

# Digital Business

**A new approach that gets to the heart of business's technology needs. More space is devoted to our 'definitive' articles on the use, management, and investment in today's technology, plus thought leadership on best practice and IT that will shape tomorrow's organisations. Featured in this issue:**

- **Contracts, lawyers and realistic claims: the IT procurement minefield**
- **The Digital Business/Bowen-Craggs Corporate Website Index – how well are companies presenting themselves online? PLUS – Fake websites: the damage they do and what can be done about them**
- **Mobile networks: can they take the strain?**
- **Can You Believe IT? A look ahead to technology that will change business**
- **Does IT work?**
- **IT First Aid: Demystification and practical advice from Ade McCormack**
- **What's New: Latest products and services from the vendors**
- **My Ideas: a senior business figure's thoughts on IT**
- **Perspectives: Alan Cane puts IT in the wider context**
- **View from the Valley: Chris Nuttall on the latest thinking**

The Financial Times proposes to publish the following FT Report on April 14 2010. Deadline for completion of articles: March 31.

*We plan to include the following features (please note that this list is provisional):*

- To receive news of updates to our schedule, send your e-mail address to [digitalbusiness@ft.com](mailto:digitalbusiness@ft.com), with "UPDATE REQUEST" in the subject field.**

## **Big Page Feature**

**Contracts, lawyers and realistic claims**

Buying IT can be like a journey into the unknown. Buyers might know what they wish to achieve but are unsure how to go about it; vendors might have the products and services that can do the job – but will they match the buyer’s expectations.

It’s a relationship rich with opportunities for misunderstandings and disagreement. That the process goes so smoothly and produces beneficial results so much of the time is a tribute to the maturity of the participants.

But the recent court case involving EDS and BSKyB show how badly things can go wrong and how enormous the consequences can be. In this feature, we will use the EDS/BSkyB case as an example of what to avoid and seek to chart a course of good practice through the potential procurement minefield.

Briefly, the court case: during its bid to win the contract to build call centres for BSKyB, EDS made claims for its technology that a judge has decided amounted to “misrepresentation”. EDS was chosen to carry out the implementation, which collapsed, at great further cost to BSKyB. The broadcaster said it would have chosen another supplier had EDS not misrepresented its abilities. The contract limited EDS’s liabilities in the event of failure to deliver to £30m, but the judge’s ruling over “misrepresentation” removes that limitation, with huge implications for both vendors and clients.

*As Martyn Hart, Chairman of the UK’s National Outsourcing Association, commented: “Now the ruling has occurred, changes in the way companies go about tendering, due diligence, selection and contracting should become more apparent.*

*“Some of the most important changes will of course be in the way an end-user assesses a supplier’s ability to do the job. This is where things went so significantly wrong in this case – promising the earth and delivering something rather different. Suppliers can expect an increased interest in things like outcome-based pricing, gain-sharing and more stringent contractual practice around what happens if things go wrong. End users will also be increasingly reticent to sign contracts that unrealistically limit supplier liability.*

*“Also it is important to understand the pressure (and targets) that sales forces are under to secure a sale, just as bonuses have become passé, perhaps it is beholden upon the industry to consider the issue of commissions and targets for such large and complex projects?*

*“Overall the ramifications of this case should be broadly positive. Those engaging in outsourcing need to be completely sure exactly what they are signing up for and what happens if things don’t work out. Institutional investors in major outsourcing suppliers might want to understand how targeting and compensation schemes are run and the consequences on management for deals that are shown to be falsely represented?*

*“End-users should look at this case and follow best practice to give them the best chance of success in the future. Above all, it should teach them that the devil really is in the detail.”*

This feature will endeavour to set out that best practice, looking at key aspects of the procurement process – tendering, negotiation, contracts, benchmarking and skills, for example. It will emphasise the need for clarity and transparency. And it will focus on the increasing complexity brought about by multiple suppliers and the need to integrate new technologies, to challenge suppliers and to compare deals. IT procurement has become vitally important to businesses and it is certainly not a time to succumb to what has been described in one public sector example as an “irrational exuberance” towards IT projects. **1,400 words, Alan Cane**

