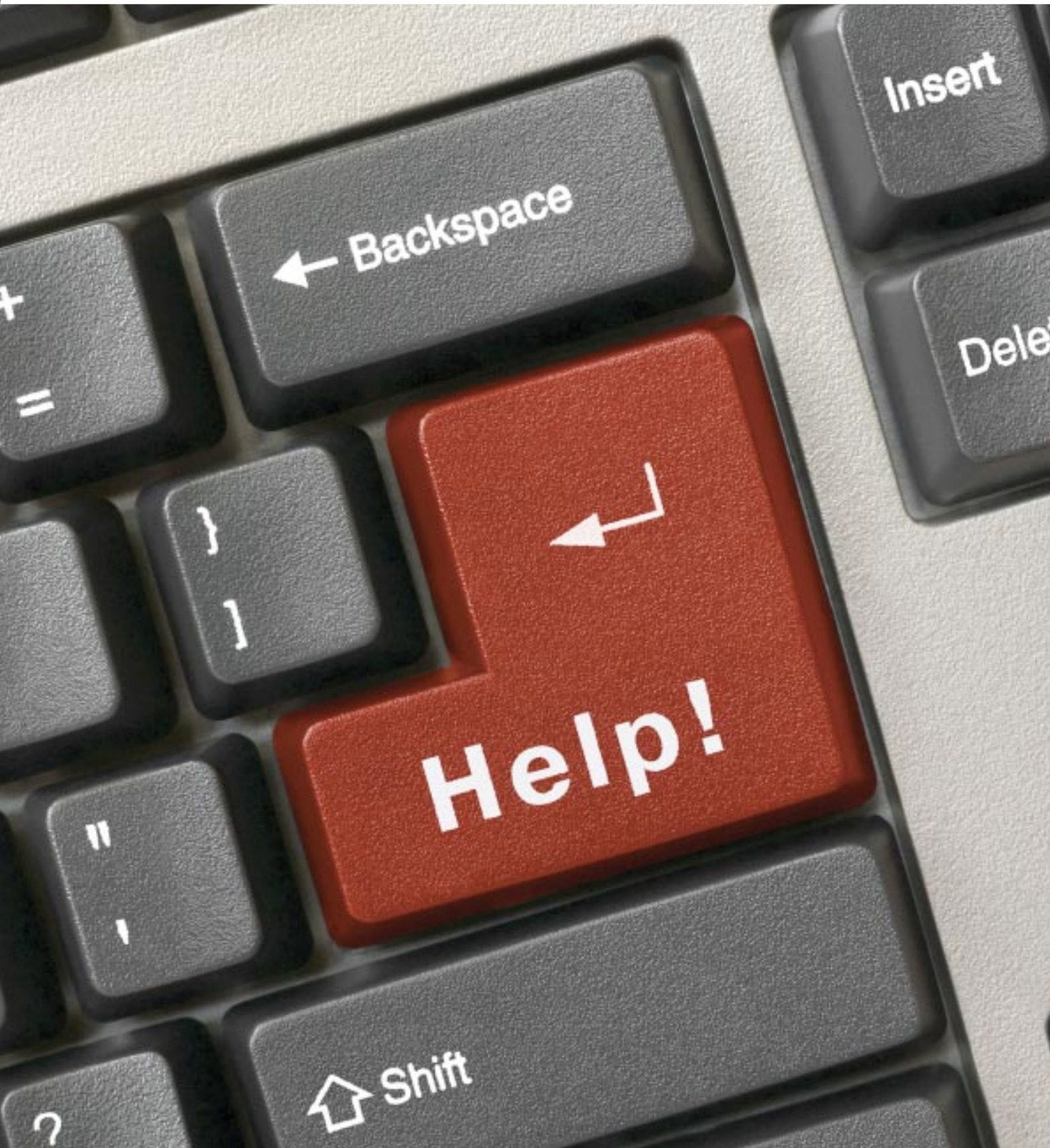




P&L
NETWORK &
SOFTWARE
SOLUTIONS

ITinsight

VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 4 • Summer-2007



Software Solutions • Serving Remote Workers • Choosing Technology
Xmas Card Competition • Latest News • P&L Sponsorship

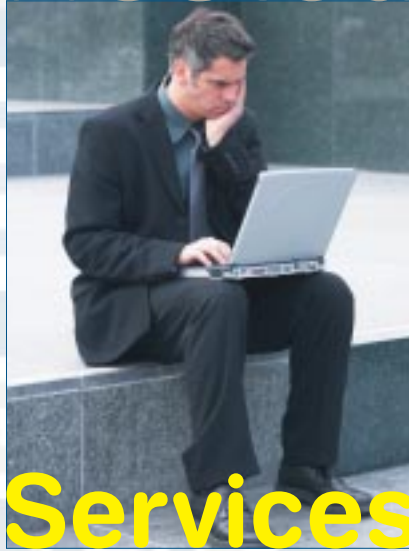


Welcome,

to the latest edition of our regular newsletter. This time we're focusing on software development. So if you want to know how to make your business run more efficiently, read on...

