

**THE MERSEYSIDE
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) SECTOR**



**BROADBAND
ENABLING MERSEYSIDE**

In association with



BROADBAND + INNOVATION + PEOPLE + FUNDING = MERSEYSIDE

It was Ian Tomlinson's choice to make Merseyside home for Cybertill, his mould-breaking IT company that uses broadband to radically enhance the retail experience for multi-sized companies across the UK.



Cybertill, meanwhile, assures operability, security and user-friendly access. It also adds a high level of basic web design. As an ASP, it can also upgrade its services constantly.

'The whole concept is broadband-based software,' explains Ian. 'There is nothing comparable. It's revolutionary. Before, to implement changes across a nationwide retail grid, you had to send out hundreds of CDs. Individual recipients often failed to back up their part of the system. There were hosts of problems.

'Now, as soon as you make a price change, it's live! There is no need for complex overnight message runs sent out individually to remote stores – 10% of which failed to arrive. No need either for managers to dial in every 24-hours for updates.'

In a significant vertical move, Cybertill is working with global IT giant Fujitsu – a partnership that includes high-tech leaders such as Box Technology and Comms XL – in creating iRetail, a project designed to support retailers operating circa 100 till locations. Fujitsu's £1.86 billion annual world turnover is inevitably focusing the attention of high street retailers on the potential for EPoS solutions online. With Fujitsu, Cybertill aims to support some 15,000 non-food till points within five years – approximately 10% of the national total.

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Ian – Regional Chamber of Commerce 'Entrepreneur of the Year' and UK runner-up for 2004 – had spotted an EPoS (Electronic Point of Sale), e-commerce and Chip & PIN market opportunity missed by other solution providers. Today, Cybertill uses the unmetered connectivity of broadband ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line), or IDSN, to feed thousands of non-food retail chain sales tills with real time stock and sales information only large enterprises enjoyed previously. It remains the only EPoS company to deliver its services nationally as an ASP (Application Service Provider) over a secure Intranet – a Virtual Private Network (VPN) which links the entire system to provide a fully-integrated retail solution. Ian also spotted something else. As the company begins a new partnership with Fujitsu that will take Cybertill's core solution to a further 15,000 UK sales points in the years ahead, Merseyside continues to offer the key venture funding and deep skills pool that will make companies like Cybertill names to follow closely in the future.

'Last week I watched a client press a till button and as the requested information flashed up in a fifth of a second, I couldn't resist asking, "Did you know that has just been to Glasgow and back?" (BT's dedicated computer centre hosting Cybertill's UK data centre).'

Ian Tomlinson, St Helens-based Cybertill's Managing Director and founder, and his 36-strong team have empowered small to mid-market retail operators with the tools to support hundreds of their remote sales points with 'time critical', integrated EPoS and e-commerce information.

In layman's terms, clients get a till system, back office and e-commerce-enabled website that delivers one complete, instantaneous – and very cost effective – sales experience.

Companies manage and update their own complex inventory, distribution, pricing, order processing and tracking and promotional information to customers on a platform provided by Cybertill. The result is a system that rolls physical and e-commerce stores seamlessly into one with mail order and a complete portfolio of customer communications.

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BROADBAND + INNOVATION + PEOPLE + FUNDING = MERSEYSIDE

Cybertill is an inspiring Merseyside example of entrepreneurship where the best people, funding and ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line) broadband access in the right location have proved a recipe for success (previous page)

IMPROVING THE PAST

BROADBAND'S BEST – AND THEN A LITTLE MORE

If Merseyside had a deficit in communicating to the world at large, BT's recent investment in a community-wide broadband-enabling, infrastructure has moved it to the front of the UK and world field – with increasing SDSL (Symmetric Digital Subscriber Line) access. Total broadband availability makes the difference – pages 4-5

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

EXPLOITING MERSEYSIDE'S 100% BROADBAND ENABLEMENT

Merseyside is playing to its strengths, with MerseyBroadband championing a far-reaching palette of broadband-based services and functions to boost existing companies and inward investors alike. Helping people to become broadband enabled – pages 6-7

FUTURE PERFECT

THE NEXT GENERATION NETWORK

Almost by definition, predicting ICT's final destination is impossible - but if you think broadband is remarkable today, Marconi points to an even more exciting future. The next generation network – an engine for growth – pages 8-9

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ICT US STUDY TOUR

A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

Merseyside ICT's first, and extremely successful, professional, academic and technical tour to the cream of the US industry – page 14



BROADBAND - HIGHWAY TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Broadband is revolutionary. Quietly, it is redefining the efficiency, scope – and sustainability – of businesses and communities the world over. So quietly, in fact, that its strategic significance can be easily overlooked – an oversight that Merseyside ICT is committed to rectify. Broadband is for everyone.

