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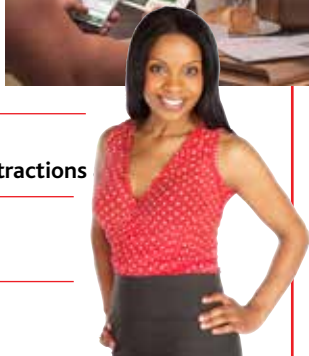
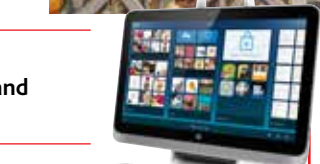
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“Comment”

Make 2015 the year of digital transformation

Happy New Year! Who knows what 2015 will bring? One thing that seems certain is that more and more businesses will be accelerating the process of digital transformation. And with good reason. As we report on page 10, a new study published by Harvard Business Review Press suggests that businesses that succeed at digital transformation are on average 26% more profitable than their industry peers.

As every issue of *Business Info* makes clear, just about every office activity can be improved by digitisation. In this issue, Stuart Evans of document management company Invu wages war on paper and the copier – he calls them ‘ghastly machines’, but they pay my wages; Maxine Park, founder of DictateNow, extols the productivity benefits of digital dictation and transcription; while Purple Wifi’s Gavin Wheeldon looks at how the even the clothes on our back are being digitised.

Elsewhere, in this month’s cover story, Neopost, which is successfully transforming itself from a supplier of mailing equipment into a customer contact specialist, urges readers to do the same by embracing rather than ignoring their customers’ communication preferences. Increasingly – though by no means exclusively – these are digital, mobile and social. For some, the need to support multi-channel customer communications could be just what’s needed to kick-start their own digital transformation.

As all this is going on, some things remain the same, notably our natural love of light, greenery and good views. The absence of these from many office environments has been shown to increase stress levels and destroy productivity (see page 4). One of the advantages of introducing digital processes and removing paper from your business is that you can fill the space you save with break-out areas, office plants, artworks and stimulating lighting – and look forward to the even greater productivity improvements as a result.

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Let there be LED light



LED lighting is being selected by more and more businesses as an energy-saving lighting choice. But, as Osram's installation in the Sistine Chapel demonstrates, LED lighting has many other qualities. Michelangelo's masterpiece is now bathed in light from more than 7,000 LEDs that enable the 5.5 million people who visit the chapel every year to see more detail and brighter colours than ever before. Despite a five to ten-fold increase in luminance, the new system consumes up to 90% less electricity than the previous lighting system. In addition, the almost complete absence of ultraviolet and infrared radiation from the lighting prevents damage to the artworks. www.osram.com



Before



After

Light and nature are key to well-being

Working in environments with greenery and sunlight engenders a 13% higher level of well-being and makes employees 8% more productive, a new report shows.

The Human Spaces Report commissioned by flooring specialist Interface and led by organisational psychologist Professor Sir Cary Cooper looked at the impact of the physical office environment on employee well-being across 3,600 office workers in eight countries throughout EMEA. It found that 55% of EMEA office employees don't have access to any greenery in their working environment and 42% have no natural light – 7% have no window in their workspace at all.

Spain reported the highest number of office employees with no windows (15%) and the most stressed workforce. In contrast, Germany and Denmark, which reported the least number of workers with no windows (2% and 3% respectively), had the happiest employees.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of EMEA office workers are based in a town or city centre and spend an average of 34 hours per week in the office. Despite city dominated lives, the research found workers have an inherent affinity to elements that reflect nature.

The top five natural elements EMEA office workers wish for are:

- 1 Natural light
- 2 Quiet working space
- 3 A view of the sea
- 4 Live indoor plants
- 5 Bright colours

Four out of 10 (40%) workers across EMEA said they would feel most productive at their own desk in a solitary office, compared to 31% who said they would feel most productive at their own desk in an open plan office.



A sea view helps well-being

Beware warm air hand dryers, says ETS

The European Tissue Symposium (ETS), the European organisation for tissue producers, is warning of the health risks of jet and warm air hand driers after ETS-funded research found that they could spread bacteria in washrooms.

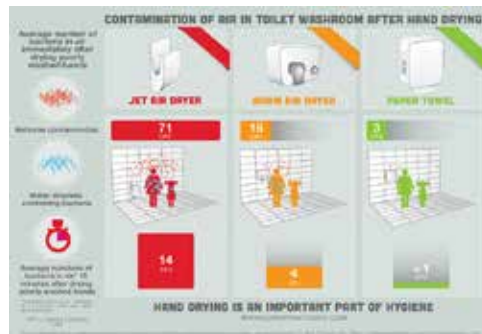
A study designed by expert medical microbiologist Professor Mark Wilcox of the University of Leeds and Leeds Teaching Hospitals compared different hand drying methods and their potential to spread bacteria from hands into the air and onto users and bystanders.

Air bacterial counts close to jet air driers were found to be 4.5 times higher than around warm air driers and 27 times higher than around paper towels.

In addition, bacteria remain present in the air

beyond the 15 second hand-drying time, with half still present after 5 minutes and some still present 15 minutes after hand-drying.

www.europeantissue.com



One in four European workers feels stressed

One-quarter of workers in Europe report feeling stressed at work all or most of the time, and a similar proportion say that work affects their health negatively.

A report, published as part of the Europe-wide *Healthy Workplaces Manage Stress* campaign found that psycho-social risks, such as monotonous tasks, high work intensity, tight deadlines, work-life imbalance, violence and harassment from the public or from colleagues, all contributed to work-related stress.

Psychosocial risks in Europe: Prevalence and strategies for prevention published jointly by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions (Eurofound) provides an overview of psycho-social risks in European workplaces and explains how to manage them at work and politically.

Juan Menéndez-Valdés, director of Eurofound, said: "Reducing psycho-social risks and protecting workers from these risks is critical for allowing longer working lives and preventing early labour market exits."

<https://osha.europa.eu>



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eco.toshiba.eu | papercut.com

Leafy Surrey tops UK tree ranking

Surrey Heath and Waverly local authority districts are the greenest areas of Britain, with 40% tree cover, according to the first ever nationwide map of trees produced by aerial mapping specialist Bluesky.

Surrey is home to five other districts ranked in the top ten for tree cover. The remaining Top Ten places are taken up by Neath Port Talbot with 32% and Bracknell Forest and New Forest District Councils.

The areas with least tree coverage are Boston and South Holland in Lincolnshire, with just over 2%. Neighbouring Fenland and East Cambridgeshire are also in the bottom 10, as is the City of London.

The district council closest to the national average is North Dorset District with tree coverage of 13.67%.

Bluesky Managing Director Rachel Tidmarsh said: "Behind the headlines, the Bluesky National Tree Map is a serious source of information that is already being used by councils, government organisations

and utility companies to inform the management of our landscape and protect our infrastructure."

The dataset is based on high resolution aerial photography, colour infrared data and detailed height models. It includes three individual map layers, detailing more than 280 million trees with a canopy cover in the region of 20,000 square kilometres or 13.5% of land cover.

www.bluesky-world.com



Steelcase identifies top five open plan coping mechanisms

As disquiet about noisy open plan offices grows, Steelcase has identified five ways that office workers can find peace and quiet at work.

An international study carried out by market researchers IPSOS and the Workspace Futures Team of Steelcase found that only 41% of office workers are able to undertake important work in privacy. The rest have had to develop their own strategies to avoid disruptions. These include:

1 Strategic anonymity: Being unknown or 'invisible' for a while in order to avoid normal social distractions and restraints. Going off radar makes workers feel that they are free of the restraints that come with normal social surveillance. Workers may choose to go to a café to avoid the social distractions of the workplace.

2 Selective exposure: Choosing what others see by being selective about the personal information and behaviours that we reveal. Examples of selective sharing can be opting for a telephone call instead of a video conference or choosing which personal items to display in a workstation.

3 Entrusted confidence: Sharing information confidentially within a trusting relationship, for example in a performance review with a manager.

4 Intentional shielding: Protecting yourself from others' sight lines to avoid being observed or distracted. Many office workers like to create a personal space by using earphones to block out audio distractions or by sitting with their back against a wall.

5 Purposeful solitude: Physically separating yourself from co-workers in order to concentrate, recharge, express emotions, rejuvenate or engage in personal activities. These workers appreciate quiet spaces within the office or sit in the furthest corner of a large room.

Bostjan Ljubic, vice president of Steelcase UK and Ireland, said: "Because people experience privacy in these different ways, the key is to design a workplace that supports them all. Workplaces dominated by enclosed offices won't solve the engagement problem. The best way to support today's workers is to provide the ability to move between individual time and collaborative time, fully leveraging the power of the workplace to strengthen satisfaction and engagement."

www.steelcase.co.uk



Stressed workers are less productive

Employees suffering from high stress levels have lower engagement, are less productive and have higher absentee levels than those not operating under excessive pressure, according to the *Global Benefits Attitudes survey* by professional services firm Towers Watson.

It found that over half (57%) of employees who claimed to be experiencing high stress levels were disengaged. In contrast, only one in ten employees claiming low stress levels said they were disengaged. Moreover, half of the low stress group claimed to be highly engaged.

Rebekah Haymes, senior consultant and well-being specialist at Towers Watson, said: "The research clearly shows the destructive link between high levels of stress and reduced productivity. A third of respondents said they are often bothered by excessive pressure in their job and this can lead to higher instances of disengagement and absenteeism – clear indicators of low productivity in the workplace."

Stress also influences absence levels with highly stressed employees taking an average of 4.6 sick days per year, compared to 2.6 days for low stress employees. Presenteeism, the act of attending work when unwell and unproductive, was 50% higher for highly stressed employees, at an average of 16 days per year versus 10 days for employees claiming to have low stress.

Inadequate staffing was the biggest cause of stress cited by employees, with 53% considering it a top cause of workplace stress. However, few employers agree, with only 15% of senior managers acknowledging it as a cause of stress in their organisation. Conversely, a third (34%) of employers thought technology that made employees available outside working hours was one of the top causes of stress, but employees largely disagreed, with only 8% listing it as a contributor to workplace pressure.

www.towerswatson.com

Collaboration wall

The Nice Wall from Bene is a room module for meetings, brainstorming sessions and visual presentations. It is powered by we-inspire, a continuous frameless and interactive wall, scalable up to 30 metres in length, that can be written on by seven people simultaneously using Anoto digital pens. Combining the Nice Wall with upholstered furniture elements from Bene's PARCS series turns any office space into an area for the exchange and development of ideas.



Link between office design and well-being is 'overwhelming'

The evidence linking office design to the health, well-being and productivity of employees is overwhelming, the World Green Building Council (WorldGBC) claims in a new report, *Health, wellbeing and productivity in offices: The next chapter for green building*.

The report sponsored by JLL, Lend Lease and Skanska finds that building design features, from air quality and daylight levels to views of nature and the interior layout, can affect the health and performance of office workers.

Some of the key findings include:

Indoor air quality: Better indoor air quality (low concentrations of CO₂ and pollutants and high ventilation rates) can lead to productivity improvements of 8-11%;

Thermal comfort: Thermal comfort has a significant impact on workplace satisfaction and modest degrees of personal control over thermal comfort can return single digit improvements in productivity;

Lighting and views of nature: Several studies have estimated productivity gains as a result of proximity to windows, with experts now thinking that views from windows are probably the more significant factor, particularly where the view offers a connection to nature;

Noise and acoustics: Being productive in the modern knowledge-based office is practically impossible when noise provides an unwanted distraction;

Interior layout: The way the interior of an office is configured (including workstation density and configuration of work space, breakout space and social space) has been found to have an impact on concentration, collaboration, confidentiality and creativity;

Active design and exercise: Active design within a building, and access to



services and amenities, such as gyms, bicycle storage and green space, can help to encourage healthier lifestyles for building occupants;

The WorldGBC says that with salaries and benefits typically responsible for 90% of an organisation's expenditure, any higher construction or occupation costs are far outweighed by even small improvements in staff performance.

Jane Henley, CEO of the World Green Building Council, said: "The evidence linking good office design and improved health, well-being and productivity of staff is now overwhelming. There is unquestionably a clear business case for investing in, developing and occupying healthier, greener buildings.

"This is something that office occupiers can demonstrate for themselves. Most businesses are already sitting on a treasure trove of information that may yield immediate improvement strategies for their two biggest expenses – people and buildings. Understanding the relationship between the two can help businesses achieve significant competitive advantage."

To help them do this, the report provides a simple toolkit that businesses can use to assess staff health, well-being and productivity based on levels of absenteeism, staff turnover, medical complaints and revenue.

www.worldgbc.org

Flexible working boost to UK economy

Citrix claims that greater flexible working allowances could add £11.5 billion annually to the UK economy.

A Citrix-sponsored survey of 1,200 individuals by the Centre for Economics and Business Research found that 96% of the UK knowledge worker population would take advantage of flexible working if it was made available to them.

This could potentially add an extra £11.5bn per year to the UK economy through the more productive use of available working hours, the equivalent of 0.7% of GDP.

In addition, increased use of flexible working could save UK workers £7.1 billion in reduced commuting costs when you take into account the cost of the half billion hours people spend travelling.

