

# MUTUAL VISIONS

Your newsletter from Mutual Vision Technologies

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## The Wobbly Egg Theory

Many years ago, whilst watching my youngest daughter win the egg and spoon race at her infant's school sports day, I learned an important lesson that can be applied to any business. She knew that she could move pretty quickly across the ground, if it were not for the egg wobbling around on her spoon. What she quickly realised was that if she placed her thumb on top of the egg, it wouldn't fall off and she could run at her best; once she introduced stability into the equation, she moved quickly ahead of the opposition (OK, yes, she was cheating, but the logic still prevails).

Perhaps the application of this principle is more clear cut in an IT development and support environment but it is just as relevant for any organisation. Identify the wobbly egg in your business. How many times have you heard.... 'Like trying to change a tyre on a moving vehicle', 'Difficult to steer the boat when we're too busy bailing'; the euphemisms are endless, but all extremely valid. You certainly can move forward in an unstable environment but, not as quickly as you'd like and almost certainly accompanied by some loss of direction.

Every business needs a system or method in place to enable work to be monitored and measured. The most basic of these is probably time-recording and, at MVT, our figures showed that, in 2001, almost 80% of staff resource was spent on product maintenance and support. It was therefore pretty clear from the start that MVT's 'wobbly egg' was software instability and, if we were to grow the Company and keep control of personnel costs, we had to have a stable core product.

We wondered how productive our business could be if we turned the figures around, so that only 10% of resources were given over to maintenance; but whilst targets should be ambitious, they also need to be realistic, so we set out to our plan to reduce maintenance resource impact by 20% to 60% overall.

Now, being able to concentrate 40% of our resources on R&D is, I believe, something to shout about and MVT did indeed achieve this excellent position in 2008. However, what we didn't take fully into account was the ongoing effect of the 'virtuous circle' that we had established. As a result, we are already looking to increase the R&D resource spend to 50% of total by the end of 2009 and to 60% in 2010.

Somehow, it doesn't seem quite right, in the current economic climate, that we should be so upbeat about the future, when most talk is of defensive strategies. Nevertheless, that is our position and it's just reward for the effort put in by the MVT Group over the years.

In business the race is rarely finished, particularly when there is a constant drive to improve. We have a thumb on the egg at MVT. Just watch how we cover the ground now!

Steve Blinston,  
General Manager, MVT

**Turn over to see who's the latest to chose stability through partnership.....**

## *Isn't it time you took back control?.....*

Looks like more and more organisations are convinced by the business case put forward by MVT. Yet another new customer will be joining our group soon, to enjoy the **security** and **peace of mind** that we bring to the table.

If you're tired of the old IT service dictatorship model and would like a voice in the development of future services and software; if you want IT to deliver your plans, rather than have your plans restricted by decisions on IT made outside of your organisation; if you want to influence how the money you pay to your service provider is spent, there really is only one port of call.....**MVT**

## Vernon Live on ProVision!

MVT is proud to be able to announce yet another successful implementation of its core ProVision system. In February, the **Vernon Building Society** went live with the complete product suite, on time and within budget, just seven months from the project start date.



David Eccles, Systems Manager at Vernon, stated, 'The level of training and support during implementation was excellent and this was reflected in the smooth transition to the new systems. We can now look forward to enhancing the range of products and services offered to our Customers, underpinned by this solid IT base.'

Chief Executive, Mike Hanson, commented, 'The Vernon has invested a great deal of time over the past few years, looking at how we could extend our products and services whilst containing costs. MVT provide a strategically strong and cost effective partnership and offer the technology solutions we have been seeking to utilise.'

From the outset, we were impressed by the functionality of the system, the existence of a strategic roadmap and the fact that MVT customers are encouraged to influence future product development. We are also appreciative of MVT's open and transparent approach to doing business.'

In welcoming Vernon Building Society to the MVT Group, MVT's General Manager, Steve Blinston, stated, 'The completion of any project of this magnitude does not happen by chance. Staff involved at both organisations should be congratulated for the professional way in which they worked in partnership to drive this implementation to its successful conclusion.'