Broadband communications are an inevitable outcome of the digital revolution's continuing evolution – sharing large volumes of data, image or sound information, encoded as numbers, slipped around the world in seconds by wire, satellite and wirelessly, and reconstructed for end-users to understand instantly.

Its power lies in information volume – and speed. Bandwidth is a key term. The bandwidth size and availability that organisations, and individuals, need to carry their data around the 24-hour world can be tailored to their goals - and wallets. To many small businesses and home users, broadband means ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line), where asymmetry means that they receive far more data – from websites, etc – than the files they transmit. As Cybertill is showing in St Helens, ADSL can be a potent commercial tool (see page 2 profile). SDSL (Symmetric Digital Subscriber Line) is also commonly referred to in broadband circles and this (usually more expensive medium) allows for as much upload bandwidth (up to the web) as the more common requirement of downloading data from the web, hence the symmetry. Broadband is simply a generic term that came into being when the bandwidth restrictions around connected PCs were reduced by technology developments, in much the same way that the M25 eased the traffic congestion around London in the mid-1990s. However, broadband applies to a wide variety of speeds and capacity; "speeds and feeds" but users should always seek clarification before committing to a contract.

Whatever the individual choice, broadband opens up new horizons that are limited only by the imagination. Its benefits include much more time and cost-efficient working. Gone is the waste of expensive physical resources, including energy and fuel and unproductive journey times. For the same low price, people can work closely together while living farther apart, around the planet, or simply next door.

This publication is devoted to simplifying the broadband issue, explaining some of the terminology and identifying the key players in the provision and exploitation of broadband as a powerful business tool. Merseyside ICT believes that in doing so we can encourage more businesses to embrace the benefits that could and should come with using the correct technology in appropriate ways. It is crucial for everyone wishing to participate in the connectivity explosion that correct guidance is sought before any implementation is undertaken... understand what it is you wish to achieve and then partner with a professional organisation that can demonstrate a pedigree of cost-effective implementation - an organisation that takes time to interpret your requirements. Merseyside has good ICT capability and capacity to match that availability. Reading this document is a great first step.

Steve Smith
ICT Industry Sector Director
Merseyside ICT



MERSEYSIDE'S WORLD-CLASS BROADBAND PLATFORM

ALL BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES ON GREATER MERSEYSIDE HAVE ACCESS TO ADSL BROADBAND – AND INCREASINGLY SDSL BROADBAND – WITH EXCITING IMPLICATIONS.



BT's recent priority investment to enable the entire community to access basic – and now advanced – broadband has positioned Greater Merseyside at the leading edge of technology. Future prosperity is being built on the ability to transfer incisive information swiftly, accurately and comprehensively. The 100% broadband platform firmly establishes Greater Merseyside as one of the world's most connected conurbations. The challenge is to capture the benefits across businesses, communities, learning and public services.

THE BROADBAND EDGE FOR BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES

BT - working closely with MerseyBroadband partners - has accelerated broadband delivery to create a Merseyside infrastructure in which local companies can thrive. The NWDA, through MerseyBroadband, is investing over £3 million in broadband partnership projects to encourage and showcase broadband take up and usage. In direct support, BT in March 2004 completed ADSL broadband enablement of all exchanges serving Greater Merseyside!

Why the priority? To give Merseyside an immediate international competitive advantage - and to establish a world-class platform for 'Liverpool European Capital of Culture in 2008'. The opportunities now open for one of the world's most connected communities are tremendous!

BT is working in partnership to make people aware of how they can exploit

broadband's benefits. This is vitally important. In the last 12 months, results have been impressive - take-up of ADSL broadband on Merseyside has more than doubled, yet the proportion of businesses and consumers taking advantage of broadband currently falls behind the North West and UK averages. Accelerating individual and partnership successes are critical to close this gap.

BT has invested in Merseyside to reinforce the area's rapid and exciting economic development in recent years. We saw the opportunity to accelerate success. Government statistics show Merseyside to be one of the UK's fastest growing regions. With this momentum, the local economy is now in an excellent position to be one of the UK's most innovative and competitive.



Broadband will be central in driving this growth and vital for Merseyside to capitalise on Northwest and national competitive gains.

Merseyside is well placed to be a world leader in the use and creation of content for broadband technology. Businesses can win new markets and streamline supply chains. Communities can rethink flexible working, homework and training, shopping, access to jobs and public services. BT is working with MerseyBroadband partners to showcase how local businesses and people can lead and win using broadband!

Peter Connor, Regional Manager, BT North West



SDSL – MOVING THE BUSINESS INTERNET FORWARD

THE EMPHASIS IS ON CAPABILITY RATHER THAN SIMPLY SPEED AND COST.

Many organisations have learned how to take commercial advantage of the information-receiving capability of ADSL Internet access. Now, as Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Lines are replaced by Symmetric Digital Subscriber Lines (SDSL), their scope for creatively sending – as well as receiving – sophisticated communications is multiplying.