An improved flexible working culture also has the potential to encourage the economically inactive or unemployed to return to work, potentially boosting GDP by up to 4.7% (£78.5 billion) and helping to ease the skills shortage.

www.citrix.com

Co-location good for small firms

Co-location is good for entrepreneurship, so says flexible workspace provider Regus. To mark November's Global Entrepreneurship Week, it released the results of a poll in which three fifths of small firms said co-location inspired entrepreneurial thinking (61%) and innovation (60%). A big majority of respondents agreed that collaborative workplaces provide better value for money (91%), help to scale a businesses rapidly (82%) and create valuable business connections (75%).

Richard Morris, UK CEO at Regus, said: "Co-locating with other businesses is an increasingly popular solution and our research corroborates our own customer feedback that working under the same roof (or even in the same office) as other firms breeds dynamism, entrepreneurship and valuable opportunities to learn from others."

www.regus.co.uk



New BREEAM rating

BRE Global has introduced a new BREEAM rating scheme for building refurbishment and fit-out projects. BREEAM Refurbishment and Fit-Out 2014 has a range of certification options: Part One deals with the building fabric and structure; Part Two is concerned with core services (e.g. centralised M&E plant); Part Three deals with local services; and Part Four with interior design. Refurbishment and fit-out projects can be assessed against one or all of the four parts, or any combination, depending on which are relevant to a particular project.

www.breeam.com/projects

www.breeam.com/ndrefurb



Sit or stand

New from Humanscale, the QuickStand height-adjustable workstation encourages users to alternate between sitting and standing postures. Available for single or dual monitor configurations, QuickStand securely attaches to the back of a fixed-height surface. Monitor and keyboard platforms can be independently adjusted. www.humanscale.com

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Old technology causes projects to run late

European organisations are struggling to adapt to the rapid evolution of technology, new working habits and the increasingly global nature of business, according to a new report, *Chaos Theory*, commissioned by cloud collaboration pioneer Projectplace.

The pan-European survey of 1,240 project managers supported by the Project Management Institute found that inefficient ways of working and old technologies are costing businesses 20 working days a year.

Email remains the main communication method amongst teams; two-thirds of project managers can access sensitive data in their organisation, but only half can see who has read, changed or downloaded a

shared document, putting sensitive data at risk; and only half of IT departments support employees' use of new technologies.

The research highlights that dispersed teams working across different geographies and time zones struggle to work together effectively, with over a third (37%) of respondents citing a lack of communication as a major headache.

One in five (19%) of all projects runs late and 14% run over budget. Project managers admit that if they are working on eight or more projects, things spiral out of control, with one in three (32%) projects delayed and a quarter (26%) exceeding the agreed budget.

www.projectplace.com

Poor call handling rife

Less than a quarter (23%) of consumers are satisfied with the way British businesses handle their phone calls, according to a study of 1,000 consumers by TNS on behalf of PH Media Group.

Mark Williamson, Sales and Marketing Director of PH Media Group, said: "Poor call handling is a constant bugbear for the British consumer but, despite this, it appears Britain's businesses have still not risen to the challenge of raising standards.

"If only 23% of customers are pleased with the way their calls are being handled, this means there is an even larger number who have generated a negative perception through bad caller experience."

phmg.com



Digital transformation boosts profits

Business that succeed at digital transformation are on average 26% more profitable than their industry peers, so Didier Bonnet, Senior Vice-President at Capgemini Consulting, and research scientists George Westerman and Andrew McAfee claim in a new book that synthesises three years of research by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Capgemini Consulting.

Published by Harvard Business Review Press, *Leading Digital: Turning Technology into Business Transformation* highlights how large global companies in traditional industries are using digital technologies to gain a strategic advantage.

Based on the study of more than 400 organisations, including Burberry, Lloyds Banking Group, Nike and Pernod Ricard, the authors identify the principles and practices that lead to successful digital transformation and set out a step-by-step guide for other companies to follow.

www.capgemini-consulting.com/leadingdigital



Audio conferencing losing ground

The European conferencing services market is undergoing significant transformation as web and video conferencing gain ground at the expense of audio conferencing. New analysis from Frost & Sullivan, *European Conferencing Services Market*, predicts that audio conferencing's share of the market will fall from 66% in 2013 to 51% in 2019. The total European conferencing market, including audio, web and video, is expected to grow from \$1.78 billion in 2013 to \$2.58 billion in 2019.

www.conferencing.frost.com

In Brief...

Phone check

The average smartphone user checks their device 221 times a day, according to a study of 2,000 smartphone owners commissioned by Tecmark.

Butter fingers

In the last two years, UK consumers have spent £4.6 billion on repairs to hand held devices, the equivalent of £78 per head. The study by protection plan provider SquareTrade found that more than one third (37%) of smartphone users have damaged their phones. Of these, half have suffered reduced functionality as a result, with one third unable to use some or all of their apps. Even so, more than one quarter (27%) of British smartphone users do not use a protective case.

www.squaretrade.co.uk

WYOD risk

UK enterprises aren't prepared for the security risks posed by 'Wear Your Own Device', warns Accellion Inc. Its survey of IT decision-makers in 100 enterprises reveals that fewer than one in four considers wearable technology within their broader mobile security strategy; and just 41% of UK enterprises currently have a BYOD policy that can be extended to cover wearables. More than half (53%) of IT decision-makers have yet to consider the possible impact of wearable tech on data security, despite the fact that 81% acknowledge an increase in wearable devices in the workplace could pose a security risk.

Watch this space

Juniper Research has forecast that more than 100 million smart watches will be in use worldwide by 2019, as launches by premium

technology and non-technology brands bring the category into mainstream consumer consciousness. It says new capabilities like GPS and NFC connectivity are likely to become standard in the next few years, helping to keep the average smart watch price above \$200 until 2020 at the earliest.



One in four users of phones like the secure Blackphone don't use protective cases.

The evolving workplace: How technology is shaping the workplace of tomorrow

The second *Global Evolving Workforce Study* by Dell and Intel identifies six key workforce/workplace trends that business managers should be aware of if they are to attract, retain and motivate employees now and in the future. These are:

- 1 **One Size Doesn't Fit All:** Employees use multiple devices to get their jobs done. Of those who use desktops, more than half also use another device. All of those who use either a tablet or 2-in-1 laptop for work always use these in conjunction with other devices. Almost two thirds (62%) of employees consider the desktop PC their primary business device while at work. But when doing work at home, laptops are used as frequently as desktops.
- 2 **The Office Is King:** The office still is the primary place of work, with 97% of employees spending some time in their employer's office. On average, employees in developed markets spend 32 hours per week in the office, compared to 26 hours in emerging markets.
- 3 Globally, employees work an average of four hours per week at an external location, such as a client's office, and another five hours per week working from home, compared with 29 hours per week working in the office.
- 4 Office-based employees feel they work best in an office, even though 48% say they are frequently interrupted. Almost one in five employees wears headphones or earbuds in the office. More than half (51%) frequently IM or email colleagues who are located physically near them, rather than talking with them directly.



- 3 **Office Workers vs. Remote Workers:** Perceptions of home working are shifting, with 52% of employees stating that home workers are just as productive, if not more so, than office-based colleagues.
 - Of those who spend any time working from home, half believe they are more productive there than in the office; 36% say they are as productive; and just 14% say they are less productive when working at home.
 - Home working has benefits for employees too: 30% sleep more; 40% drive less; and 46% feel less stress. On the downside, 38% of home workers snack more; 20% exercise less; and there are more distractions from spouses, children, parents and pets.
- 4 **Work Life Blurs into Personal Life:** As innovations in technology continue to advance, people have more flexibility to choose when and where they meet their professional obligations. Almost two thirds (64%) of employees conduct at least some business at home after business hours, especially in emerging economies where 83% check work email after hours, compared to 42% in developed markets.
 - The blurring of boundaries is most pronounced amongst executives: they use personal technology for work more frequently than other employees (64% vs. 37%); are more likely to take work technology home for personal purposes (45% vs. 20%); and are more likely to access personal websites/apps/software at work (67% vs. 49%).
 - More than half of employees globally use personal devices for work purposes or expect to do so in the future: 43% of employees do so secretly without the company knowing, with smartphones and laptops being the tools used most frequently.
- 5 **Technology leads to Happy Employees:** One out of four employees globally reports they are influenced by the technology provided to them at work and would consider taking a new position if it provided better technology that enabled them be more productive. Fewer than half of employees globally report



that the IT department takes employees' opinions into consideration when selecting technology.

- 6 **The Future of Tech is Bright, But Not Fully Automated:** Employees are generally optimistic about the future of technology. They believe it will keep evolving and continue to provide new benefits and capabilities, but will not fundamentally change the way in which they work.
 - They say that in the future, voice recognition will be used instead of the keyboard (92%), tablets will completely replace laptops (87%), all computers will use hand gestures (87%) and keyboards and mice will be obsolete (88%). However, advances in technology won't replace the need for humans in the workplace: only 34% of respondents think their job will be fully automated in their lifetime.

Faced with these trends, Dell offers the following advice to business leaders, IT managers and human resource professionals:

- **Activity-based work:** Provide the right technology for the job, which might mean supplying multiple devices;
- **Seamless Access:** Provide employees with seamless access to their data and applications from any device, anywhere, at any time;
- **Security:** Don't just ensure BYOD devices are known and secured; make sure the user and their access to information is managed and secured as well;
- **Diverse Environments:** As innovations in technology continue, people have increasing flexibility to choose when and where they work, so employers need to provide tools that enable them to be effective in their preferred environment. For those who don't need such flexibility, provide a variety of workspaces to meet the task at hand.

For more in-depth analysis, please review the study in full at www.dell.com/evolvingworkforce.

Close contact

Get closer to your customers with the help of Neopost and make 2015 the year of multi-channel customer communications

As business leaders return to their desks after Christmas and the New Year, many will be wondering what 2015 holds. Amidst so many uncertainties, from the the price of oil to the outcome of the General Election, what are the factors that businesses can rely on and set their compass by?

One certainty is the continued importance of customer service. This was a key trend in 2014 and is likely to become even more critical in 2015 as businesses expand their marketing activities to build stronger relationships with customers who all the evidence suggests are becoming less and less loyal.

Almost one in three UK consumers (30%) surveyed by Vision Critical for customer service specialist Kana said that they had become less loyal to retail brands in the last five years, with 25% identifying poor customer service as the main reason.

Who's in charge?

Consumers have always had the power to vote with their feet and take their custom elsewhere. But in the past, it was often easier to endure poor service than find an alternative provider or navigate the complexities of switching supplier. Today, things are very different.

A number of factors, from market liberalisation to the world wide web, mean that in 2015 consumers hold the cards. It is no longer the customer's lot to fulminate about poor service and then eat humble pie; today, with just a few clicks of a mouse, it is easy to find an alternative supplier and probably one that charges less.

The impact of technology is also changing customer expectations. People know what technology can do; they know what is possible and are therefore less tolerant of delays, errors or obstructive customer service. The twentieth century consumer doesn't exist to be fobbed off – at least not more than once.

In a recent Censuswide poll

The twentieth century consumer doesn't exist to be fobbed off – at least not more than once!

commissioned by Netcall, 11% of consumers revealed that they had taken their business to a competitor after failing to get a satisfactory response to a complaint at the first time of asking.

Technology as enabler

However, technology is much more than a stick to beat suppliers with. It is a great enabler for businesses too. Today, those that choose to do so can find out more about their customers than at any time in history.

Electronic payment systems, the rise of e-commerce and even people's own social media profiles give remarkable insight into the buying habits and preferences of customers and potential customers; while electronic messaging and social networks, allied to commoditisation of computers, smartphones and tablets, enable businesses to interact with customers like never before.

Nor is technological innovation limited to electronic communications. Digital presses that allow businesses to

Neopost proves the right choice for baking specialist



As part of a strategy to improve its customer communications, Ranson, a provider of baking supplies to bakeries and patisseries around the UK, surveyed its customers to see how they wanted to receive invoices, statements, credit notes, leaflets and catalogues.

Approximately 70% expressed a preference for mail, with 30% choosing to receive documents electronically.

Ranson sends out about 100 letters a day and after letting customers choose how to receive them, staff had to spend a great deal of time manually separating those that were to be emailed from those to be sent

through the post.

Ranson already used a Neopost franking machine and folder-inserter and so it was only natural that it adopted Neopost output management software to streamline and automate the company's multi-channel communications processes as well.

Now, software automatically routes mailings to email or print, based on each customer's preference. This has led to happier customers, lower mailing costs and significantly less manual processing, whilst providing Ranson with verification that emails have been sent.

Marcin Rutowski, office administration manager, said: "The solution Neopost provided is very, very simple. I would recommend this multi-communications platform to other companies; it's really saved time and money."

personalise mailings have transformed direct mail, which remains a vibrant and effective means of generating business and deepening customer relationships. New techniques for linking physical documents to websites and other digital content offer new possibilities by adding intelligence to the printed page.

Many businesses have fully embraced these developments and transformed their customer communications by making use of both online and offline channels to communicate with target customers. Others are just starting down this road and taking their first steps towards true multi-channel customer communications encompassing direct mail, email, telephone, SMS & mobile, web and social media.

