

Note - this newsletter is now available as an online view in our Members Club web site with direct links to the speaker presentations, information about enhancements, and many other useful pieces of information.

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If you are not yet a member of ISTUG - you are not finding out about the things that could benefit your business, and quite possibly reduce your IT costs.

Visit our Open Web Site at www.istug.com and JOIN TODAY.

A Few Words From Your Vice Chairman



I would like to thank all who attended our meeting at IBM Warwick on 20th March 2003 for what turned out to be another excellent meeting.

Taking into consideration the current difficult trading conditions and year end, we had a very well attended meeting. Thank you to all

who made the effort. It was however, a great pity that quite a few who had booked did not turn up to the meeting, including some who booked late. Please remember that the user group incurs costs for catering when you fail to turn up due to early booking requirements. We do not like having to spend your money in this way.

Chairing the meeting was, for me, a new experience due to our chairman, Henry Waters, having arranged his holiday to suit the original meeting date of 5th March. I must admit to having some pre-meeting nerves about addressing a large room full of people but Jim Wigmore, our technical director, assured me that "thinking about it, is worse than doing it". Afterwards I had to admit he was right.

You will see from the following reports some of the interesting contributions that were made on the day. We hijacked the Reporting Special Interest Group session in the afternoon and turned it over to David Stokes from Sage, who was interested in seeking our members' views on the future of reporting tools within future Sage product releases. You will find a copy of the Sage discussion document on the ISTUG Members Club website. David will be interested to hear your views.

As always, nobody left the meeting without having learnt something. For many the revelations were quite illuminating, giving us all some interesting thoughts for the future, not only of the product we use, but also how we can evolve our systems to get the most from our investments.

Both Henry Waters and I look forward to meeting with you all at our future meetings and Awareness Days.

OUR NEW TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

At the beginning of the meeting on 20th March 2003, Jonathan Lassman introduced Nicole James as the Technical Director Designate.

Nicole joined ISTUG on 1st April 2003 and will be working with Jim Wigmore until his retirement in mid June 2003. Nicole was chosen by a sub-committee of the main ISTUG committee who were appointed to short list the applicants for the post, carry out interviews and select the most suitable candidate. We all wish Nicole success in her new role.

Nicole has a financial background but has been involved for a significant period with system implementation within the NHS. She is currently going through a number of Sage training courses to raise her awareness of some of the issues within both Manufacturing and Distribution.

Members should note that as the result of this appointment, from the 1st June 2003 the ISTUG office will be moving to the following address:

PO Box 7298,
Tadley, Hants
RG26 3ZX
telephone: 0118 981 3223
email: istug@nj3.demon.co.uk

PURCHASE TO PAY - Made easy.



Dave King of FormScan presented the merits of being able to scan all incoming documents, locate key fields and link the associated data direct to the Sage System in order to automate the invoicing and subsequent payment procedures.

The demonstration showed a success rate of data capture in the order of 95% across a broad range of dissimilar documents, with a very simple manual intervention to correct the capture errors driven by the system. Online readers can view the presentation.

FIRST SAGE USER CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

Make a point of coming along to one of the venues where we will be hosting the first of what we hope will turn out to be an annual exhibition and conference. You can find out about and see some of the interesting products that will work with your Sage system to benefit your business.

The dates and venues are as follows:

6th May - IBM Bedford
7th May - IBM Warwick
8th May - IBM Manchester

An information pack for the above should be included with this newsletter. You will however, need to book, and can do so via the ISTUG website, www.istug.com/events.htm. Further information can also be requested from the same website address, www.istug.com/events

All the products or services that you will see may only be obtained via your Sage reseller.

MAKE THIS A DATE FOR YOUR CALENDAR.

E-Business on Demand

Would you like to have computing power and IT staff you can turn on and off to suit the irregular demands of your business? If this appeals to you then you should be talking with IBM Global Services, according to Phil Clark of IBM.

Online readers can look at the presentation and see the breadth of services offered to meet the ever changing requirements of businesses. This approach could be of special interest to those businesses that are subject to seasonal peaks and troughs, or whose systems slow down during period end and year end processing.

Questions and answers from the March 2003 meeting

These have been placed in the Members' Club area of the ISTUG website and where appropriate have been added into the Discussion Forum to add to the overall Knowledge Base. Members reading the newsletter online will be able to hot-link to the full QA listing online

SAGE CUSTOMER CONFERENCE

26th/27th February 2003

A significant number of customers took up the Sage invitation to come and meet its staff and find out about where both the organisation and the products are going in the future. The agenda for the meetings is outlined below.

View from the Top - Gavin May - Managing Director Sage Enterprise Solution



Bill Hill - Marketing Director, Sage Enterprise Solutions

Market Overview - Bill Hill - Marketing Director Sage Enterprise Solutions.

Product Devt. Strategy - Graham Cardwell - Head of Product Marketing Sage Enterprise Solutions.

Linux for Business Critical Applications - Imran Waheed - Linux sales Manager IBM

CRM - Buzzword or Tangible Business Benefit - David Pinches - Marketing Director Sage CRM

Are we satisfying your needs? - Andria Chaplin - Support Manager Sage Enterprise Solutions.