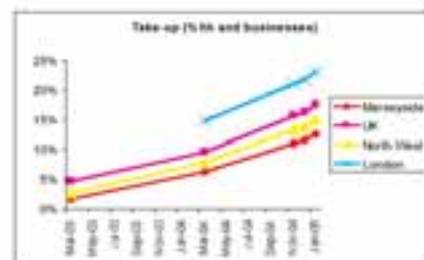
Effective technology use is as important to small businesses as large corporations. Having begun by simply sending and receiving basic text emails, plus online research, perceptive SMEs have expanded their Internet use to cover e-commerce and distribute large files, images and video. However, many don't realise how much information they actually transfer electronically.

They wrongly assume that upload speeds are the same as download speeds on ADSL broadband services. In addition, they often believe that the latest breed of high-speed Internet technology is exclusively for companies working in hi-tech and new media sectors. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Many new symmetrical (SDSL) business broadband customers work in 'traditional' industries - printing, law, finance and

accountancy. Traditional sectors they may be but these companies are at the forefront of broadband's quiet revolution. Having fully embraced the Internet's potential, they realised they need greater upload speeds to connect between sites and for faster file transfer, video streaming and video conferencing – plus email or web server hosting. The number of businesses using SDSL broadband is increasing. Whether they use this to create a virtual private network (VPN - connecting together regional sites), satellite offices, or to give customers multimedia information, the ability to send and receive data at an equal speed gives companies a clear competitive advantage.

This means that BT's announcement to upgrade a further round of UK exchanges to SDSL services has been timely. The number of Merseyside SDSL exchanges will increase from six to 15 by the end of summer 2005, to



include Bootle, Wallasey, Birkenhead, Stoneycroft, Cloughton, Arrowbrook, Sefton Park, Waterloo and Anfield.

The availability increase is good news for Merseyside SMEs, teleworkers and remote office workers needing to send and receive data at equally fast speeds. Applications such as Virtual Private Networks, video conferencing and Voice over IP (VoIP) can become an integral part of daily work.

www.btbroadbandoffice.com/sds

WELCOME TO THE DIGITAL NETWORKED ECONOMY

Technical developments are being made at such a pace that no company can afford to miss not only the technology itself but also the inherent efficiencies and business advantages it brings. The way business is done is changing forever and no-one can risk being left behind the pack, says Brian Crouch, North West Regional Director for BT.

Most people may have access to broadband. Not all of us choose to use it – particularly in the SME community, which accounts for all except 6,000 of the UK's four million companies!

Does broadband really live up to the hype? Yes. Organisations typically report 10% productivity improvements - sophisticated software applications can be used online at a fraction of conventional costs. Communication within a firm is improved. Irreplaceable information is also better protected. An estimated 60% of businesses hold vital data on PCs and can now store this routinely, at low cost, off-site via

broadband services like BT Datasure. Seven out of 10 firms go out of business after a major data loss.

So why do August 2004 Ofcom figures show UK SME take-up to be below 40%?

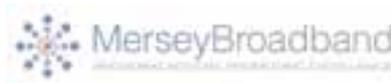
Awareness is one reason. Many decision-makers still see broadband as just faster access to websites and receiving big emails. Others are concerned about cost. Again, the case for the defence is growing stronger - subscription package prices have tumbled recently and look set to fall lower. Many ask, 'Opting out won't be catastrophic will it'? Again, the answer is a

resounding 'I'm afraid so' because developments in networking technology – including broadband – mean the way business is done is changing forever.

BT calls this new reality the 'digital networked economy'. We're talking about a world where everything is increasingly connected to everything else – people to people, people to IT, and IT to IT – with productivity, profitability and customer, employee and partner satisfaction gains all round. This is an opportunity to improve competitiveness fundamentally.

EXPLOITING MERSEYSIDE'S 100% BROADBAND ENABLEMENT

Business growth, lower costs, higher productivity and inspiring new ways for working swiftly and efficiently - MerseyBroadband's mission



MerseyBroadband exists to maximise the number of people and organisations understanding the broadband concept and exploiting it to the full. A unique feature is the expanding range of sophisticated business-related functions that connected companies can now 'lease' online.

To integrate these into the local business fabric, MerseyBroadband has been rolling out trial pilot projects to the business community. In its directory is a full suite of online services, made possible by broadband data transfer. To make the journey even easier, MerseyBroadband's Chapel Street demonstration centre in Liverpool offers first hand broadband experience to organisations and their clients.

MerseyBroadband is a partnership led by Liverpool Chamber of Commerce and Industry, strongly backed by GMDDA (Greater Merseyside Digital Development Agency). Funded by the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA), it also has the full technical and professional support of the Merseyside ICT Sector. Crucially, sector member companies are instrumental in pioneering its pilot projects.

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT BROADBAND ON MERSEYSIDE?