A necessary journey

To help businesses on this necessary journey, Neopost, in association with the DMA, the professional body for the one-to-one marketing industry, has produced a free guide explaining the rationale, benefits and pitfalls of a multi-channel customer communications strategy.

How to Really Connect with Your Customers – Smart Ways to Manage Multi-Channel Communications covers:

- The factors driving the uptake of multi-channel customer communications;
- The benefits of such a strategy, including enhanced customer contact, better response levels and lower costs;
- The different channels, and what combinations of media are most effective;
- What's required for successful multi-channel communications;
- Advice on how to construct a campaign;
- Examples of best practice; and
- A useful checklist to refer to when creating a campaign.

Neopost marketing manager Phil Winfield said: "Customer service is no longer just a question of delivering what's been ordered within the agreed time-frame. With the emergence of new communication channels, the nature of the customer contact has become just



81% of adults want to choose how they receive information and 84% don't like it when that choice is taken away.

as important. Mobile, social media, email, the web, direct mail and the telephone are all very effective methods of communication – when used in the right way and in the right combination.

"However, businesses need to be careful how they use these tools. A telephone call is more intrusive than a letter – especially if made in the evening – and a social media interaction might not be appropriate for communicating sensitive material. Each medium has its own qualities and strengths and businesses need to think carefully about when to use them. That includes taking into consideration individual customers' own preferences, which might change depending on the nature of the communication or the time of day. Making the right contact with customers will strengthen relationships, but getting it wrong could be damaging."

The importance of choice

The trap that many organisations fall into is to force customers to communicate in a certain way, usually to further a corporate cost-cutting agenda. A company might fail to publish

its phone number online so that customers have to communicate by email or web chat, or it might charge for paper bills in an attempt to migrate customers to electronic billing.

Such tactics are high risk. According to a survey by the Keep Me Posted campaign, which lobbies service providers and the Government to give consumers choice in how they receive bills, statements and other information, 81% of adults want to choose how they receive their information and 84% don't like it when that choice is taken away.

A consistent experience

The decision to implement multi-channel customer communications presents its own challenges:

Is the quality of your data up-to-scratch? The *Experian Global Data Report 2014* suggests that wasted marketing spend and lost productivity due to bad data costs the average organisation 12% of its income: and 28% of those who have had problems delivering email because of bad data say that customer service has suffered as a result;

How do you ensure a consistent brand identity? If you communicate with the same person using a variety of methods, it is important to have a consistent image, for reasons of brand integrity and customer reassurance, especially when communicating or transacting online;

How do you maintain communications integrity? When communicating via multiple channels, how do you make sure that everyone receives the right communications via the right medium? And can you prove it if challenged?

As a customer contact specialist, Neopost has been helping businesses both large and small to answer these questions and implement successful multi-channel communications strategies. To find out how it can help you to develop more profitable and enduring customer relationships, please download a free copy of *How to Really Connect with Your Customers – Smart Ways to Manage Multi-Channel Communications* from <http://www2.neopost.co.uk/MCC> or call 0800 731 1334.

NOTES

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Voice Recording, Made Easy



The future according to Invu

Stuart Evans, chief technology officer of document management company Invu, highlights the key trends affecting businesses in 2015. Over the page, he explains how organisations can get rid of paper without compromising compliance



If Microsoft is to be believed, the megatrends of the moment are Mobile, Cloud, Big Data and Social. And, to be fair, the signs are there. While IT departments are still trying to spell BYOD (Bring Your Own Device), the population as a whole is now used to, and expects, mobility. Desktop sales are in steep decline and smartphones, touch-laptops and tablets dominate. Humans expect data to come to them and software vendors now have to add a twist of mobile to everything they do – which can be a shock for some. Mobility will continue to grow into an expected aspect of business solutions.

The Cloud

The mobile revolution is very visible – we all love toys – but the Cloud revolution is much more disruptive because it affects not just software functionality but the business terms that surround it too. The Cloud is not just 'hosting'; it's a whole new approach to software and its consumption. It will change the speed of delivery and software sales cycle and enable new solutions to be assembled as IT barriers are torn down.

From a vendor's perspective, the Cloud is a maturing and powerful new enabler that is ripe for use. Customers are still wondering what it really is, but they will all too soon be demanding its benefits: reduced IT barriers for projects, Opex commercials, powerful computing features and scaling not possible on a normal business network. Cloud is now in its prime time of disruption when it is vital for vendors to embrace it and of real interest to customers.

Cloud is a great place to collaborate and in 2015 we will see many vertical Cloud apps appearing that solve collaboration challenges and an increase in the use of self-service in the Cloud. It means companies do not need to run their own 24/7 server solutions; they can work in the Cloud with integration into back office systems.

Big Data

If Cloud is a little stratospheric, then 'Big Data' is more or less surreal to our customers. Nonetheless, the new generation of business user understands the value and nuances of data and wants to use data to help drive their decisions and processes. Access to good quality plentiful data can enhance or completely transform solutions. For most businesses this will not be an overnight epiphany, but will smoulder for a few years as disparate systems and poor data are herded into the new Big Data world. For 2015, we'll see an increased demand for better and effortless reporting from a more articulate customer.

To prepare the ground, start organising your data – show it some respect. Most companies are not measuring the correct things and are lying to themselves about the accuracy of their data capture. 2015 will be the year companies look to clean up their data capture process to ensure they are analysing information that is beneficial to them.

Social

Meanwhile, social has caught the attention of all businesses as a 'new' way to reach and interact with prospects, customers and competitors. Content-focused solutions will have to offer more value from social content, events and software systems than ever before; these features will start to become deal winners. Long-standing businesses still have a hard time understanding the 'Social' role in their business, but many consultancies are doing a roaring trade helping them make the turn, and this activity will only increase next year.

And what of Paper?

Last year I predicted growing resentment of the photocopier, and I am pleased to say there were signs of this – with sales of those ghastly machines finally taking a downward turn. I am sorry to say that change is happening more

slowly than I would like, but department heads now understand that paper and the machines that produce them must be removed from business processes in order to achieve greater efficiency and competitive edge. I am begging business leaders to accelerate the trend and replace over-priced copiers with a few good quality scanners and put this clumsy era of computers for paper to bed.

With over 100% penetration of mobile devices in the UK, printing is now seen as a dirty activity and is being limited to transportation/delivery/shop-floor use cases. We shall see the continued battle against paper. Clean desks and paper-free offices are appearing in many places now and not because of the '90s paperless dream, but because of the clarity of vision of new business owners and progressive IT directors.

Beginning of the end for shared drives and huge mail boxes

Many companies are still having trouble knowing where important information is kept. They have bloated mail boxes and chaotic file shares that are not visible to the business in any way – and Dropbox is only making it worse.

In 2015 I predict that many more companies will be shutting down their file shares and taking control of the information in there. These shares have been 'dumping' grounds and many business owners will be looking to introduce easy discovery of information and policy-driven control of access. After all, everything you do at work is corporate property.

Add to this the fact that 80% of your shared drive is irrelevant, a duplicate copy or digital rubbish. Companies are realising that if they discard the waste and put the remaining quality documents into a document management system, business information is known and access is far more efficient and IT money is saved.

Companies are also starting to reduce their reliance on email – and the huge email boxes that employees hog. Email is like 'digital paper' in disguise. Email is a slush of notifications, conversations and unmanaged agreements that can be moved around without anything but the simplest of restrictions. Who's to say an employee won't email something important to the competition? Using a company depository platform extends a business's control and will help you prevent your email turning into chaos.

Continued...

...continued

Changes in how people use Invu?

Whilst we expect users to keep enjoying good Document Management, I expect to see many more Finance departments automating their Accounts Payable function to make their processes more efficient and their controls more effective. Invoice Processing is a fabulous solution that is high on benefit and relevance to businesses of varying size. Customers are now seeing the need for Workflow solutions. They understand that a process needs to be embodied

in a system and not just described in a standard operating procedure document, printed out and left on a shelf. Auditors now expect, and hope, to dock into an electronic store of data and electronic audit trails that make their job easier too.

Stuart Evans is Chief Technical Officer at Invu Plc. Since joining the company in 2007, he has overseen the development of Invu Document Management, taking the Invu product portfolio from a simple eDM solution to a suite of products

that can automate processes, provide real-time information and offer security and compliance of critical data. Invu's products are used by 1,600 organisations in diverse sectors including financial and professional services; manufacturing, engineering and construction; estate management; education; housing associations; transport & logistics; retail and wholesale; and leisure.

www.invu.net

Admissibility and Retention: the best approach for document destruction

Invu CTO Stuart Evans suggests a strategy for getting rid of bulky paper documents while complying with longer-term document management regulations

Technology has shifted the reliance on physical paper documents towards more electronic transactions and documentation, transforming the processing and retrieval of documents. Yet, while physical documents are extremely vulnerable to loss, damage or misfiling, they are tangible and – if untampered – do provide absolute proof. It is this comfort factor that stops many businesses from embracing electronic document management (eDM) solutions.

Despite the fact that more documents are being shared electronically, the 'paperless office' has not materialised quite yet – though the journey is well underway. Even today, destroying physical paper evidence can feel unnatural and risky, and this is stopping many firms from embracing the digital method wholeheartedly. There are even cases where employees print and file documents they receive by email. While it is critical that company documents are stored and managed securely, some companies have outdated views on why original paper documents should be retained.

Is it safe to destroy originals?

Original paper documents are usually destroyed because they are no longer needed and getting rid of them frees up precious filing and storage space. However, certain documents that are critical to an organisation's legal obligations must be retained, for example HMRC tax forms, signed leases, title deeds and contracts. There is a common misconception that these documents must be kept in hard-copy format, but nothing could be further from the

truth. As long as digital documents are appropriately captured and managed, they have the same legal validity as paper-based counterparts.

Opting for an electronic document management (eDM) solution makes good business sense. Effective document management is about far more than scanning and storing documents in digital format. It is about using data capture to automatically pull out relevant information and drive an electronic and automated process. This includes document storage, but it can also be used for invoice or payment status tracking or for streamlining and automating the approval process of contracts, non-disclosure agreements and other legal documents.

The main benefit of an eDM approach is that it creates an audit trail that is essential for potential legal challenges. Operational documents, once captured electronically and saved in an eDM solution, will always be retrievable. Meeting a court's requirement for highly reliable evidence is where the issue of Legal Admissibility comes into play. As with paper-based documents, if the provenance of a document is clear and its integrity is incontestable then admissibility is not considered an issue.

However, before you reach for the shredder and destroy hard-copy documents, ask your eDM supplier the following questions to ensure you stay on the right side of the law:

■ How credible are your scanned and saved electronic copies? The scanned

document must be an exact replica of the original document.

■ Can it be used to produce reliable evidence? The scanned document must be of a high standard of legibility with no modifications between it and the originating document.

■ What are the specific regulations around eDM in your sector? Each industry vertical is slightly different, so make sure you know what regulations apply to your business.

Aligning business processes

The road to a paperless office can be fraught with difficulties and unforeseen challenges, which require not only a change of direction for the business, but also a change of mind-set for employees.

In addition to reviewing the technology involved, organisations must address their own internal business processes. The British Standard BS 1008:20081 includes best practice advice to ensure the legal admissibility of information. In complying with the code, a business can be as sure as possible that they are satisfying official record-keeping requirements. Importantly, this standard is device-independent, as in the last few years smartphone use and remote working practices have grown hugely.

Electronic filing is now increasing at such a rate that it is commonplace for regulatory bodies, such as HMRC, to declare the standards they require. Opting for an eDM solution is therefore no longer a luxury; it is fast becoming a necessity. Whether you opt for a web portal, cloud or server-based solution, seek advice from relevant industry bodies and contact other companies in your sector to ensure your choice of eDM incorporates regulation and legislation into your solution from the outset.

The road to a paperless office can be fraught with difficulties and unforeseen challenges...



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Olivetti's Range steps up to a new Level



When Olivetti launched its range of colour and mono MFPs and desktop printers this year, the aim was to guarantee all-round improvement throughout the entire range of 35 new products that will be launched by the end of 2014.

It's a tall order to bring so many new products to market but the variety and choice Olivetti can now offer its customers, arguably differentiates the company from other manufacturers.

Increased productivity

Across the range Olivetti's new products offer outstanding speed and performance with exceptional finishing, long-lasting consumables, large intuitive touch screen colour operator panels and standard duplexing.

Improved security

Most of these new devices offer state-of-the-art security. The hard disks can be overwritten and data can be encrypted which provides added protection against improper use. Network security is also guaranteed by utilising the latest IPsec, IP filtering and IPP over SSL protocols and client authentication solutions.

Impressive energy efficiency

The entire range offers outstanding energy savings with very low TEC (Typical Energy Consumption) levels, low fusing temperatures, many newly designed power save modes; all ensuring compliance with the latest European Directives.

Scanning for standard applications

As well as offering extensive scanning capabilities to email, FTP, SMB and WebDAV and scanning directly to the hard disk and USB, most of these devices can scan in many different formats such as JPEG, TIFF, PDF, Compact PDF, PPTX (PowerPoint), XPS and Compact XPS.

