS Direct quickly escalated, use of the online Cold and Flu symptom checker rose to nearly 100,000 usages per week. Were it not for the availability of the symptom checker, there would have been severe pressure on NHS public contact points'.

NHS Direct anticipates that the website's innovations will help some 4 million members of the public check their health and symptoms online in its first year of operation.

More details may be obtained from Sitecore, 10 Philpot Lane, London EC3M 8AA. Telephone: 020 3327 0630. Email: SaC@sitecore.net

CASE STUDY: MERZ PHARMA

Merz Pharma are specialists in the field of medicinal products for the treatment of neurological and psychological illnesses and a pioneer in the area of Alzheimer's research. In collaboration with Mematine they developed the first substance in the world for the treatment for moderate to severe stages of Alzheimer's. They are also a leading supplier of self-medication, dietary supplements and skin care products and are active in clinical and aesthetic dermatology.

Whilst workers' requirements have always been important to the business they wanted to bring their employees' needs more into the heart of the business and for this reason they sought to re-launch their Intranet so as to allow up-to-the-minute information and new services to be brought to the employees.

Many Intranet systems continue to suffer from complicated CMS systems that are weak, require high levels of maintenance, consume lots of worker's time and are difficult to keep updated. Merz Pharma were feeling these pressures and therefore set out to discover a practicable way of putting content from many different sources onto their Intranet as quickly and simply as possible.

Merz Pharma selected HLP Informationsmanagement GmbH, whose SAP specialists have been integrating FirstSpirit™ in SAP NetWeaver portals successfully for many years, as their integration partner for the implementation work. The FirstSpirit™ content management system, combined with the Business Package for FirstSpirit™, incorporates a powerful portal integration tool and was therefore ideal for supplementing the existing portal.

Before implementation got underway the team held workshops, which involved all of the departmental managers, to examine what content could be re-used. The approved structure and content then formed the basis for technical preparation. Training was provided on how to use the FirstSpirit™ content management system:

'As all the editors have different requirements of the CMS, they are able to choose between an intuitive WebClient and a more complex JavaClient. While WebClient is particularly suitable for occasional users, JavaClient is geared to users who want to cover the entire spectrum of online work.'

In order to use the preparation time as effectively as possible, the training sessions incorporated a test view which enabled the authors to integrate content and simulated the view in the SAP NetWeaver portal. The authors also had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the many different paragraph templates for the new Merz Intranet as well as with the structures and functionalities of FirstSpirit™. For implementation the existing hardware only had to be supplemented with a Dell pro Edge server.

The Merz Intranet now features various connected databases, an offer and search function and an extensive employee address book. The separation of structure and content within the CMS lets employees publish content across different media in accordance with the Corporate Identity guidelines without the editors having to deal with the details. The authors can output processed content at several points and using FirstSpirit™ can feed it into the SAP portal without any specialist knowledge.

The new Merz Intranet now allows employees to find all relevant company information at a central point, regardless of whether it originally derives from the SAP portal or from other systems. A single sign-on also means that users only have to log into their computers once, so avoiding difficult passwords and multiple log-in procedures.

Dr. Andrea Kreisselmeier, Intranet Project Manager for Merz Pharma commented:

"Our new employee portal represents a significant gain for us worldwide in terms of high-quality user-specific information. We have created a central platform for our employees where they can access not only their SAP functions and business processes, but also news from the company and all the other information they need for their daily work."

FirstSpirit™ is manufactured by e-Spirit, who are based in Dortmund and were founded in 1999 by former members of the Fraunhofer Institute for Software and System Technology (FLG ISST) in cooperation with the IT service provider Adesso AG.

Further information may be obtained from e-Spirit UK Limited, 88 Wood Street, London EC2V 7RS. Telephone: 020 8528 1021. Email: marketing@e-Spirit.com

CASE STUDY: BLACK LIBRARY AND FORGE WORLD

Black Library and Forge World are divisions of Games World, the largest and most successful tabletop fantasy and futuristic battle-games company in the world. Both Black Library and Forge World sell gaming products to a specialised sub-section of Games World's customers. Black Library sells books and other publications designed

to enhance gamers' experiences and knowledge. Forge World manufactures detailed resin models. They both sell limited edition and collectable items that are always in high demand.

Whilst Black Library's publications are sold through both high street and online retail chains, direct sales via the division's website are also a major part of the division's business. Virtually all of Forge World's business is conducted via its website.

In both cases the divisions had websites that dated back to the early days of their business and in both cases these websites were inappropriate for the modern business.

Ragnar Karlsson, Direct Sales Manager for Black Library, stated:

"Any orders we received had to be rekeyed into our back office systems – a time-consuming and expensive process that was open to errors."

Stephen Green, Operations Manager for Forge World, stated:

"Our customer service teams were spending all of their time processing orders and not interacting with the customers."

Following an announcement by the parent company Games World that it intended to update its corporate website, a search commenced for an e-commerce solution that would deliver the improved levels of service that both divisions badly needed.

This search led teams from both divisions to Red Technology, whose expertise enabled design, development and implementation of dual e-commerce websites based around tradeIT, a proven and highly successful e-commerce engine. It also allowed for tight integration with back office systems which helped eliminate the order processing difficulties of the past and enabled customer service teams to focus far more on the customer with a much more streamlined and automated order process.

Key benefits of the investment are listed as follows:

- An increase in the average value of online orders with the manual process of fulfilling orders that used to take up to four days being replaced with a ten minute process

- Ability to update the website quickly without diverting the IT department from core projects

- Economies of scale from a multi-site e-commerce system that reduced costs and accelerated the 'go-live' date

- Customisable shopping basket and checkout providing an intuitive order and purchase process

- Introduction of a range of digital products has created a new revenue stream and has further enhanced customer engagement and interaction with the site

More information is available from Red Technology, eCommerce House, Oakfield Industrial Estate, Eynsham, Witney, Oxfordshire OX29 4AG. Telephone: 01865 880 800. Email: info@redtechnology.com