100% broadband connectivity is a life-changing experience shaping the business plans of: -

- Inward investors making decisions that pivot on the sheer strength of the broadband environment
- Far-sighted SMEs - many in the ICT Sector – that are, or will, be both broadband service users and solution suppliers
- Start-ups with business strategies built on broadband information exchange
- General business and public sector bodies in transition
- Synergies of all the above!
- Merseyside's vibrant social community which is pioneering novel broadband uses

NEW WAYS OF WORKING BUILT ON FAST, CHEAP DATA EXCHANGE

Through uninterrupted access to a broad stream of mobile information, employees can become **teleworkers** – active where they choose while exchanging simple messages or complex data sets. A laptop - or PDA - diary entry during, say, a Berlin client meeting registers instantly with colleagues working around Merseyside. **Tele-conferencing** and **customer/client relations management** tools make history of fuming in cars, trains or planes and adjusting the body clock to world time zones. Instead of budgeting for expensive software, every company can cost-effectively lease - as needed - regularly upgraded packages and services from **Application Service Providers (ASPs)**. Or, their own best route to market may be to become **ASPs** themselves. Fire, theft, flood, illness and staff turnover are lesser business threats when essential information, automatically stored off-site, is available securely at multiple locations. **Other core functions include stock control, supply chain management, business administration, accounting and security.**



DEMONSTRATION CENTRE IN CENTRAL LIVERPOOL

"The real challenge for many small businesses is how to make effective use of ICT without spending a fortune on technical consultancies or having the over-head of in-house staff."

Chris White, Enabling SMEs Manager, MerseyBroadband



Greater Merseyside companies would find it hard to keep up with all broadband technology's advances. They don't have to. Instead, they can experience technology in action at no charge in MerseyBroadband's Chapel Street demonstration suite, advised by Chris White, Enabling SMEs Manager. Current examples include Voice over IP (Internet-based telephony), wireless communication (Wi-Fi), remote team working (teleworking) and CCTV-based property security. The next step can be to join free, or subsidised, broadband pilot projects.

Booking via tel 0845 145 1115, or via sme@merseybroadband.com

A ONE-STOP BUSINESS SOLUTION – WITH ZERO SOFTWARE PROBLEMS

It's a common company problem. To cut corners, businesses try to integrate separate business software tools on a piecemeal basis – and struggle. Iomis™ has been designed by Liverpool new media company, New Mind, to help SMEs avoid that trap from the outset. It brings together core functions of ordinary, competent businesses – through ASP services accessed by broadband online technology. Either run independently, or as an integrated system allowing remotely stationed people to work co-operatively using shared information, Iomis™ could, for example, connect an office-based networked PC-user, to a laptop-user working through an airport wireless link, to a personal digital assistant-user operating a Bluetooth mobile phone. And because the system is accessed through a web browser and Internet access, there is no software to go wrong!

www.newmind.co.uk

'FREE' BROADBAND PHONE CALLS

Voice over IP telephone calls always begin with the international dialling code – using the Internet, they have global reach. Not being tied to local area codes also means that businesses can take their numbers with

them when they move. From computer-to-computer, calls are free. From computer-to-phone they are at low-cost local rates. Call quality is also digitally clear.

MerseyBroadband has worked with iFreedom (UK) to promote the latest communications technology that allows companies to set up their own extremely efficient intranets to connect geographically remote workers at negligible cost. Once calls go outside a company, they can be routed via the Internet or standard phone lines.

www.ifreedomcom.com/uk

BARRISTERS LEAVE THE COURTROOM TO CONFER ONLINE

Four barristers chambers across Liverpool have been sampling the benefits that video conferencing can bring to their businesses. The video conferencing equipment, supplied by Rapid Technologies, can work either over a standard broadband internet connection or, for higher quality, a connection can be made directly over multiple ISDN lines. The technology is so advanced now that not only will it enable people to meet without travelling but also to share within a conferencing session electronic content, such as PowerPoint presentations, video and word documents

YES, THERE IS MONEY FOR BROADBAND INNOVATION

Funding is available to support proposals encouraging broadband use in the Greater Merseyside area.

MerseyBroadband's Community Chest has supported a wide range of innovative projects, such as an on-line magazine about disability issues - Alltogethernow.org.uk, Tenantspin - a digital TV channel created by tower block residents in Sefton Park, a health information project for cancer patients and their families and a computer games creation platform to help freelancers sell their work.

Although much of the funding has been awarded, some capital funding is still available for path-finding broadband projects through grants of up to £50,000.