Direct printing capabilities

Nearly all the models offer users the opportunity to print directly from USB stick, some support AirPrint™ and some support PDF, XPS, TIFF, JPEG and OOXML (Office Open XML including docx / xlsx / pptx) file formats, via a Web Browser Utility, so that all bases are covered.

Flexible media handling

The extensive Olivetti portfolio offers some of the largest paper capacities on the market with a range of optional additional cassettes and supports high media weights and large formats such as SRA3 and Banner (1.2m in length) size.



Olivetti's d-Color MF3300 33ppm A4 Colour MFP ideal for managing in-house print



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Smart technology for business people in the office, at home and on the move



Sharp in name and nature

Sharp's new range of edge-lit LED monitors have a built-in USB media player that enables them to display video and images without being attached to a network.

Perfect for simple signage applications, the PN-Y range of LED backlit displays includes four models in sizes from 32 to 55 inches. All offer full HD (1,920 x 1,080) resolution and a range of PC and other video connections, including HDMI, DV-I and D-Sub. DV-I out enables users to display content from one source simultaneously on up to five displays.

High brightness and contrast levels, combined with an anti-reflective coating, help the displays to deliver excellent colour quality and uniformity, even at wide viewing angles, in any professional environment.

Michael Bailly, product planning and marketing director, Visual Solutions, Sharp Europe, said: "We're answering a new market demand for simpler, more affordable and reliable signage solutions, with high quality and robust professional displays that do not require any technical support to run. We see the PN-Y series benefiting independent shops with no IT support, right through to big corporates or museums requiring signage for reception areas."

Stylish and secure

Securikey Euro Grade safes are not just highly functional, with grades of protection from 0-5; they also come with the option of multiple customisation, from the colour of the exterior to the arrangement of inner compartments and the locking mechanism used. All models meet EN1143-1 security standards, are Association of Insurance Surveyors (AIS) approved and are included on the insurance companies' Official Safe List. They also meet VdS approval, exceeding insurance and security industry criteria. **01252 311888 • www.securikey.co.uk**



Another set of eyes

ID Logistics and EOS Innovation, a French robotics company, are using robots as a supplement to flesh and blood security guards in the former's warehouses.

The e-vigilante mobile surveillance robot is being used at a 25,000m² ID Logistics facility in Orléans to help secure goods belonging to a client in the cosmetics industry. EOS Innovation's first security robot will complement the work of security guards.

The e-vigilante robot moves at speeds of between 5 and 10 km/h, follows pre-programmed rounds and identifies anomalies, break-ins and movements. When it detects an incident, it alerts an off-site security operator, sending real-time video feeds and location information.

The security operator can take control of e-vigilante remotely to assess the situation, categorise the level of alert and take necessary action while keeping clear of physical danger.

www.eos-innovation.eu

Automation speeds up deliveries at Alton Sports

Hampshire-based sports clothing specialist Alton Sports has shaved around two hours off its despatch processing time, by implementing a web-based integration solution from NetDespatch that seamlessly connects its order management system and its parcel delivery network.

Founded in 2001, the family-owned business lists more than 13,500 lines of sportswear online and despatches hundreds of consignments every week.

Previously, Alton Sports would manually enter details of orders placed through Amazon and its own e-commerce website, print the address labels and then notify Royal Mail.

Now, order data is transferred directly from Amazon and the Alton Sports website through the NetDespatch import engine, with labels automatically streamed to thermal printers via a NetDespatch Connector application. Where necessary, CN22 and CN23 customs declaration forms are produced automatically.

The solution reduces operator error and speeds up order fulfilment, which is now normally within 24 hours. Customers are notified by email when their orders have been despatched.

The system has also streamlined the production of complex carrier manifests, called Sales Order Summaries, which are now produced at the click of a button. At the same time that these are printed, the data is transferred to the carrier's Online Business Administration system, ensuring that billing is always correct.

The completely automated solution enables Alton Sports to handle erratic volumes, which increase dramatically in the lead up to Christmas and just before the triathlon season in April to June. **www.netdespatch.com**



Secure your office with Kibbi

London based start-up Ashiemymy has successfully completed an Indiegogo fund-raising campaign for the smartphone-connected Kibbi home security solution.

Kibbi monitors a home or small office using an HD wide-angle security camera and motion and temperature sensors on doors and windows.

If it detects anything out of the ordinary, Kibbi automatically sends an alert to your smartphone with a live feed so that you can assess the situation yourself.

As well as improving security, Kibbi can be used to check when family members return home, view footage of your home when you are away and control heating and other settings.

Features include auto-arming, motion detection, night vision, custom alerts, sound monitoring via microphone, 1GB free cloud storage and secure authentication.

www.qllondon.com/kibbi



The workstation of the future?

Is the future of desktop computing immersive? Possibly, if Dell and HP are right. Both companies have released new immersive computing solutions.

The first product in HP's Blended Reality ecosystem, the Sprout by HP combines the power of an all-in-one desktop computer with an intuitive user interface designed to break down barriers between the digital and physical worlds.

Key features include:

- Two displays – an integrated 23in touch screen and a horizontal capacitive touch mat that allows users to capture, create, move and manipulate content using their hands or the bundled stylus;
- An integrated capture and projection system,



the Sprout Illuminator, which combines a DLP projector and a four-camera sensory system including a hi-res camera and a 3D Camera for the instant capture of 2D and 3D objects;

- The ability to interact with and manipulate content remotely, in real-time from anywhere in the world using HP MyRoom; and
- A suite of immersive applications designed and optimised for Sprout by HP. Third parties can develop their own Sprout applications using the Sprout software development kit.

Sprout is expected to be available in the UK early this year.

Following HP's launch of Sprout, Dell announced its own 'smart desk' concept for designers. This comprises interactive multi-touch LCD screens and a horizontal digital work surface that ergonomically surrounds the user for natural manipulation using touch, stylus and new-generation totem-based tools.



Built-in cables

The credit card-sized M3000 and LM3000 PowerPack battery banks from PNY Technologies boast a slimline design and built-in cables for charging Android and Apple mobile devices.

The M3000 has a Micro-USB cable compatible with Android devices, while the LM3000 features both a Micro-USB and a Lightning cable, making it suitable for Android and Apple devices.

Both models provide up to two full battery charges. They cost £22.99 and £29.99 respectively.

www.pny.eu

HP simplifies proactive IT management for SMEs

HP has launched a cloud-based IT management solution that enables SMBs to do more than just react to IT issues.

Working across most operating systems (iOS, Android and Windows), devices and form factors, HP Touchpoint Manager's web-based dashboard enables administrators to deliver proactive 24/7 support, including the ability to:

- Monitor the inventory and health of devices;
- Remotely lock and wipe lost or stolen devices to prevent unauthorised access to company data;
- Automatically apply security and policy settings;
- Communicate proactive alerts so that IT admins can quickly troubleshoot and prevent employee and device down-time;
- Perform password and PIN resets; and
- Enable IT management from the office or on-the-go.

HP says HP Touchpoint Manager has the potential to cut costs and increase the productivity of IT staff by reducing the need for multiple point solutions that can be costly and time-consuming to learn. It can also increase the lifespan of devices by alerting SMBs to potential hard drive failures, security holes or battery failures.

The Basic version of HP Touchpoint Manager is available for £1.20 per user, per month. A Pro version with additional functionality is available for £6 per user, per month.

www.hp.com/Touchpoint

Rubber ring

Smartphone holders don't come any simpler than the iLoop from Provoco. Made from 100% silicone, the soft, flexible ring is designed to fit almost any smartphone and is small enough to fit in your pocket. When not supporting your smartphone, it can be used as a stress reliever. The Provoco team is seeking funding on Kickstarter.



Protective leather

Mujjo's new phone holders for the iPhone 6 and iPhone 6 Plus incorporate a slanted pocket for essential bank and ID cards.

Available in black or tan, the Leather Wallet Case 80° has a soft, protective suede-lined interior with openings for volume rockers, headphone-jack and lightning

connector, so that you can listen to your favourite music and charge your phone without any loss of protection.

The Leather Wallet Case is made from Mujjo's signature vegetable-tanned leather. Waxed and carefully treated with aniline oil to enrich 'colour tones', it acquires a beautiful patina over time.

Emergency power

Sandberg's Credit Card Power Bank boasts a built-in Micro USB cable. With a capacity of 850 mAh – enough for an extra 50% charge – Sandberg is pitching it as an emergency source of power to keep you going until you can recharge your smartphone fully, at home or in the office. www.sandberg.it

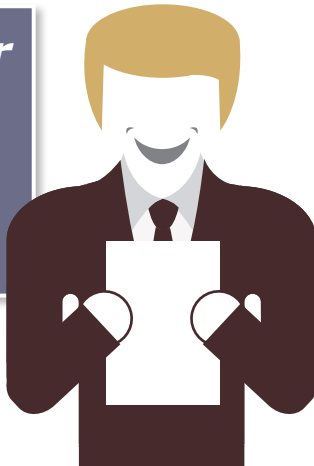


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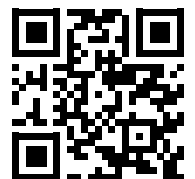
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QR code connectivity

Epson has introduced the first portable business projector to feature QR code connectivity for quick and easy collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Epson UK product manager Chris Goff said: "The iProjection QR code connection makes it easy for anyone with a smartphone or tablet to link to the EB-W28. Once the Epson iProjection app has been downloaded to a smart device, it's just a matter of scanning a QR code that's projected by the EB-W28. It's never been easier to take what you're seeing on a smart device and share it with a larger audience."

Smartphone and tablet users can also connect their devices by cable via the MHL-ready HDMI input.

Designed for small business premises and small corporate offices, the EB-W28 (£493 inc. VAT) boasts WXGA resolution, a 10,000:1 contrast ratio and 3,000 lumens brightness. An optional Wireless LAN adapter facilitates wireless projection from PCs and Macs. www.epson.eu

Panasonic re-enters large panel market

Panasonic has re-entered the large panel market with two 4K professional LED LCD displays, the 98-inch TH-98LQ70 and the 84-inch TH-84LQ70. The LQ70 series is capable of 24/7 operation and has a protective glass panel and an aluminium cabinet for protection in harsh environments, such as a shopping centre or bus/railway station, or for rental applications with frequent packing, unpacking and transport.

The displays can up-convert non-4K sources to a higher level of image quality. Moving images, which were previously difficult to compensate, are smooth and clear, with an optimal viewing distance 1.5 times the screen height (half the optimal distance of full HD screens).



Say goodbye to the flip-chart

SMART Technologies, famous for its interactive whiteboards, has started shipping a modern alternative to traditional flip-charts and dry erase boards.

The SMART kapp digital capture board combines ease of use with the ability to share and save work in real time, on any device, anywhere in the world.

Winner of a Frost & Sullivan 2014 New Product Innovation Award, SMART kapp is a plug-and-play solution that requires no IT integration or internet connections. Just hang up the 42-inch board and get to work.

Users can write on the sleek surface without risk of staining; save and share anything written on the board in JPEG or PDF formats; invite remote participants to view content via any browser on a smartphone, tablet and computer; and automatically submit snapshots to shared accounts like Evernote, Google Drive or OneDrive.

www.SMARTkapp.com



Taking a wider view

MMD has enhanced its Philips 23-inch USB docking display with advanced IPS panel technology offering a wider viewing angle of 178 degrees and brilliant, high contrast Full HD image quality. The Philips 231P4QUPES LCD notebook docking display (£239) gives notebook users access to desktop equipment, networks, intranet and the Internet via a single, super-speed USB cable. For flexibility, the dock has an integrated Ethernet port, a single USB 2.0 port and two superfast USB 3.0 ports. A Philips PowerSensor automatically detects when a user is no longer in front of the monitor and instantly reduces screen brightness for energy savings of up to 80%. www.mmd-p.com

Laser projector has clear benefits

Medical practitioners at Northwick Park, part of the London North West Healthcare NHS Trust, are enjoying crystal clear images after Video South Medical Television installed a high brightness, 6,500 lumens 1-chip DLP laser projector in the hospital's Himsforth Hall training complex.

Alistair Holdoway, managing director of Video South Medical Television, said: "The influential St Marks, a specialist tertiary hospital unit within Northwick Park, uses the Hall for an annual meeting called Frontiers, at which they showcase their latest developments.

"They are the UK's top centre for colorectal procedures and well known for their research and training. This year, we installed a complete fibre network transmitting from three endoscopy rooms and two operating theatres in full HD with two-way audio. The audience



of 160 specialist consultants was able to see in greater clarity than ever before what was happening in the theatre."

Panasonic product marketing specialist Tom Gibson said: "The PT-RZ670 complements the company's existing line-up of SOLID SHINE projectors and features 20,000 hours of working life. Projectors that don't have lamps or require filter changes offer significant benefits, reducing the Total Cost of Ownership and maintenance requirement."

business.panasonic.co.uk/visual-system

Free collaboration tool takes off

The number of registered users for the free version of Projectplace's collaboration tool has surpassed 10,000, one third of whom access it using a smartphone app.