In the case of Vernon Building Society, the ethos of openness and transparency was embraced very early on, to the benefit of all. I know that MVT and the wider customer group are already welcoming new ideas put forward by the Society. This is a shining example of how mutuality does work. At MVT, the concept is as pure as you will find.'

Our job in business is to thrive today but also to plan for continued future success. This is particularly critical in IT, where even a year of stagnation could place a business at a disadvantage. That's why, at MVT, we place so much emphasis on research and development; investigating and promoting new technologies to provide cost-effective solutions for your business. **R&D: our responsibility, our expense.**

## MITRE RE-ENGINEERED!

Initially, our customers wanted a simple, cost-effective system to monitor for irregular transactions and that's what we delivered in Mitre.

However, as soon as Mitre was launched, we began collating customer feedback and our own ideas on how to improve the existing functionality and to add new facilities.

In 2008, we began re-engineering Mitre, using the latest Microsoft technologies and are now ready to launch the new version.

Our customers will have a product able to respond to the increasing demands for sophisticated transaction monitoring solutions. Even better, the cost of such continued innovation is already covered within annual maintenance fees!

**Working with MVT means future proofing your IT and your IT costs.**

## 'Thousands of Customer Data Records Lost in the Post'

Such attention grabbing headlines prove that, contrary to the old adage, not all publicity is good publicity, so it's reassuring that MVT give paramount importance to data protection.

"We understand that, should there be a need to carry backups in briefcases or send them via the postal service, it is vital that, if these were lost, the data held on them is still safe from prying eyes." explains Stephen Armstrong, technical consultant at MVT. "We use 128bit AES encryption and even the operator who's performing the backups or restorations doesn't need the encryption key. For additional peace of mind, our customers can change the key themselves if they wish"

Already integrated into ProVision is the ability to encrypt all backups, both full system and database, without the need for any expensive hardware. Users now have the option to backup to disc removing the need for costly tapes.

## Oracle 11g: Roll-Out Keeps on Rolling.

Leaving nothing to chance, MVT is ensuring that users of its core ProVision system keep ahead of their competitors. Over 64% of MVT sites have now migrated to Oracle 11g, anticipating the benefits that the latest advances in technology bring to the table.



Armed with the best tools available, MVT's development staff are firmly focussed on making sure our software delivers the 'wow' factor.

## Effective Reporting Workshop

Access to pertinent Management Information is more important than ever in difficult times and the MVT customer-led Development Group recently held a workshop to discuss ideas and future requirements.

Finance Director of Beverley Building Society, Tony Wilmot, explains the rationale behind the workshop, "Dealing with changes in regulatory reporting requirements and indeed understanding the guidance issued by the Financial Services Authority in the first instance, is an onerous task at the best of times and even more so when our attentions are more directed to what is happening in the financial world in which we operate. Being able to share thoughts and ideas with other ProVision users by way of workshops eases the burden of change dramatically. This, together with ensuring that the software produces information we require for reporting purposes, makes life so much easier".

The result is a radically new approach to reporting which, as well as simplifying access to and production of standard and bespoke reporting, will allow for the retention of vital calculated historical statistical data; a kind of selective data mining facility. It's going to be good!

Additionally, MVT will adopt Oracle's BI Publisher Middleware as an optional reporting and document production facility for customers and will share the licensing and maintenance costs.

Another great example of MVT's partnership approach to IT.

## New Prepaid Debit Card Partner



Every cloud has a silver lining! The demise of Alliance and Leicester Card Services seemed to be a dark cloud in an otherwise clear sky. But, dusting ourselves off, we went looking for the silver lining and found Tuxedo Money Solutions.

Now, our users have an even better proposition - an attractively priced group solution that can be branded to suit the individual organisation.

Prepaid debit cards are a great route to new markets and, with Tuxedo, MVT customers have access to a really classy solution.

## A Final Thought .....

To plagiarise The Observer:

*'The best argument for mutuality is blindingly simple - MVT is owned by its building society customers, so its sole purpose is to serve them. That goal is not complicated by a conflicting need to satisfy the Square Mile.'*

If you truly believe in the ethos of mutuality, shouldn't you be speaking to MVT?