For more information, call 0845 145 1115

and printed material, such as old case files. Each conference session can also be recorded digitally onto a computer and played back for review in the future.

www.rapid.co.uk

TELEWORKING ADDS UP FOR ACCOUNTANTS

Teleworking is about flexible ways of working rather than specific technology. It offers businesses choice in how their staff and clients work and communicate. Broadband puts these services within reach of smaller businesses so they can bypass existing, expensive, remote working solutions. With help from MerseyBroadband, Rainhill-based accountancy firm, Jonathan Ford, has been using a document management system provided by Gap InfoMedia. With a broadband connection, it can share standard company documentation in a secure environment through the company website. This means the company's clients benefit from secure, 24-hour, online access to their accounts and financial details, while being able to submit their tax returns via the system.

www.gapinfomedia.com

NGNS AND PRODUCTIVITY

Broadband has made a difference to business productivity like no other technology before. But NGNs will take that growth to another level, contributing to productivity by driving efficiencies in business processes, increasing access to international markets and providing the foundation for more flexible working. The benefits of NGNs are not restricted to the private sector, they will also bring about dramatic improvements in public services.

NGNS AND THE CITIZEN

According to the CBI, road congestion costs the UK up to £20 billion per year in lost productivity and earnings. NGNs may not solve all our transport problems, but their ability to allow individuals to travel less and use virtual workplaces will make an important contribution in alleviating congestion and improving quality of life.

With broadband availability hitting 99% by mid-2005 and the increasing prevalence of NGNs, flexible and remote working will become more widely available and more accessible to employees requiring high volumes of bandwidth, regardless of their work location.

Teleworking and telecommuting, enabled by high-end video/web conferencing and data transfer, can play a significant role in easing congestion in our transport system and contribute to environmental sustainability by keeping cars off the roads.

NGN AND SKILLS

Despite its expected growth, the fact is the majority of UK citizens do not have broadband. With estimates that 90% of new jobs in the UK require some degree of computing and that 20% of the productivity gap between the UK and Germany is a result of a poorly-skilled workforce, this very real digital divide is not good news for UK plc.

But NGNs and advanced technology can go a long way in addressing this skills and education problem. In fact, technology is

already empowering primary and secondary schools through the government-backed National Grid for Learning programme (NGfL). By delivering networked curriculum over fibre networks, the NGfL transforms the classroom with new, creative, digital learning resources.

NGNs also allow for greater and wider access to a range of new technologies, as well as new ways of looking at "old" technologies. NGNs will, for example, transform the ordinary TV into a tool essential to the knowledge economy, capable of addressing the digital divide. Today's television is used primarily for entertainment but the pending digital switchover, coupled with the advancements offered by NGNs, will allow more people widespread high-bandwidth access to interactive, advanced educational training in the increasingly important area of IT skills development. Because the TV, unlike broadband or the PC, is available in 98% of UK homes, NGNs will make "upskilling" and distance learning opportunities available regardless of location, financial status or mobility.

MARCONI AND NGN

Marconi is a global telecommunications equipment and services provider powering broadband and Next Generation Networks. They are working with telecoms operators to provide infrastructure solutions that support an easy evolution from narrowband to broadband services. Marconi has a strong track record designing multiservice broadband networks for customers as diverse as the London Underground, the Paris Transport Authority and Miami International Airport. They are investing £200 million per annum in R & D to continue the creation of Next Generation Networks.

Marconi's Northwest operations are playing a major part in the company's NGN development, in particular with work on the Impact portfolio of products. This covers the part of the network that handles the real-time services of voice and video, and will lead to the eventual disappearance of traditional telephone exchanges: today's PSTN (Public

Switched Telephone Network) will be replaced by IP (Internet Protocol) softswitches, which are similar to, and not much bigger than, personal computers.

IMPACT ON SMES

The Impact portfolio includes products and solutions aimed particularly at SMEs. The first of these is Impact UltraKey, a key system solution hosted by a telecoms service provider that delivers fully featured, integrated, broadband communications services for small businesses. With UltraKey, SME owners and managers can provision, configure and, crucially, reconfigure their communications services quickly and easily in line with their changing business needs.

Web technologies are used to provide the customer with a simple self-provisioning and control portal. Together with multiple language support and Web Interface branding, this approach touches all the key aspects of the customer experience – from ordering, through provisioning and fulfilment, to online customer support. It puts the control and power into the hands of the small business owner.

The solution provides all the features that small businesses use, without the upfront capital cost and the ongoing maintenance expense inherent in owning a traditional phone system. Instead, this simple-to-use functionality is delivered as a 'pay as you grow' service that will never be obsolete.

And the business will not outgrow its voice system: the customer can grow their business and extend to multiple-site working in line with their needs, maintaining consistent number ranges and feature interworking between sites.

This unique solution delivers on the promise of simplicity and ease of use – the two primary requirements for small businesses to quickly adopt this solution.

MAKING PRACTICAL CONNECTIONS

In the past year, MerseyBroadband has run pilot projects with the following suppliers of broadband services. These pilots are now underway and will be finishing towards the end of the year. Evaluations of the experiences and of savings and benefits to local businesses will then be published in early 2006.

M denotes a Merseyside-based service.