ToDo was launched in April last year, since when it has experienced a 20% month-on-month growth in active users. Projectplace itself has close to one million users in thousands of SMEs worldwide, as well as big brands such as Carlsberg, Sony, Vodafone, BP and AEG.

ToDo provides organisations of all sizes with scalable, secure cloud-based collaboration based on highly visual Kanban boards.

Johan Zetterström, CEO of Projectplace, said: "We are very happy that ToDo has been received this well. It is designed to be visual, intuitive and easy to use. It makes everything your team needs, from documents to contacts, instantly accessible."

ToDo is available in a Pro edition, with additional storage for the most demanding collaborators, and a Plus version that lets users add modules such as Gantt charts. <http://todo.projectplace.com>





Argos offers customers paperless receipts

Argos has become the largest retailer in the UK to offer customers the option of digital receipts instead of paper ones. After a successful trial, it is rolling out the eReceipts platform to 750 stores in the UK and Ireland.

The eReceipts platform gives Argos customers the option of an emailed receipt so that they have a permanent digital record of their purchases and warranties. Argos itself benefits from a new channel through which to build relationships with customers and view real-time information on customers' shopping habits.

Emailed receipts sent by eReceipts currently have open rates in excess of 70%.

www.argos.co.uk • www.ereceipts.co.uk

Augmented reality is latest piece of the marketing jigsaw

Jigsaw Business Solutions has launched an augmented reality (AR) application that gives companies a new way to interact with customers and deliver personalised sales, promotional and loyalty messages.

Once it has been installed on a smartphone or tablet, the Jigsaw AR application enables a user to scan an image or logo and gain access to a hidden world of content that can be continually updated – long after the original

image to access the content was created.

John Bohan, Managing Director of Jigsaw Business Solutions, said: "Augmented reality offers firms a smarter way to reach smartphone and tablet users and engage with them on a personal level. Our AR software is a bespoke system which, unlike others on the market, does not require a data connection to operate."

www.jigsawbusinessolutions.com

The easy way to find your favourite magazine

MyKIOSK.com is the latest example of how digital tools are being harnessed to support the printed word.

A search engine for magazines, it enables internet users in Germany (and soon Austria and Switzerland) to locate the nearest stockist of their favourite newspaper or magazine, saving much frustration and legwork, especially for readers of minority interest titles.

Users simply enter their location (or allow their location to be determined) via a web browser or smartphone app and select the

magazine they want. With one click, the nearest stockists are displayed on a Google map.

MyKIOSK.com is backed by the Federal Association of Press Wholesalers whose members provide data on orders placed by retailers every day. This ensures that the information it provides is always up-to-date. The service currently covers up to 5,000 magazines and 110,000 retailers in Germany.

One interesting possibility for publishers is the option to integrate links or QR codes into their adverts so that someone standing at a bus stop, say, could scan the QR on a poster for a new magazine and immediately locate the nearest stockist.

www.MYKIOSK.com

Personal touch drives growth of Lettrs

Lettrs combines the benefits of digital messaging with the personal touch and longevity of a handwritten letter. Already offered as an Android app, it is now also available for the iPhone and iPad.

The platform for mobile-to-mobile letter writing enables writers to hand-sign their messages, select writing filters and attach photos and tags.

In addition, the iOS apps include a collection of designer themes; geo-location stamping of signed lettrs, including photo attachments; a one-stop letter centre for organising personal and public letters; and a tagging system for easy searching and sorting.

Lettrs CEO Drew Bartkiewicz said: "The disposable messaging apps today are a joke, nothing more than digital crack for society's youth. Our company is committed to transforming the future of written communication and to powering the lasting mobile letters we knew the world could write, even in a fully mobile network."

The Android app registered almost 1 million downloads within just three months.



Stylish and interactive

Arjo Wiggins is adding interactivity to all the papers in its Creative Papers range, including Conqueror, Curious, Pop Set and Rives.

The new Alive branding denotes creative papers that have a laminated layer of PowerCoat paper incorporating printed electronics.

The combination enables brand owners to marry premium packaging, cards, corporate communications, labelling and advertising with NFC-enabled interactivity for a more engaging customer experience.

Arjo Wiggins writes: "Cost-effective paper-based printed circuitry can be used to reveal instructions or ingredients in an unlimited range of languages; take customers to a dedicated website or online promotion; personalise a product; or facilitate instant sharing via any of the social media channels. All it takes is a quick scan with an NFC-enabled mobile device."

Alive papers can also be used instead of swing tickets and RFID tags to deter shop-lifting, facilitate stock control, deliver useful information or loyalty-building offers and reassure customers that a product is genuine.

Powercoat manages to do this without the use of environmentally damaging PET plastics thanks to its unique cellulosic formulation and patented coating process. PowerCoat is FSC-certified, biodegradable and recyclable. Like ordinary paper, it can be folded, cut, shaped, torn and even burned to create a desired effect.

www.powercoatpaper.com/powercoat/alive/

A marketing beacon

Mobikats has launched an enterprise-grade iBeacon Platform that will enable retailers, museums, sports arenas, airports, hotels and entertainment centres to interact with smartphone-wielding customers. Beura, the Gaelic for iBeacon, provides customisable iBeacons – low-energy Bluetooth transmitters that can track smartphones running a relevant app – and a messaging platform for delivering tailored, location-specific messages. iBeacons can detect a user at three unique ranges: immediate at up to 20cm, near at up to 2m and far at up to 50m.

www.mobikatsenterprise.com

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Sustainability declarations

Herman Miller is to issue independently verified Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) for certain seating products to help customers assess their environmental qualities and complete applications for sustainability certifications, such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). The EPDs meet the requirements of the BIFMA PCR (Product Category Rule), which will take effect this year and aims to give quantified environmental information through a globally recognized system. EPDs are available on request for the Aeron, Embody, Mirra 2, Celle, Capex, Sayl and Setu chairs. www.hp.com

Book a meeting room wherever you are

A cloud-based resource scheduling and booking system has been developed to meet the needs of today's 'always connected' mobile workers.

Smartway2 lets users book meeting rooms, desks and other resources through on-premise touch-screen panels or remotely via an app for Android, iOS and Windows Mobile devices.

When attendees turn-up for a meeting, they can check-in at a panel using password authentication, NFC Tags, QR code scans, Bluetooth and even facial recognition.

Nigel Reading, director of Smartway2 Limited, said: "As organisations strive to lower costs by decentralising and encouraging flexible working, there's been an explosion in the number of mobile workers. When they need to meet with their partners or customers, it is essential the right collaboration resources are available on the day, without fuss. With Smartway2, we have brought resource scheduling right up-to-date by creating a solution based around how people work and the tools and applications they use daily." www.smartway2.com/



Entry-level DECT headset

The Sennheiser D 10 is an entry-level wireless DECT headset for the office professional. Offering connectivity to either a deskphone or a softphone/PC, it has a full workday talk time of up to 12 hours and fast charging, with a 50% charge in just 20 minutes.

Call clarity is ensured with a noise-cancelling microphone, wideband audio and advanced Digital Signal Processing incorporating both echo cancelling and audio equalisation. ActiveGard technology protects against acoustic shock.

There are three models to choose from: the D 10 phone for desk phones; the D 10 USB for UC professionals; and the D 10 USB ML for professionals using Microsoft Lync.

<http://en-uk.sennheiser.com/d10>

In Brief

Queue reporter

A free crowd-sourcing website and app has been launched to reduce time spent queuing at tourist attractions and on the end of a telephone line. Wait a Moment analyses wait/queueing times supplied by UK consumers and reveals the best and worst times for users to call banks, phone companies and other service providers or to visit busy tourist attractions. waitamoment.co.uk

Money for old laptops

Sellyourlaptopformore.co.uk (SYLFM) promises to pay the best prices for unwanted laptops, MacBooks and netbooks. The Microsoft-registered Refurbisher erases and reformats all drives, before refurbishing laptops for resale. Laptops that are broken and can't be fixed are used for parts. The site provides instant quotes and issues payment within 48 hours of receiving a laptop via pre-paid post.

www.sellyourlaptopformore.co.uk

Employment guidance

ADP, a provider of Human Capital Management (HCM) solutions, has launched ADP HR Everywhere to provide small businesses with advice on employment law issues such as redundancy, long-term sickness, grievance procedures, TUPE, absence management, maternity leave and health and safety. Targeted at companies with up to 149 employees, ADP HR Everywhere consists of a 24/7 online portal and an ADP HR Advice Line staffed by HR professionals and solicitors.

www.adp.co.uk

Space saver

PNY Technologies' pocket-sized Duo-Link On-The-Go (OTG) Flash Drive offers easy file transfers and streaming between PCs/Macs and Android mobile devices. Equipped with USB and micro-USB connectors, the Duo-Link OTG enables users to free up internal memory on their Android smartphone or tablet. Alternatively, content can be stored on the drive itself. It is available with capacities of 16GB (£12.99) or 32GB (£19.99).

www.pny.eu



Find a developer you can trust

Businesses that have an idea for a mobile app and need a developer to bring it to life are being encouraged to post their projects on AppFutura.com, a workspace that brings together mobile app developers and potential customers.

Once a business has chosen a developer, AppFutura facilitates every aspect of the partnership including acting as a referee in case of a dispute; offering technical assistance throughout the development process; making developers sign a Non-Disclosure agreement before discussing a project; protecting your intellectual property; and guaranteeing you are the owner of the code provided.

It's free to create a developer profile or post a project, and there are over 12,000 developers using the site now, waiting to be connected with the right project.

www.AppFutura.com

Cloud contact centre boosts charitable donations

The Canadian Cancer Society in Saskatchewan has increased charitable donations by 40% since deploying cloud contact centre technology from NewVoiceMedia.

The ContactWorld omni-channel engagement centre enables better interactions with supporters, volunteers and other stakeholders through seamless integration with Salesforce.

For example, the ability of agents to access the wealth of information in Salesforce about past dealings with supporters resulted in a 30% uplift in participation retention and a 70% increase in pledge numbers during this year's signature Relay for Life fund-raising event.

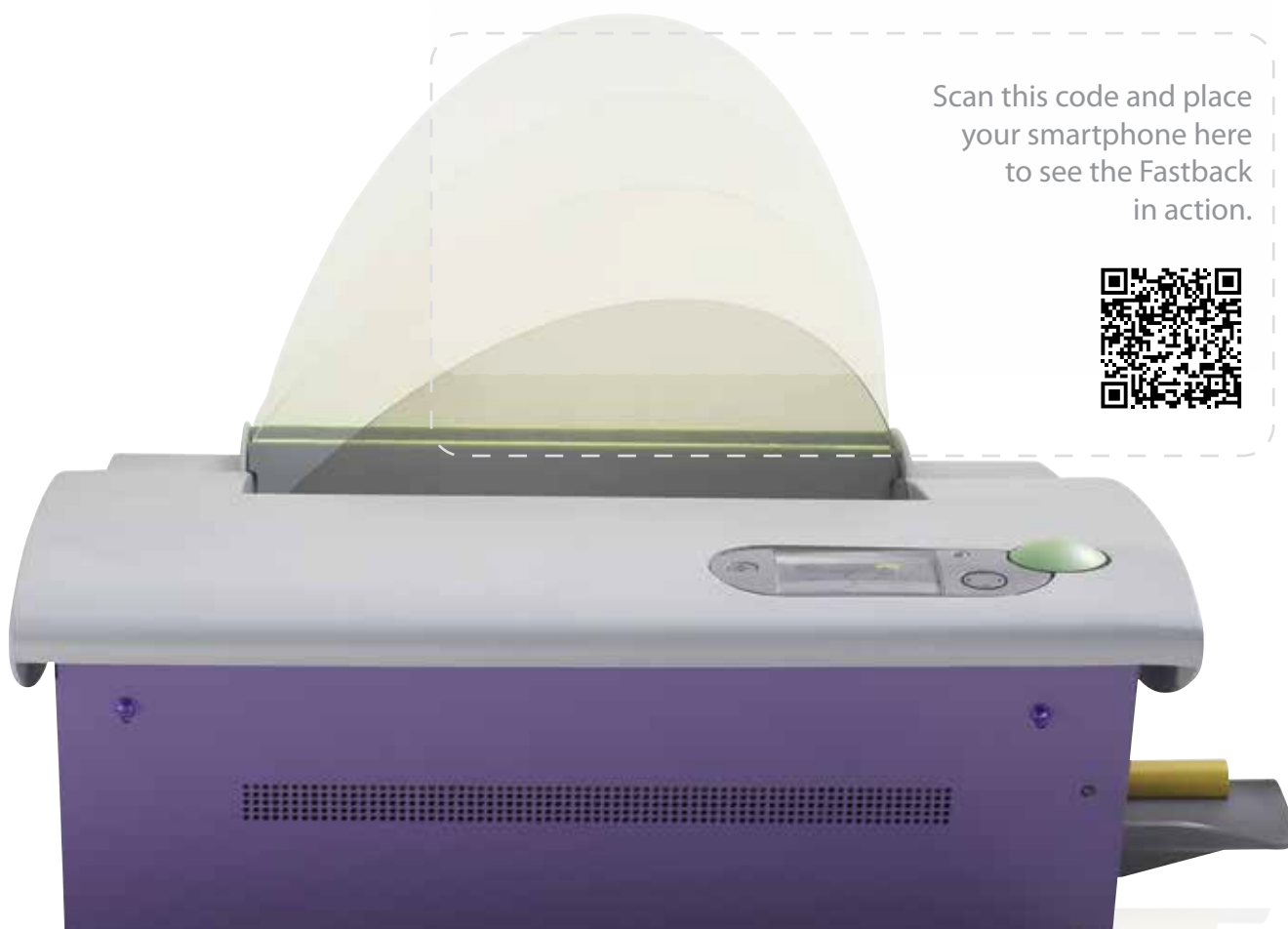
Catherine Moore, senior director of strategic engagement and platform development at Canadian Cancer Society, Saskatchewan Division, said: "NewVoiceMedia has been a game-changer for our organisation. Now we are better able to engage with people to increase the impact of our support, prevention and advocacy programmes."