We're also inviting you to test your film knowledge. Somewhere in this newsletter there is a famous quote from a well-known movie – when you find it see if you know who said it and in what movie. There are no prizes, but drop us a line at admin@pln.co.uk if you think you know and we'll tell you if you're a film buff or if you need to go to the movies more.

Hosted



In response to customer needs, we're making a new product available. It's called **Hosted Services** and is perfect for you if you have remote workers or don't want the expense of purchasing your own server.

P&L will allow you to rent space on our server – as much or as little as required.

Here are some of the situations that would benefit from it;

Remote workers who need access to the same document simultaneously. For example, rather than sending round a report to a team for updating and waiting for each team member to complete it before it goes to the next one, host it on our server and then the team can go in and update it when they're ready. With no waiting.

Lack of space Once again, if you have a remote team but don't want to rent offices just for somewhere to host the network, use our server instead.

Shared web-applications For example, our Fieldman system which is a progress tracking mechanism for calls, accessed by multiple users simultaneously. Rather than purchasing a server specifically to host it, use ours instead.

XMAS CARD COMPETITION

Our Cheeky Cherubs!

This year's Christmas card competition attracted an excellent response. We asked you to name selected P&L staff in their younger years. Congratulations to

Carol Cookson of The Balcombe Group who correctly identified them all and won our prize draw. The prize was a donation to the charity of the winner's

choice so The Motor Neurone Disease Association are now £100 better off.

In case you were wondering, here's who the cheeky cherubs are now.



Simply match the faces to the names shown, visit our website at www.pln.co.uk/xmas2006 and complete the online form. Don't forget to include your details. All correct answers will be put in to a draw and we will donate £50 to the winner's chosen charity.

The staff names are:
Emma Beavon
Adam Cooke
Lynn Dawson
Peter Dawson
Rex Fidler
Lee Hubert
Helen Jones
Ian Micklewright
Martin Salsbury



Ian Micklewright



Peter Dawson



Martin Salsbury



Rex Fidler



Adam Cooke



Helen Jones



Lee Hubert



Emma Beavon



Lynn Dawson



Focus on P&L Software Solutions

What do you do when standard off-the-shelf software packages don't do exactly what you want?

That's when P&L Software Solutions can help. We create bespoke software applications designed to do what you need them to do, when you need them to do it.

A typical project involves understanding why your business needs the software and then writing a computer programme designed to do it. It'll be thoroughly tested before going live and then incrementally developed as and when other requirements come along or new technology allows greater usage.

We've developed software applications for many companies including Peel Holdings Ltd who own the Trafford Centre and Liverpool John Lennon Airport.

Here are some examples of projects we've completed;

Manchester Ship Canal Runcorn Docks unload ships containing a variety of products from

glass pottery to raw materials in bulk for the fertiliser industry. Ships are unloaded into stock or onto trucks for transport direct to customers. A weighbridge determines the quantity of material from vehicle weights. We created a stock control solution that managed stock movements both to and from vessels and customers in a multi-user system.

Driving Edge Limited is an employment agency providing contract warehouse, stacker truck and HGV personnel to major distribution companies. The company operates from a centralised HQ in Runcorn but has personnel nationwide and operates 24/7. We delivered a solution to automate all its recruitment procedures, including placing advertisements, organising interviews, allocating successful candidates, equipment tracking (overalls, boots and so on) and other peripheral functions.

A feature of the system is the use of the Post Office database for matching postcodes to grid references to determine the distance from a candidate's residence to the place of work. This enables the company database

of prospective candidates, currently in excess of 75,000 records, to be searched by postcode to find those nearest to the recruiting workplace.

Fiscal Solicitors have to account for the time spent on a job as part of their accounting procedures. Many of the software packages designed for solicitors in England have a facility for doing this but not so in Scotland where there is a different legal system. We created an easy-to-use, unobtrusive, computer desktop system for the largest legal practise in Glasgow which allows fee-earners to account for all the time they spend on every case they're dealing with.

Quantum operate from Spain and manufacture goods in Taiwan for sale in UK office supplies outlets. There are offices and remote employees in many countries. We developed a system that allows them all to communicate by telephone using VoIP for minimal cost whilst having access to all the company's shared documents via our Hosted Services. A truly international complete technology solution.

Choices



Choices

Continually improving technology is a great thing in principle but can be a real problem if you're thinking about upgrading. How do you avoid your new purchase being out of date before you even start using it?

Technology is currently going through huge changes and as the old saying goes, "you pays your money and you takes your choice".

Here's our guide to helping you make some of those choices.

Windows Vista This is the replacement version for the Windows XP operating system which most people are familiar with. The trouble is, it's so new that there are still glitches with it. We're inclined not to install it for the moment until the glitches have been identified and fixed. Dell have also announced that they will continue to offer Windows XP for the time being.