(A) Enabling SMEs

(1) Application Service Provision (ASP)
Leasing sophisticated software on a pay-as-you go basis immediately gives smaller companies the power, functionality and marketplace clout of larger organisations. Merseyside is home to a suite of world-class ASP providers that can radicalise an SME's business footprint, including: -

M Marple Document Management –
Ushering in the paperless office and controlling the delicate transition from traditional, physical records to off-site, electronic access.
www.marple.co.uk/pages/docman.htm

M Iomis™ – Automating daily business functions – a shared company diary, project management, timesheets and customer relationship management.
www.iomis.com

CICCWORLD - Credit control / management system.
www.ciceworld.com

Visor Stock Control – Real-time, secure stock management over the Internet.
www.v-stock.co.uk

M eShot – A marketing suite to reach and track thousands of contacts via personalised emails and e-newsletters.
www.mandogroup.com

M EntryNet - A bespoke, entry-level website updated in-house in seconds to put businesses online and in full control of their Internet profile.
www.acmeart.co.uk

Netsuite NetCRM - Customer relationship management systems for small companies to integrate and streamline customer-focused activities.
www.netcrm.com/netcrm/products/netcrm/main.shtml

M PDC Online 50 – Access to Sage Line 50 accounting and business management software allowing companies to benefit from real-time online accounting.
www.pdconline.co.uk/50/50.asp

(2) Offsite data storage
US research shows that major data losses are likely to put companies out of business within two years. Offsite storage automatically transfers data to be held in an encrypted form on a secure computer in a remote location. Equally important is an accompanying business continuity and disaster recovery plan.
www.databax.co.uk

(3) **M** Crime reduction
Broadband links technologies combating crime, including IP CCTV accessed by a web browser, so property can be monitored around the world.
www.businesscrimedirect.org.uk

(4) Supply chain management
Supply chain efficiency can be improved, using websites to process



orders and sell products, while replacing catalogues and laptops with information on hand-held devices.

www.tradeasi.com

- (5) Excluded and disadvantaged groups
Broadband's near universal access can include the contribution and needs of home-bound people who, not being in formal employment, can't surf the web at work, or are marginalised for many reasons. MerseyBroadband is actively examining ways for everyone to have information, opportunities, services and a global voice.

www.kensingtonvision.org

- (6) New technologies
Introducing new ICT-based ways of working, such as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telecommunications - low-cost digital telephone calls around the world via the Internet rather than standard telephone lines.

www.ifreedomcom.com/uk

(B) Teleworking

- M** MGL Mobile Working Solutions - Increasing ICT support efficiency for SMEs and bypassing the complications of IT helpdesks.

www.mglworld.com

Your Communications - The BlackBerry wireless communications device with services including wireless email, calendar, mobile phone and internet access.

www.yourcommunications.co.uk

- M** Gap Infomedia - A document management system for local SMEs, plus secure and stable back-up of key documentation and information.

www.gapinfomedia.com

ConferencePlus – Highlighting the role of web conferencing in teleworking.

<http://global.conferenceplus.com>

- M** Nviron – Introducing the Small Business Server 2003 system as a broadband-enabled hub providing 20% business efficiency gains.

www.nviron.co.uk

eSAY Solutions - Vehicle management system using GPRS and GPS technologies to deliver real-time, interactive and detailed journey reports about vehicles activities.

www.esay-solutions.co.uk

- M** Nublu Wireless VPN Solutions – A package enabling access to business information, such as email and office documents, virtually anywhere.

www.nublu.com

(C) Tele-conferencing

- M** Atlantic, Oriel, Exchange and Chavasse Court chambers - State-of-the-art video conferencing facilities for local barristers.

<http://www.rapid.co.uk/index.html>

LIVERPOOL TOP OF WORLD LEAGUE, ACCORDING TO THE PAPERS

Liverpool has the Best IT and Telecommunications Infrastructure in Europe, according to Financial Times magazine, Foreign Direct Investment. It won the European Cities and Regions of the Futures 2004/05 award, presented in Hong Kong, beating off Frankfurt, Paris, Glasgow, Dublin, Budapest and Milan. Low telecom charges and 100% broadband coverage impressed the judges.

With 140 applications from Baku to Belfast, the magazine sent 15,000 emails and 250 letters, and made some 1,000 telephone calls to judge who was the global best. Competing cities were ranked by 33 criteria in 11 categories, based on their economic potential, cost effectiveness, human resources, telecommunications and IT infrastructure, quality of life for expatriates, transport, security and foreign investment promotion strategy.

Another compelling reason to come to Merseyside.

www.fdimagazine.com



SIMPLE STEPS TO ONLINE SECURITY

In the ever-connected world, people rightly perceive protecting data from unwanted third party intruders as a serious issue. A variety of ever more sophisticated security layers are the counter-measure. Data passing between PCs is vulnerable, encryption techniques being the response. As an example, passing credit card information requires particularly heavy encryption and authentication. But more cunning technologies are emerging too.