Real-time dashboards and extensive reporting provide insight into engagement opportunities and visibility of call volume, duration and success rates, which has enabled the Society to reduce call queues and abandon rates.

www.newvoicemedia.com

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Cloud Storage: What are the alternatives?

Lee Holsgrove explains how tape storage can work in conjunction with cloud storage to help keep your business data safe

Last year's hacking of celebrity selfies put data privacy issues firmly into the spotlight and raised important issues about how individuals and organisations store and protect their most sensitive information. Above all, it served as a reminder that data is hot property and every organisation has a responsibility to ensure that the information it holds is secure and protected.

There is no doubt that the cloud offers distinct advantages to businesses of all sizes and should be embraced for the benefits it brings, such as reduced cost and the flexibility of remote working. However, the cloud shouldn't be the sole method a business uses to store and back-



up information, mainly because physical back-up reduces the risk of losing data completely.

Data stored in the cloud can and does get lost and/or corrupted. A survey conducted in 2013 by internet security company Symantec found that 43% of businesses have lost data in the cloud, which they have had to recover from backups*. Yet, most cloud service providers accept no responsibility for data losses in their service level agreements.

Providers of public cloud storage services quite often subcontract elsewhere, giving customers very little control over, or access to, their sensitive information. It may even be difficult for the provider itself to identify and retrieve your data from the plethora of other clients' information.

Businesses will also need to check that their data is being stored in compliance with the laws of their country, and not just those of the country where the cloud server is hosted. Many cloud servers are based in the U.S. and operate under U.S. law. UK-based organisations must comply with the EU Data Protection Directive, which outlines standards of protection throughout the EU.

Tiered storage

Instead of relying solely on the cloud, we strongly advise organisations to adopt a tiered approach to data. It is crucial that your most important data should have a different strategy to less important information. For business critical information, we advocate using tape storage, as well as the cloud. Data stored on tape boasts a 99.99% reliability level, as well as robust security. If you use an outsourced supplier, computerised zone access, perimeter fencing and high-security vaults make it near impossible

for your data to be lost or corrupted.

Tape storage also provides encryption, so that should your data fall into the wrong hands (extremely unlikely in the first place), a third party would not be able to make sense of it, rendering it useless to them and to anyone else they pass it on to.

Thanks to recent innovations like LTFS (Linear Tape File System), tape storage is no longer an expensive, cumbersome option. Launched in 2010 by IBM, LTFS was developed specifically to address tape archive requirements and to improve data access times. Being an open standard format, it also addresses the concern that archived data will not be readable in the future without the use of specialised software.

With cloud security breaches continuing to hit the headlines, I urge anyone using cloud storage to perform their due diligence and, crucially, to investigate tape storage options for the most sensitive data you cannot afford to lose.

Lee Holsgrove is Strategic Data Protection Development Manager at Wincanton Records Management. WRM has over 20 years' experience in the provision of off-site data protection services, along with secure document storage for live and archive documents, data protection, secure records destruction and electronic document management. It holds ISO9001 accreditation for quality management systems and ISO27001 for security management systems.

www.wincantonrm.co.uk

[*http://finance.yahoo.com/news/cloud-computing-users-losing-data-205500612.html](http://finance.yahoo.com/news/cloud-computing-users-losing-data-205500612.html)

2015 Predictions

Yorgen Edholm, CEO of Accellion, a provider of secure mobile file sharing and collaboration solutions, shares his predictions for 2015

Mobile

2015 will be the year of enterprise mobile applications. The IBM/Apple partnership and HP's push into the mobility market illustrate just how large this market could be. So far, apps created for enterprise use have been a mobile skin on existing desktop solutions. In 2015, enterprises will develop new, native applications that take full advantage of the mobile device form factor and mobile features to create streamlined business processes.

Cloud

Following all the security breaches that have occurred recently, 2015 will see the beginnings of a downward spiral in public cloud hype,

as enterprises realise they may need a combination of public and private cloud solutions. We've seen this happen already with GE. Despite claims by some groups that the company will go 'all in' on the public cloud, security teams have stated that compliance or infrastructure issues mean certain data will remain 'private' and reside behind the firewall.

Wearable Tech

Wearables will find their first footing in the enterprise and businesses need to prepare for this shift from a data security standpoint. Look at Google Glass, its most compelling use case is in industries where hands-free computing is a matter of life and death – surgeons and

field workers who fix machinery. Wearable technology applications in the enterprise will grow exponentially once wearables are introduced.

Security

A 100% secured environment is not attainable, so there will be increased demand for vendors to build security directly into applications. Every app needs to be self-aware and self-protecting, so emerging companies will no longer be able to push security below user experience on the priorities list. In the future, security will have to be an integral part of the app.

www.accellion.com



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– other models available.



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Wearable technology: beyond fashion

Gavin Wheeldon, CEO of Purple WiFi, looks at what you might be wearing in 2015

Wearable technology refers to any electronic technology or computer that is incorporated into items of clothing and accessories. These include fitness trackers, smart watches and even smart rings that vibrate when we receive a new email, text message or call on our smartphone.

The smartest wearable devices can perform tasks that we might expect to carry out on a computer or laptop. In fact, in many cases, wearable tech is even more highly developed and sophisticated, being able to scan, track and provide sensory feedback on our bodies, bi-rhythms and physiological functions.

The whole idea of wearable technology is that we remain hands-free and online at all times, with seamless and instant access to the data we need exactly when we need it.

So what are some of the most common types of wearable device in use today?

Health-tracking devices

Health trackers worn on the wrist provide feedback on things like heart rate, body fat and weight – even on your skin’s electric conductivity. Information can be synced wirelessly with apps that help keep track of personal health and fitness goals.

For example, the Simband, which Samsung describes as an open reference design platform ‘for building advanced devices that will empower individuals to

Connectivity at your fingertips: the MOTA SmartRing, which notifies wearers of new messages, has exceeded its funding goal on crowdfunding website indiegogo.com. www.mota.com



monitor their own health and wellness more effectively’, has six sensors to keep tabs on daily steps, heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature and sweat glands.

Listening to one’s whole body can be important for the maintenance of good health. For example, measuring GSR (galvanic skin response – sweat to you and I) provides an indication of stress levels that could act as a warning to people who suffer from stress-related illnesses.

Smart watches

Smart watches combine timekeeping functions with many of the features we expect from a smartphone including text messages, email, web-browsing and media player functions.

The first smart watches performed what now seem very simple tasks, such as calculations, translations and games, and had to be paired with a smartphone through Bluetooth.

The latest models can operate on their own, often taking SIM cards just like a cell phone, and act like mini wearable computers running mobile apps – including information downloaded from health and fitness trackers.



Google Glass

Google Glass is a hands-free, head-mounted camera and display that communicates with the internet through voice commands. Its use by individuals raises issues of privacy but for business customers it has proven benefits in certain applications. For example, it has been used successfully in healthcare to demonstrate surgery to medical students who can watch procedures remotely.

In fact, Google Glass has uses in all types of education. Teachers can create ‘first person’ video guides and students themselves can record interactions with each other whilst working collaboratively on a piece of work or whilst out in the field. Manufacturing companies can use it to deliver on-the-job training or to provide remote support to field workers.

Where will this all lead?

Wearable tech doesn’t have to be removable like the examples above. Invasive versions, such as microchip implants or even smart tattoos, have far-reaching implications for the future.

For gamers, there is the promise of a more realistic, immersive online gaming environment through augmented reality that combines the real world with computer-generated sensory input.

In retail, virtual mirrors that scan your body shape and project clothes onto your image could enable shoppers to try on clothes without removing those they are already wearing.

Enhanced clothing

In addition to questions of practicality and functionality, researchers are also having to consider fashion, as technology is increasingly incorporated into t-shirts, jackets, headbands and jewellery.

Trends to watch out for include solar clothes that can recharge your phone; a tracker that works out where each outfit is in your wardrobe; bike helmets with built-in navigation systems (safer than using a smartphone whilst cycling); smart socks that work out if you are running in a way that could cause injury; smart bras that track your heart rate; and designer clothing that uses technology purely for aesthetic purposes.

As wearable technology gains ground in 2015, it is worth celebrating the fact that by 2018 there is predicted to be one public Wi-Fi hotspot for every 20 people on earth. After all, without WiFi, wearable technology would not exist.

www.purplewifi.net



Gavin Wheeldon, CEO, Purple WiFi

This year’s model

What are likely to be this year’s most popular wearable technology products and applications in the workplace?

To find out, enterprise mobile solutions provider Accellion surveyed IT decision-makers in 100 organisations with more than 1,000 employees.

■ **The most popular wearable device:** 41% said that they expected to see the Apple Watch in their organisation in 2015, ahead of Google Glass (36%); the Sony Smartwatch (20%); the Samsung Gear 2 Neo (17%); and the Pebble or Pebble Steel (16%).

■ **The most popular application on wearable devices:** email (29%), followed by social media apps (20%).

■ **The most popular work applications on wearable devices:** internet browsing (10%); document review via Word, Powerpoint or Excel (10%); telephone calls (6%).

James Longley of Business Energy Consultants (www.bizenergy.co.uk) discusses the energy issues facing businesses and offers some tips for reducing energy spend

Dealing with the energy crisis

News that the 'Big Six' energy companies were singled out for criticism by industry regulator Ofgem recently will not come as a surprise to many of their commercial customers. Despite ongoing energy price rises, it seems that many customers feel let down by poor service levels, with increasing number of consumers stating that they are 'very dissatisfied' with the service they receive from their energy provider.

Price is often the major factor for business users, and so many are prepared to put up with poor customer service for the sake of what they see as a good deal, particularly if their business is a large energy user.

As someone who deals with energy companies and their clients every day, I don't believe that anyone should put up with poor service. In fact, as a business user you are likely to be a valued customer, even if the level of service you receive doesn't reflect that fact. So, remember that you are in a position of strength because energy firms really want your custom.

Find the finance

Energy conservation is a big deal for companies and the government, which has strict EU targets to meet. As a result, there are some funding schemes currently available that are worth investigating. For example:

- **The Green Deal** (www.gov.uk/green-deal-energy-saving-measures) in effect helps companies to borrow against future savings in energy consumption in order to finance energy-saving initiatives, such as insulation or more efficient lighting and heating equipment.

- **The Energy Efficiency Financing Scheme**, run by Siemens Financial Services and the Carbon Trust, allows businesses to invest in energy-efficient technology with payments that can be offset against the energy savings made from using the equipment.



Bizenergy office interior



James Longley, Business Energy Consultants

- **The Enhanced Capital Allowance (ECA) Scheme** is part of the government's programme to reduce energy consumption. The scheme provides businesses with enhanced tax relief for investment in equipment that meets specific energy-saving criteria. It enables companies to offset the cost of equipment against their taxable profit as a 100% first-year capital allowance.

Audit your energy use

If you haven't done so before, it's advisable to carry out an energy audit of your company. Start by monitoring what and where energy is being used – or wasted. For example, are computers, photocopiers, heating or lights being left on when there is nobody around? There are also other simple changes you can make to cut energy consumption:

- **Turn down the heat:** are thermostat settings too high in your offices or on the factory floor? For every degree your thermostat is turned down, an 8% saving is achieved.

- **Follow my leader:** appoint an 'energy champion' who can take responsibility for reducing and monitoring how energy is used.

- **Shine a light:** lighting is a significant cost for many businesses and energy-

saving technology has come a long way. You could invest in energy-saving light controls that switch lights off automatically when they aren't needed, or simply buy some energy saving LED bulbs or fluorescent tubes.

Revisit your contract

One major way of saving money that's surprisingly simple and frequently overlooked is to review your contract. I am often surprised by just how many businesses are either on the wrong tariff or on the incorrect VAT rate (this varies for different types of business).

Even if you are locked into a contract for two or three years, if you were given the wrong advice initially and have been put onto a contract that is penalising you (for over-use or under-use), you may be able to renegotiate your deal and potentially engineer a refund.

VAT is another issue that confuses companies. We have come across a significant number of businesses that have been put on the wrong VAT rate, subsequently paying more than they need to. Again, if this is the fault of the energy company (and it often is), you should be able to claim a refund, which could add up to thousands of pounds over the course of a year. Brokers who know the market and are used to dealing with energy providers are best placed to deal with this for you.