Pentium 4 or Core 2 Duo This is the processor that sits inside your computer and is responsible for its power. Pentium from Intel was the industry standard until they introduced the Core 2 Duo. Now there's an even faster, more efficient option. The one most suitable for your needs depends on what you use your computers for. We suggest you obtain independent advice from someone like us before choosing.

Suppliers It's very easy and attractive to go online to someone like Dell who will configure your computer to your requirements and deliver it to you. Others who are not so sure of what they want may go to a retailer like PC World

for a packaged solution. There's nothing wrong with either of these options, but we frequently go to sites that don't have the quality of equipment needed for the task or it's not suitable for their network or software. Only a specialist like P&L can give you truly impartial advice on exactly the specification you need and then source equipment of the appropriate quality.

Operating speeds and memory This really is an area where equipment can be obsolete before you even own it. The only way to future-proof your equipment is to buy the highest specification your budget allows.

CD/DVD Readers and Writers One day all computers will be able to read and write to both CDs and DVDs in every format they come in. Unfortunately that day is not here yet. You need to carefully consider what you're likely to use the machine for and use that to determine what you need.

P&L offer a software and hardware purchasing and advice service. Not because there's a lot of profit in it, but because it's the only way we can be sure our customers are getting the equipment they need for their requirements.



NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS

New Faces (1) Many of you will know Martin Salisbury who was with us for 5 years. Originally he came to us from the Foreign Office. We are sorry to say that he has returned to the Foreign Office and is looking to return to Thailand where he spent many years working in the past. Martin has been replaced by Andy Tingley who joins us from Fujitsu. Welcome aboard Andy.



of you will be speaking to Helen as she will often be the person who answers the phone in the office.

Licensing A Liverpool company has had to pay £52,000 for using unlicensed software. The British Software Alliance (BSA), an umbrella organisation of software vendors, is targeting companies to identify those that do not have the appropriate licenses and to prosecute. Be warned, even if you think your package is legal it may have been sold to you inappropriately in which case you may be liable.

New Faces (2) We'd also like to welcome Helen Jones to our office administration team. She joins us from South Cheshire College and this is her first full-time job. No doubt many



Stop Press We were dramatically evacuated recently following a major fire on an adjacent industrial estate. We're pleased to say that our contingency plans worked perfectly without any loss of service to our customers. See the next *ITinsight* for the full story.

Meet the Team



Ian Micklewright

We feature a member of the P&L team in every issue of *ITinsight* – so you can put a face to who you are speaking to!

Ian is one of our software developers. When you need software designed to help you run your business more efficiently it could be Ian who creates it for you. Ian has extensive experience in many programming languages. Although many of the systems he has developed are data-intensive he is keen on developing applications that are visually pleasing and easy to use.

Name: Ian Micklewright

Position: Software Developer

Likes: Golf – he is a member of Bloxwich Golf Club and has a handicap of 5

Dislikes: Bad programming code

Background: Ian originally joined us on a placement in 2003 before graduating from Staffordshire University in 2005 with a 2.1 in Computing Science and then joining us on a permanent basis. During that time he learned the programming languages which can help make your computers work for your business. Next year he plans to marry Becky who he has known since school.

Ask the experts!



In each issue of *ITinsight* we will answer those burning IT problems you have and offer you top tips on common complaints.

My computer had a serious crash and now I've lost all my files. Is there any way I can get them back?

The short answer is no, unless you've backed it up. Then you can recover data to the time of your last back-up, but anything since then will be lost. There are some specialist firms who will try to retrieve it for you, but it is expensive and there are no guarantees. The message is clear; back up regularly, including laptops, and make sure you don't save to your personal drive – save it to the

shared drive so that it is backed up with the network.

I have data in an Excel spreadsheet column that I want to split across several columns. Can I do it?

Yes. This is typically something that happens with names and addresses, where you have the title, first name and surname in one column but you want them in separate ones so you can use them in, for example, a mail merge. Excel has an excellent Help function which guides you through how to split and join columns in a very easy, self-explanatory way. Select Help from the menu bar at the top, then Microsoft Excel Help from the drop-down menu. You'll be presented with a box in which to type your question and then a list of potential solutions.

sometimes find it difficult to locate the entry I'm looking for in Excel. Any tips?

Select Edit from the menu bar at the top, then Find from the drop-down menu. You'll be presented with a box in which you can type the entry you're looking for. Choose Find All or Find Next and it will take you to the relevant entries. This also gives you access to Replace, which enables you to change an entry.

To have your IT questions answered by our team of experts simply e-mail your questions to admin@pln.co.uk

LOOKING FOR SPONSORSHIP?

We're always keen to put something back into the community and are happy to consider sponsorship. If you have a local junior sports or activity team who need some assistance, let us know. We may just be able to help.