Broadband opens up opportunities and responsibilities for the wise user. In the case of access, validation and authentication – that is, identifying and verifying the user – is still a strong means of security, with simple password controls often the answer. However, humans forget passwords! Especially complex ones.

To solve this, IBM has led the way with fingerprint scanners on some laptops and PCs. To log on, you simply bring your finger with you! Just in case someone else brings your finger, the system doesn't work unless a pulse is detected! For extra security, PC hardware and biometrics together can create a unique personal identity that is almost unbreakable.



MASTER KEYS AND ROAMING CREDENTIALS

Software exists to help corporations and large organisations manage banks of password information centrally to swiftly restore access for absent-minded individuals without compromising productivity. The software can store multiple-password and access controls, allowing users to combine all their passwords in a single master key. For smaller organisations and individuals, this can be distributed, while 'roaming credentials' can be managed for individuals needing access to multiple PCs and workstations.



FIREWALLS AND BAD WORDS

For protecting data itself from unwanted intrusion, virus damage or interference, 'firewalls' are a must. A firewall is a hardware device through which all incoming and outgoing data is routed. Software embedded in the firewall verifies the data source, scrutinises it and only allows into the network data acceptable to the organisation. Firewalls similarly treat data requests leaving a network, enabling the administrator to identify and exclude types of data, content, specific users or sources, swear words and pornographic material. Through customisation, a firewall becomes a network's frontline protection against the outside world and potential harm, being as restrictive or as relaxed as the user deems appropriate.

FIX THE GOALS AND USE THE TOOLS

The rule is to establish what needs protecting and then incorporate tools, devices and software appropriate for the task. The following is a brief guide of elements to have in place:-

MANDATORY TO ALL PCS

- Anti-virus software - regularly updated
- A firewall regulating who can pass information and data types
- PC password control (not a telephone number, a pet's name, or anything that can be traced in the public domain)

OPTIONAL

- Encryption – vital in financial transactions
- Password management - in any environment where sensitive data is transmitted across open networks

Mersyde ICT strongly recommends seeking advice from a professional organisation for any connected environment that requires some, or all, of the above. All major resellers, representing IBM, Microsoft, Cisco, etc, have the skills to meet most business requirements.

BROADBAND ADDS COMMUNICATION POWER

Telling people what you do is important. The Mando Group is working closely with the sector to broadcast the Merseyside ICT message far and wide. As well as specialising in high-level website development, Mando Group's eShot is now putting in company hands the ability to pinpoint thousands of customers with powerful email and e-newsletters - instead of taking a shot in the dark.

Presentation is important, yet it is not the core skill of many small companies. Available as an ASP via broadband, eShot is designed to make reaching out to potential customers and tracking progress easy.

As a web-based application, it provides a ready-made solution needing no software, only a broadband connection. Because effective marketing and communications are important in the growth plans of buoyant companies, eShot is one of the pilot programmes rolled out to business through MerseyBroadband. It not only personalises html or text-only marketing emails – and e-newsletters – but also tracks what happens to them once they have gone into the ether.

Even with thousands of addressees, the system reports back how many times a particular email is opened, the number of clicks made on a body text link leading back to the company's own website and

the recipient's software platform. Users receive a system licence, training, a branded eShot template – and a user name and password for security.

www.mandogroup.com



Continued from page 2

'Fujitsu have set up their own data centre and are sub-hiring the system from us and running it themselves. They are establishing a help desk, service and sales process. Our input is 4th-line support – software,' says Ian, adding, 'We hope that this is a further boost to Merseyside's reputation as a centre of IT excellence.'

Crucial to success in St Helens has been the financial support afforded to a promising young enterprise like Cybertill by the Merseyside Special Investment Fund's (MSIF) Venture Fund. Its backing has kept pace with Cybertill's growth and now totals £900,000 of the company's total £1.3 million funding. MSIF involvement, says Ian, has been pivotal in Cybertill's expansion.

No less a factor has been the staff calibre, commuting in from urban and rural belts around St Helens and Merseyside.

'The people are what has driven the business forward,' says Ian. 'I have tried to engender an entrepreneurial culture within the company to empower Cybertill's staff to

reach their potential. The company's investment in training has equally contributed to the team's success.'

In five years time, the company will have moved on. 'We will be listed on the Stock Exchange and operating internationally, probably further up the retail chain,' predicts Ian.