Of course, it's preferable to be in a good contract from the start, rather than having to dig around to find out where you have been overcharged. The optimum time to investigate a new contract is around six months before the current one expires. Don't be afraid to state your terms and negotiate – or appoint a broker to do it for you.

Energy is a major financial outlay and an absolute necessity for any business. If you are looking to reduce costs, improve margins or finance growth, looking at your energy costs is a good place to start. Despite energy providers' poor reputation for customer service, being a customer gives you a degree of power when negotiating with your provider, so use that influence to ensure that you get a better deal.

James Longley is a Director of Business Energy Consultants (www.bizenergy.co.uk). He researches the energy market and negotiates on behalf of the hospitality industry and facilities managers to find the most competitive energy deals on the market.

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Flexible working: your options

Bostjan Bregar outlines the different flexible working arrangements being adopted by businesses and their benefits

Recently introduced Government legislation permits any UK employee with more than 26 weeks' service to make an application for flexible working, and requires businesses to consider these requests in a 'reasonable manner'.

In an attempt to remove the cultural assumption that flexible working only applies to parents or carers, the Government believes the change to the law will make workplaces fit for the 21st century and create a more engaged, agile, results-driven and productive workforce.

So, what exactly is 'flexible working' and how could it change what your employees do day-in and day-out?

The reality is that elements of flexible working are probably already happening in your business, if you're the kind of person who checks your emails on your phone when you're out and about, or does a bit of work on the train in preparation for a meeting, or if you've let an employee leave early for a personal appointment. These are all examples of flexible working in action.

Flexible working arrangements typically fall into one of the following categories:

Job sharing: The dividing up of one job between two or more people, with the hours split between them. The apportioning of hours does not need to be equal.

Flexible places of work: In the digital age, Wi-Fi, cloud storage and other technologies enable employees to do



...elements of flexible working are probably already happening in your business

some or all of their work from home or somewhere else other than their normal place of work.

Part-time: Allowing individuals to reduce their hours to less than full-time, whether by working shorter days or fewer days.

Compressed hours: Unlike part-time working, this involves the same number of hours as a full-time role but spread across fewer days, so an individual may work four longer days each week, for example.

Flexi-time: Many companies will establish core business hours (e.g. 10am to 4pm) but allow individuals to set their own start and finish times to fit in with other commitments. This may result in some shorter and some longer days, but over the course of the working week each individual should do their contracted hours in full.

Annualised hours: An extension of the Flexi-time principle that can work well for roles or businesses that have a high degree of seasonality. Individuals can be contracted to work a certain

number of hours over the course of the year, with flexibility on when they work to accommodate peaks and troughs in business activity.

Staggered hours: Each employee can set different start, finish and break times. Such arrangements can be of benefit to businesses that want to extend opening times without increasing total hours worked by staff.

Phased retirement: Now that the default retirement age has been phased out and older workers can choose when they want to retire, individuals can gradually reduce the number of hours they work to part-time over a given period. This eases pressure on them personally and allows a transitional handover period that will help the business prepare for their eventual full retirement.

On the surface, the combination of flexible options and alterations to the law may seem daunting, but the rewards of flexible working can be hugely beneficial to your business and your team.

Often, taking the first step is the most difficult part, but by planning and implementing a company-wide flexible working policy and supporting teams with the right technology, you can create an organisational culture of always putting customers and staff first and give yourself a competitive advantage as a truly agile business.

Bostjan Bregar is co-founder and CEO of The 4th Office, a structured cloud workspace with intuitive collaboration, file sharing and task management tools that enable teams to work together efficiently, whether they're in the same room or on the other side of the world. Established 10 years ago, The 4th Office embraces the principles of agility and flexibility in its own operations. It is based in Slovenia and the UK and expands and shrinks resources and skill-sets as required through a combination of full-time employees, freelancers and partners. For further information on The 4th Office's agile workspace or a free trial for your business, go to www.4thoffice.com



Free Guide

The 4th Office has produced a free guide to flexible working explaining:

- How the working landscape is evolving
- Changes to the law and why the legislation has been updated
- The steps you need to take if you receive a flexible working request
- Guidance on updating your existing flexible working policy

The 4th Office Guide to Flexible Working can be downloaded from <https://www.4thoffice.com/web/blog/employers%E2%80%99-guide-new-2014-flexible-working-legislation>.

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How to make a success of home working

As new research highlights the pitfalls of home working, Anjula Mutanda offers her top tips for success

If you are one of those who finds it hard to focus when working from home, Anjula Mutanda has the following advice:

1 Birthday suit or work suit?

For some, the ritual of getting formally dressed for work and 'commuting' to a designated work space is needed to prepare mentally for work. For others, it is less important. The key is to focus on what works for you and the type of work you do. Whatever you choose, it is important to be aware that how you dress may subtly affect your attitude. You may enjoy wearing a dressing-gown all day, but doing so could sub-consciously put you in a relaxed mood and slow you down.

When working alone, it is crucial to have reminders that keep you in work mode, whether that is wearing business-like clothing or remembering to adjust your body language when taking business calls, for example by standing up or sitting up and smiling.

2 Neutralise your work space

This is almost the opposite of what we do when we work in an office. There, people have photos of family and other personal knick-knacks to personalise their space. At home, the challenge is to create an environment that enhances work productivity and helps you focus. Whatever the size of your work space, dress it for work by having work materials to hand like a printer, laptop, post-its or a pin board. De-cluttering home distractions and adding workplace props will help to create a more productive working environment.

3 Work smart

Understand your work pattern. Doggedly sitting at your desk until 5pm, just to feel that you've been 'at work' for eight hours can be counterproductive. You'll know when you've hit that turning point, when you move from being in the flow of work to simply twiddling your thumbs.

Identify when you are most productive and achieve optimum results. The beauty of being in charge of your own work schedule is that you can set your targets, decide what you need to achieve for the day, and work towards those goals.

4 Not alone

Working from home can be isolating, and the sense of being cut off from others for long periods can negatively affect your mood. If you are working remotely, build-in time to make contact with your office. If possible, schedule time to go into the office, as this will act as a physical and psychological reminder that you

are still very much connected.

Being self-employed can add an extra challenge. Consider building up a network with others in a similar position in your local community or joining a social media community.

5 Avoid the procrastination demon

This begins with the words "I'll just....". You can fill in the blanks with: take a bath, vacuum the house, update my status on Facebook or watch that box-set everyone's talking about!

One of the most effective ways to combat this temptation is to make a list of what you need to accomplish and a time frame in which to do it. Once you achieve one task, tick it off your list and move on to the next. This approach will give you structure, keep you on task and help you stay focused.

If you are simply too distracted by the comforts of home, then consider swapping your workspace for another, like the local library.

6 Don't be the gopher

Be careful that you don't become the 'go to' person for running other peoples' errands. Working from home can be interpreted by family and friends as a licence to ask for multiple favours, from picking up the kids or doing the shopping to taking a relative out for the day. Having boundaries and being strict about your time management will stop others from taking advantage of you.

7 Post-lunch slump

Sometimes known as the 'graveyard session', the post-lunch slump between 1 and 3pm is the time of day when our energy levels, mood and alertness tend to be at their lowest and when we may feel a very strong urge to take a nap. In order to combat this, try to avoid eating heavily at lunch and find time for a brisk 10-minute walk. Save the most mentally demanding tasks for periods when you are at peak alertness.

8 IT meltdowns

When IT glitches occur, such as emails not connecting with the company server, internet problems or crashes, we react emotionally. However, frustration, blind panic and anger lead to poor decision-making. The key is to wait a few minutes and see if the problem resolves itself. Taking a deep breath and cooling down gives you the opportunity to think logically and consider alternative solutions.

Don't over-personalise the event by declaring 'why does this always happen to me?'. This type of thinking can cause you to feel totally helpless, so don't do it! Don't get upset about what you can't control. Instead, look at what is possible: contact technical support, take a walk around the block or have a break.



Working from home is as contentious an issue as ever. Supporters say it makes them more productive, while detractors argue the opposite.

A new survey of 1,000 workers commissioned by office technology specialist Altodigital gives ammunition to both sides, with 40% of respondents claiming their productivity more than doubles when working from home and a similar number admitting that their motivation tails off after just four hours.

Working from Home – A productivity report by psychotherapist Anjula Mutanda also reveals that 41% of home workers regularly skive, for example by watching TV (24%), doing household chores (27%) or playing with their children (26%). More than one third (35%) prefer to work in their pyjamas or dressing gown.

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Jonathan Kini, Head of Small & SME Business at Vodafone UK, explains how technology is enabling UK businesses to work more flexibly

Investing in the future

The global economy is starting to show signs of recovery and, in the UK in particular, SMEs and start-ups are at the heart of this growth. In March this year, 2.26 million businesses were VAT registered in the UK compared to 2.17 million in 2013 – a rise of approximately 96,000 (4.4%). Since then, the UK has made major strides to be ranked as the fourth most entrepreneurial economy in the world.

A recent Vodafone survey of 1,700 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across Europe reveals that 80% are confident about continued business growth in the coming years, with 50% already performing better than they were in 2011. With SMEs in the UK performing better than those in most other European countries over the last two years, confidence is understandably higher here than on the continent.

As green shoots emerge and economies begin to recover, SMEs are looking to make smart investments to maintain growth. Our survey shows that, in addition to boosting spending on staff, marketing and premises, SMEs are prioritising investment in technology as a way to help to drive sales and revenue. The top priorities for investment in technology amongst SMEs include company websites (17%) and 4G data and cloud services (equal second with 12% each). Smartphones and tablets are not far behind, with 10% of SMEs making devices an investment priority.

Leveraging technology to enable business success

From cloud services to mobile and tablets, technology is increasingly critical to business operations and is fast becoming the backbone of any successful business, regardless of its size.

Today, customers expect a positive experience and immediate response if something isn't right. If a customer is unable to get hold of someone to remedy a situation, they will simply look for another option. SMEs realise that in order to maintain a competitive edge, as well as keep up with larger enterprises, they need to invest in the right technology that will enable them to provide the 24-7 service their customers expect. Four out of five (82%) SMEs that have already invested in technology to help them become mobile and work more flexibly say they have seen direct business benefits as a result.

Take Diamond Logistics, for example. As one of the country's fastest growing logistics providers, its success depends on its ability to respond quickly to customer requests. With business growing at a rapid rate, the company needed to invest in a communications infrastructure that would allow calls to be answered anytime, anywhere. By linking its landline to mobile, Diamond Logistics has been able to increase its level of customer service and satisfaction, which has led to the opening of 14 new locations and plans to open a further 25 in 2015.

Many other SMEs recognise that as they grow they will need to ensure they are supported by the right technology. A majority of SMEs in Vodafone's study



say communications technologies are fundamental and will help transform their business, particularly mobile solutions and smart devices. In fact, two thirds (68%) say the cost of not having mobile solutions is greater than the cost of having them, a clear example of where the benefits of technology outweigh its costs. In the UK, 57% of SMEs have adopted tablets and 45% have adopted cloud services, a number that's likely to grow as the need to access information anytime, anywhere grows.

Most SMEs reported customer service as the main benefit of mobile services, ahead of internal efficiencies. This highlights the importance of providing SMEs with cost-effective mobile solutions that enable them to compete against larger organisations and deliver a more responsive customer service.

The study reveals that tablets, cloud services and unified communications are the emerging technologies that SMEs are most likely to adopt over the next 1-2 years. In light of the recent flexible working legislation, these technologies will be key in enabling employees to work remotely and increase productivity no matter where they are located, whilst also providing OPEX savings.

Low adoption levels of unified communications and managed devices to date, with less than a quarter of UK SMEs already using them, highlights an opportunity for growth as workforces become more mobile and the proliferation of devices increases.

Barriers to adoption

Despite the clear benefits of emerging technologies, about 40% of SMEs perceive cost as a prohibitive barrier to their adoption. However, that doesn't have to be the case, as cloud-based infrastructures allow SMEs to deploy innovative technologies without heavy CAPEX investment in hardware.

As SMEs get ready for tomorrow's new opportunities, they recognise the value of leveraging emerging technologies. Doing so, not only gives businesses the flexibility to operate from anywhere, it also aids customer service, workforce productivity and operational agility. No wonder most SMEs see technology as fundamental to their future success and are willing to make the necessary investments.

The top priorities for investment in technology amongst SMEs include company websites and 4G data and cloud services...

Talk more, type less

Maxine Park, solicitor and co-founder of digital dictation and transcription service provider DictateNow, argues that businesses of every size can increase productivity, efficiency and profitability by talking more and typing less

Organisations seeking to improve staff productivity often overlook time spent typing. Executives hired for their ability to sell, solve problems, create solutions, train, explain, present, negotiate and care for customers continue to treat typing as a core skill.

It makes no sense for valuable assets to waste time typing reports, presentations, documents, letters, even long emails, when they could be doing what they were hired to do.

Everyone thinks they are quicker, but in reality the composition typing speed is about 15 words per minute (wpm) for the average amateur typist. However, that same individual can dictate at more than 100 wpm, producing a 3,000 word report in 30 minutes compared to more than three hours if typing.