## **Big Page Feature**

### **The Digital Business/Bowen-Craggs Corporate Website Index**

Our fourth annual look at how companies are presenting themselves online. Bowen Craggs, a website consultant, examine the corporate website, looking at what they set out to do, how they can best achieve and how closely the results match expectations. Now with a body of data from our previous website surveys, we will be able to assess who is improving and who is declining and whether best practice is raising the bar for all. The research measures how well large corporate websites are performing in the service they provide to their key constituencies: customers, jobseekers, investors and others. The feature accompanying the table will highlight the key changes and trends. **1,000 words, David Bowen**

### **The FT/Bowen Craggs website index**

An index of 75 corporate websites of some of the world's largest companies around the world will be presented in the print section, with reconfigurable versions available online. The aim is not to find a "best" website but to give business managers a real understanding of what makes a strong web presence, to establish best practice and share experience.

### **Fake websites: the damage they do and what can be done about them**

Brands can suffer serious damage to their credibility and reputation when fraudulent websites abuse their name to pass off fake, counterfeit and pirated goods. Such websites divert online users from legitimate sites and can harm both the reputations and bottom lines of well-known brands. We look at how widespread the problem is, how it works and what measures can be taken to combat it. **900 words, Jessica Twentyman**

## **Big Page Feature**

### **Mobile network capacity: the race is on**

How much more can the poor thing take? Video, mobile broadband, increasing numbers of mobile applications, streaming music, data, data and more data – the volumes of traffic on the mobile networks piling up. Yet so far, they have coped.

But the latest generation of phones are increasingly smartphones and prices and contract costs are falling to levels at which a greater segment of the market is tempted to enjoy the experience of what amounts pretty much to having a PC or laptop in the palm of your hand.

But there must be a limit and a race is on between the networks striving to meet demand and the growth in devices, services and users.

This feature will ask: what are the main problems and where do the main bottlenecks lie? What would be the implications of network traffic jams? Who would be affected and how? And what is being done to expand capacity? **1,200 words, Stephen Pritchard**

## **Issues for Business**

### **NEW REGULAR FEATURE – Can You Believe IT?**

A new series focusing on a new piece of surprising technology that could one day change the way businesses operate – or even the world. In this issue: a mobile technology. **Joia Shillingford, 600 words**

### **Does IT work**

A look at how a particular aspect of IT is affecting businesses. **950 words**

### **NEW REGULAR FEATURE – First Ade**

What can your business do to be better at IT? **Ade McCormack** begins a new regular feature that demystifies technology and offers easily digestible and practical guidance on how it can best be used. His rolling list of topics will include security, being green, mobility, and web strategy.

### **What's New: Launches and Updates Digest**

Keeping general business abreast of the most interesting products and services. A selection of highlights to keep opinion-formers informed about the technology industry's output. **Geoff Nairn**

**NB: A new edition of Geoff Nairn's What's New round-up appears every Tuesday at [www.ft.com/digitalbusiness](http://www.ft.com/digitalbusiness)**

### **Interviews / Ideas**

#### **My Ideas**

Either: A senior executive or industry expert is interviewed about their relationship with technology; the importance they attach to IT in their business and their sector; how it can differentiate their company or provide it with competitive advantage; and whether their business sees IT as strategic or simply a cost. Or they put forward their own ideas in their own words. **1,200 words**

#### **Perspectives**

**Alan Cane**, our regular columnist, places today's technology in context.

#### **Valley View**

**Chris Nuttall's** column that captures the colour and flavour of life in Silicon Valley.

### **Editorial Information for FT Digital Business**

Background information for articles or themes that have not yet been assigned to individual writers should be sent, by e-mail only please, to [digitalbusiness@ft.com](mailto:digitalbusiness@ft.com) where they will be considered by Peter Whitehead, FT Digital Business editor. Please do not use individual e-mail addresses, fax numbers or post.

Once articles have been assigned (the synopses on the Digital Business pages of FT.com – accessible via 'Looking Ahead' link – will be updated), please send information directly to the writers concerned. Information on writers, and their email addresses, is available via the "Writers and Contacts" link at [www.ft.com/digitalbusiness](http://www.ft.com/digitalbusiness).

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