His vision for the future? 'Expect to see an ASP-base accountancy model, as well as an ASP merchandising and 3D space planning application. Something that gives a great deal of information about all the factors that relate to a sale. RFID (radio frequency identification) will have replaced bar-codes. There is even talk of intelligent price labels controlled by the lights! Just imagine what the innovation build-up to that will involve.'

www.cybertill.co.uk

SMALL BUSINESSES CHOOSE BROADBAND

Broadband is the connection of choice for small UK businesses, according to latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures, showing one-in-four firms go online via broadband - up from one-in-seven in 2002. The report also notes small businesses catching up with larger rivals. Businesses with 10 to 49 staff showed 8% growth; connections from firms with fewer than 10 grew by 3%. Worryingly, some 40% of the smallest businesses still do not have Internet access, while nearly all those employing more than 50 people do.



A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

HOW TO DEVELOP STRONG MUTUAL ICT FRIENDSHIPS ON AMERICA'S POWERFUL EASTERN SEABOARD ... AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE.

Working with the Americans is good in every respect - meeting principal IT industry influencers, understanding US 'blue sky' thinking and promoting Merseyside as an obvious opportunity for partnering, alliances and inward investment. For these, and many other reasons, Merseyside ICT recently took regional ICT companies, Northwest corporations and senior government officials on the sector's first high-level US ICT study tour to Boston and New York.

The lure of America is its healthy entrepreneurial environment and the challenge of pinpointing the transferable factors that can be imported to the UK and Merseyside. Boston and New York are now loci of the US's finest east coast ICT development models, founded on an active venture funding culture driven by a pragmatic global vision. There are clear trends at the cutting edge – global leaders are pouring major resources into open-source technology development. At the same time, Merseyside's expanding ICT base is an increasingly attractive option for both US, and their UK counterparts, to develop reseller opportunities.



Networking American style - Merseyside ICT will be running a regular series of twice-yearly study tours to Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Americas.

As Merseyside ICT's first US Study Tour of 2005, a team of 22 recently went to America to explore the opportunities.

The touring party included business people - representing both the region's vigorous SME ICT innovators and heavyweight corporations who rely upon modern IT solutions to drive the local economy - and government personnel supporting imaginative regional regeneration. During two days in Boston and three in New York, global leaders IBM, Cisco and Novell were extremely open in discussing



the core of their success plans. The Merseyside party also benefited from meeting successful US principals currently less known in the UK, such as Corvil, Vonage and Akamai, while exchanging views with Fortune Magazine, PricewaterhouseCooper and MIT Media Labs.

'It is difficult to over emphasise the benefits of meeting international colleagues at first-hand,' says Merseyside ICT Director, Steve Smith. 'Our over-riding aim is to increase Merseyside's potential for creating wealth, skills and sustainable growth by making network connections at many levels.

'The study tour - the first of an extended series that we are planning - made connections between Merseyside's very robust and enterprising ICT SME community, major corporate solution users in the sub-region and world leaders in America.

'The balancing act is for Merseyside grass-roots companies and start-ups to gain from contact with US champions, while making our international colours clear to inward

investors encouraged by evidence of a variety of commercially-reassuring strengths.'

Early results of the tour include a definitive return visit to Merseyside by IBM Global Government Industry Programmes Director, Brad Westpfahl, a Corvil sponsored sales trip to Dublin, a strong buy-in by corporate bodies and SMEs on Merseyside to create an 'On-Demand' ICT project, substantial reinforcement of an enterprising Merseyside ICT brand, the likelihood of more pivotal Merseyside VIP visits, and – excitingly – opportunities to remarket US products through the UK and beyond.

"Initially, I wondered why we had been asked to participate... by the end of the tour it was apparent that there is a vibrant ICT sector on Merseyside and that we could and should contribute either by placing business with local companies or using our corporate name to assist with local initiatives."

Colin Watt,
IT Manager, Jaguar - Halewood

KEY ORGANISATIONS WHO SUPPORT MERSEYSIDE ICT

UNITED WE STAND

Our strength is our members – their ideas, skills, initiative, adaptability and ambitions.

Members are invited to play an active role in a series of district-level events, seminars and co-operative ventures that are organised through the year.



MAKING CONTACT

We would like to discuss how we can help you to make a success of ICT-based projects on Merseyside.

In particular, we would like to show you the special strengths, skills, financial advantages and support that Merseyside offers. However, we appreciate that any decisions you make must be based on reliable information. If you would like more detail, or to talk to us in confidence, please contact: -

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Merseyside ICT

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The Merseyside ICT Sector represents a series of geographically defined district clusters in which ICT companies co-operate rather than compete, join in collaborative ventures, provide a voice in local decision-making and exchange technical and commercial ideas. To talk to the clusters directly, please contact: -

Knowsley ICT Cluster
Chair - Eric Menzies
BEC Systems Limited

Tel 0151 290 1111
eric@becsystems.com

Liverpool ICT Cluster
Chair - Johnny Read
Village Software Engineering Ltd

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St Helens High Technology Group
Chair - Kevin Cliffe
Lake Technologies Limited

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Sefton ICT Cluster
Chair - Ed Horwich
Pacificstream.com

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Wirral ICT Cluster
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