Talking instead of typing allows employees to utilise the skills for which they were originally employed and helps the business grow. It can be no surprise that the biggest users of digital dictation are the legal and healthcare sectors, where managers have long recognised the value of keeping skilled people away from the keyboard – often a good place to hide and take it easy.

Think digital

Thanks to mobile technology, dictation is available to everyone, anywhere, with secure applications for smartphones, iPad, iTouch and BlackBerry allowing one-touch recording. Importantly, users don't have to worry about getting it right first time, they can return to any point within a dictation and re-record passages or insert new sections.

Digital sound files need transcribing, but once recorded, users can prioritise their recordings and specify a time for the transcription to be completed. Notes on formatting, pronunciation and spelling can be added to ensure the finished transcription requires little amendment on its return.

If a business has the necessary internal resources, the dictation can be



routed direct to them for transcription, or it can be outsourced to an external transcription service provider, ideally based in the UK.

Confidentiality matters

Although the transcription process is completely confidential, it's important to consider whether anyone can overhear or record the dictation, to avoid the inadvertent disclosure of redundancies, shop closures, product launches etc..

Typists can be granted remote access to client systems, ensuring sensitive data never leaves the client's servers and removing doubts over potential security breaches. Businesses outsourcing sensitive work should seek service providers that are ISO 27001:2013 certified – the international standard for information security management.

Work being outsourced is likely

...in reality the composition typing speed is about 15 words per minute for the average amateur typist.



to include data covered by the Data Protection Act. Any breach is the responsibility of the business that outsourced the work, so it's essential that businesses check the level of security provided, looking at the encryption used for sending and receiving work, the storage of finished documents, the location of the typists etc..

Sounds familiar

Despite the hype, for most users, voice recognition software remains okay for basic note taking and has a part to play, but will never replace the latest transcription services available via handheld devices, backed by experienced, qualified secretaries.

Regional accents, background noise and pronunciation often lead to problems, to say nothing of the obvious words that cause trouble for even the best transcription typists: council and counsel; affect and effect; Walsall and Warsaw even. And of course, unlike an experienced secretary, voice recognition software does not format the document according to a user's specific requirements.

Increase efficiency

If more UK businesses used dictation like the legal and healthcare sectors, supported by transcription service providers charging by the minute, based on dictation length, with no contracts, on a pay-as-you-go basis, they would increase productivity and achieve greater efficiency.

The flexibility the process offers should appeal to any proactive UK business, allowing executives to make better use of their time in the office and utilise time wasted in the car, on the train and commuting to and from work. It's time to work smarter not harder, and talking more and typing less is a simple step every business can and should take in what remains a challenging economy.

DictateNow provides fast, reliable and confidential digital dictation and transcription services. With a large pool of experienced typists, all based in the UK, it serves a wide variety of sectors, including legal services, accountancy, medical, property and the public sector.

www.dictatenow.com



PANASONIC LAUNCH NEW FASTER WORKGROUP/DESKTOP MONO MFPS WITH ADDED FUNCTIONALITY

The new Panasonic KX MB2100 range offers users a mid-range sized MFP with super-fast print and copy speeds.

The 3 new models in the range all provide fast print/copy times of 26ppm and unprecedented duplexing at 24ppm

With a built in ADF which also offer 26 scans per minute and either colour scanning as a PDF, Bitmap, Jpeg or TIFF either directly to you PC (Via a network) or to FTP.

All models come with a Secure Print feature which allows users to send their print to the printer and then release the document to print once they have keyed in their secure log in code, avoiding sensitive documents been seen by others or losing part of prints when accidentally picked up by other users.

The Network models are compatible with most mobile printing Apps. Google cloud is also supported.

All machines comes as standard with a drum and toner, separate replacements toners and drums are available from your usual suppliers or online.

The Duplexing feature is perfect for environmentally minded businesses that wish to cut down on unnecessary waste of papers without the downside of slower print times.

The new KX MB 2100 range had been designed to offer users a fast quality print, copier & scanner that can either integrate into a bigger managed print proposition or a stand-alone workgroups.

With key features such as fast duplexing, scanning to email, future proof functionality & secure print the new range of printers is fully capable to tackle all that a busy office whether SOHO, SME or Corporate can throw at it giving users peace of mind, great quality prints/copies, and good value for money.

NEW MODELS:

- The KX MB2120 is the entry level model and is designed for single use connectivity via USB.
- The KX MB2130 is the next model up and features both Network and USB connectivity allowing multiple users to get access to the machine for printing, scanning plus direct emailing (when set up with an address).
- The KX MB2170 is the flagship model and comes with all the features mentioned on the 2 models above and in addition has Wi-Fi connectivity via a WPF button allowing fast and easy setup.

For more information on the full range of Panasonic Printers, Scanners and MFPs simply visit <http://business.panasonic.co.uk/communication-solutions> or call 0207 022 6530.

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Opening doors for in-house teams

Adam Dalnoki, CEO of Mobilengine, considers the benefits of Software Development Kits (SDKs) that enable in-house development teams to build and manage workflow apps from white label solutions

Imagine a world where 90% of your daily tasks are already done. You wake up and tea is already made; all that's left for you to do is pour the milk. You head to work and nine out of ten tasks are already complete so all you have to do is concentrate on the one remaining job. In the evening, dinner is already cooked and on the table just waiting for you to add your chosen condiment.

For in-house developers, this is the positive impact that a Software Development Kit (SDK) can have when building a mobile workflow app – an increasingly popular tool that allows organisations to transfer traditional

paper-based tasks to a mobile platform.

Providing up to 90% of a mobile workflow app solution as a white label product, SDKs like the new Mobilengine platform enable mobile apps to be easily created and customised.

With SDKs, in-house IT teams in a range of industries with field-based staff, including construction, sales, healthcare and logistics, have the opportunity to specify, design and launch their own customised workflow apps without software development.

In doing this, developers can themselves create forms; dashboards and reports; complex workflows, both on mobile and backend; online web forms and data exports – with full flexibility to customise highly complex workflows.

The benefit for the business is clear. Taking out the requirement for external software development can drastically reduce costs and the use of a white label platform allows IT teams to concentrate on business procedures instead of developing something from scratch.

A leading SDK will include all the elements needed to build and manage mobile workflow solutions, such as

Specialist demolition, construction and civil engineering contractor McGee Group has been using the Mobilengine workflow solution to simplify administration for field workers. It enables site managers and other field-based employees to complete essential processes through a mobile app running on Android tablets. These include daily resource allocation; HR tasks, including filling



in new starter and site induction forms; building site stock management; safety inspections; the issuing of permits; and a site diary. McGee Group plans to move all paper-based administration to a single Mobilengine application.

www.mobilengine.com

..the use of a white label platform allows IT teams to concentrate on business procedures...

runtime, integrated development environment, monitoring console, comprehensive documentation and support – all designed to improve the efficiency of the business by process optimisation.

Mobilengine is the leading mobile enterprise workflow solution. It helps companies automate field work and go paperless. It has more than 1,500 customers worldwide, and some big names on its SDK platform already, such as Telenor, Siemens, G4S, Citibank, McGee, Henkel and 3M. Resellers include T-Systems and Vodafone.

www.mobilengine.com

What's in a name?

Roisin McCrory, a partner at hlw Keeble Hawson, explains how to protect your business from cyber squatters

Running an online business can be a veritable minefield, especially when it comes to protecting brands from unscrupulous cyber-squatters looking to make money.

Cybersquatting usually involves a party registering a domain name, often in bad faith, to gain a commercial advantage – such as selling the domain name or using it as a link to their own website to divert customers.

Although domain name registration is a relatively straightforward process, it can cause a business significant problems if not done properly. The following advice aims to help small businesses avoid some of the potential problems.

- There is no automatic right to a domain name; they are available on a first-come, first-served basis. If you have developed a new product, business or



brand and you want to market it online, check out your preferred domain names as soon as possible. If a third party has already registered your favoured domain name, there may be little you can do to force them to transfer ownership to you.

- Do not register competitors or third party brands as a domain name. Courts have consistently found in favour of brand owners in such cases of cybersquatting.

- If the domain name is not essential to your business, but you would like it, keep a note of the date its registration lapses. If the current owner does not renew it, you may be able to purchase it. Equally, if you have registered domain names important to your business, do not allow them to lapse.

- If you do encounter a problem, consider using a dispute resolution service. For example, in the UK, domain names ending co.uk are overseen by Nominet, which provides a relatively straightforward and cost-effective dispute resolution service. However, its powers are generally limited to a transfer of the domain name and, unlike a court, the

service cannot make any order for costs or damages.

- Consider buying variations of your preferred domain name in addition to the domain name itself, including ones with common typographical mistakes in relation to any words used within the name. If you are likely to be trading in overseas' markets you may want to purchase domain registrations in those countries as well.

- As with all intellectual property, actively monitor domain name activity in order to protect your position.

For many businesses, operating online is fundamental for growth and a web presence is instrumental to a marketing strategy. Monitoring, maintaining and, ultimately, protecting your online brand from potential cyber squatters is crucial if your business is to succeed.

hlw Keeble Hawson is ranked in the top 10 in Experian's table of the most active advisers in Yorkshire's mergers and acquisitions market during 2013.

www.hlwkeeblehawson.co.uk

What To Expect In 2015

David Lester, Founder of Citrus HR, outlines key employment law changes on the cards for 2015



Employment law is forever changing, and in this respect it looks as though 2015 is going to be no different to last year. So what are some of the changes in the pipeline that employers ought to be preparing themselves for?

1. Pensions Auto Enrolment

Many companies are currently looking for advice on how to ensure their staff are enrolled on a suitable pension scheme. However, it is widely reported that demand will outstrip supply and there are also concerns over how robust the schemes are. This is one development that employers will need to keep front of mind over the next 12 months.

2. Zero Hours Contracts

Whether employers like it or not, changes will be brought in to make these forms of contract work better for employees. The findings of a Dept. of Business review into employee status in the British workforce is due in March

2015, but it is likely that changes will include a ban on exclusivity clauses.

3. The Small Business, Enterprise & Employment Bill

The Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill (going through Parliament at the time of going to press) also has changes to zero hours contracts, plus a number of other provisions, including improvements to whistleblowing procedures; greater penalties for employers who pay below the national minimum wage; and financial penalties for non-payment of industrial tribunal awards.

4. Increases in Holiday Pay calculations

Another thorny issue for employers, holiday pay has received a fair amount of coverage in recent weeks. Following the EAT ruling in November, further clarification of what is included in 'normal pay' is expected. More information should come out of the Lock case tribunal on including commission in holiday pay calculations, as well as the government's task force on backdated pay. These developments will give employers a much clearer idea of how to address this subject.

5. Shared Parental Leave

Applying to babies born on or after the 5th of April 2015, the new rules raise a number of questions that could limit take-up. These include issues around the implications for enhanced maternity schemes and the ability of employers to check information with a partner's employer.

6. Fit For Work

If any of your staff have been off for more than four consecutive weeks, you may well have heard of this already. Delayed from late 2014, but due to be implemented fully at the beginning of this year, Fit For Work is designed to help employees and employers communicate about long-term sick leave and get access to occupational health services and support so that staff return to work as soon as possible.

Party politics and employment law

With a general election coming up, it wouldn't be sensible to look at forthcoming changes to employment law without considering the main parties' policies and what you should expect if one or the other gets into power.

Conservatives. The Conservative bench is looking for two main things should they be re-elected: the aforementioned ban on exclusivity clauses in zero hours contracts and the creation of 3 million apprenticeships subsidised by benefits cuts.

These don't represent a massive shake-up, but offer some hope to employees looking for more security and for employers that want to take on apprentices but aren't sure they can afford them.

Employers should also bear in mind that the Conservatives are pushing for legislation in the summer to make caste discrimination a form of race discrimination, which has implications for workplace equality.

Labour. Labour has been very vocal in the last few weeks, with Ed Miliband taking on Sports Direct's zero hour employment practices and, more recently, the agency workers sector. It proposes a number of policy changes, including:

- Raising the National Minimum Wage to £8.00 per hour by 2020;
- Banning exploitative zero hours contracts;
- Having as many young people on apprenticeships as currently go to university by 2025; and
- Changing agency workers legislation, with tougher regulation of employment agencies via licensing to deal with the unscrupulous behaviour of some employment agencies in the wake of a rise in temporary agency staff since 2007.

Whilst two of these policies are similar to Tory ones, and the first is simply a statement of where the coalition's changes to minimum wage would appear to be going anyway, they offer a clear message that Labour is on the side of the employee.

The stance on employment agencies is something very different and could see more employers having to employ staff on permanent work contracts rather than using agencies and paying lower rates of pay – something that is sure to have an impact across the nation.

With so many amendments and new policies on the cards, it is vital to be prepared for any changes by keeping up-to-date with the latest news.

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The Redmond multi-cooker can either warm pre-prepared food such as soups, stews, pasta dishes & rice dishes or can cook full meals from scratch by simply placing the ingredients within the cooker and switching to the appropriate programme.

The Redmond range of multi-cookers are fully versatile and offer users the ability to Bake, Boil, Sauté, Fry and Roast, giving even the most inexperienced cook the ability to create a huge selection of meals and dishes with simple preparation. *(Recipe Book included)*

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