International Expansion - Taking Sage Line 500 Overseas - Arie Koppenhol Sage Consultancy Services Director Sage Enterprise Solutions.

Injecting a New Lease of life into your System - Dave Mitton Sales Director Sage Finance.

Your Voice - ISTUG - Jim Wigmore - Technical Director ISTUG

Online readers will be able to access all the above presentations and see for themselves some of the information that was delivered. These presentations were made available by Sage to ISTUG and placed on the Members Club web site immediately after the conference.

There were lots of opportunities to question Sage management both in public and in private. Some of the public debate was quite fierce but was generally resolved there and then, with some very frank answers regarding either actions that had been taken or future policy.

There was a lot of forthcoming information to give all attendees plenty to think about. It was also very interesting to see Sage being very open with their customers and giving them a good insight into what the business is trying to achieve and where it wants to take the product offering.

The forward view of product development would have been to many a significant opening up of what is likely to happen with the product range, it is of course the delivery that will be the true measure of this process.

The up and coming operating system, Linux, was once again given an airing, along with an insight into how this product is already in significant use. Many of us are already being supported on the internet by servers running under Linux, as are many other business critical applications. Sage is increasing its offerings on this operating system, it will be interesting to see how this grows in the future.

Andrea Chaplin during her presentation about Support intimated that in the near future you may be able to get your Sage Systems Manager certified by the same process that resellers for their staff certification.

The extent of support to companies that are multi-national was also quite a revelation, giving a good insight into how the language barriers can be recognised and broken down.

The independent user group ISTUG explained how its voice is becoming more representative of all end users whether they know it or not. End users were encouraged to become members of the user group by both ISTUG and Sage. It is hoped that by this process, end users will have an increasing say in the way the product evolves in the future with a higher level of customer-led development.

IS YOUR VOICE BEING HEARD
THROUGH YOUR CHOICE?

CODIS EXCELERATOR

- SEAMLESS INTEGRATION BETWEEN EXCEL & SAGE

Supplier No.	Invoice No.	Inv Gross	Inv VAT	Date	Eff Date	2nd Ref	Our Ref	Nominal Code	Nom Value	Vat Code	VAT	Description	Analysis 1	Analysis 2	Analysis 3
S001	a098234	117.50	17.50	01/11/2001		ak200111	IN000230	1-01-10-01-002	50.00	V	17.50	ASK Expenses Claim	Anil	expenses	fuel
								1-01-10-01-004	50.00	Z	0.00	ASK Expenses Claim	Anil	expenses	Train
S004	0079127	2275.00	275.00	01/12/2001	30/11/2001	mn200112	IN000231	1-01-10-01-001	750.00	P	75.00	MN Expense Claim	MN	expenses	hotel
								1-01-10-01-002	250.00	P	25.00	MN Expense Claim	MN	expenses	meals
								1-01-10-01-004	1000.00	V	175.00	MN Expense Claim	MN	expenses	flight

Excelerator enables the user to post directly from existing Excel spreadsheets into Sage Line 200, Sage Line 500, Enterprise and CS/3. Excelerator can reduce your data input times by up to 50%. This is achieved by eliminating existing multi-screen re-keying and providing the user with immediate data validation in Excel.

Excelerator's low cost provides rapid ROI and is supplied with pre-defined templates to facilitate instant use. Currently available Excelerator modules include Nominal Ledger, Purchase Ledger, Sales Ledger, Cash Book and Payroll Timesheets. Excelerator integrates in both Windows and Unix environments.

Excelerator is easy to use, requires minimum training, is user definable, has the same full interactive browse facilities as found

in Sage and has many additional advantages over traditional Tetralink based solutions.

Single click updates directly from Excel into Sage batch files – no intermediary files to manage. Other features include:

- Pre-defined validation
- Easy reversal of data
- Multi-currency features available
- Integration with Project Accounting
- Generates next Sage journal / batch / our reference number

Excelerator is priced at £400 per PC per module with annual licensing and maintenance set at £100 per annum.

For further information about Excelerator or any of our services please contact us on: Telephone 020 88 610 610 Email codis@codis.co.uk Web www.codis.co.uk

WEB SITE TEACH-IN



Our letterhead and our newsletters all carry references to our fast-growing website, especially in terms of the content of the Members Club. One of our members said, "I have looked at the date on the index page and because it has not changed, I assume the content of the site has not changed". I recall one of my teachers saying "never assume, it makes an ass out of you and me", how right he was. We carefully scrutinised both the Open and Members Club sites for ways in which we could improve the information delivery.

OPEN SITE - All the pages have a directory of content. The aim being to ensure the casual visitor sees that there is more information than what is immediately visible. The pages were examined in some detail and the full content explored, see the following notes.

ABOUT - this delivers exactly what it says, information about ISTUG and its activities.

EVENTS - visitors can review agendas for our meetings, check dates, and book online. In addition, it is possible to submit questions to both the meeting and our Special Interest Groups using online submission forms. Travel details and maps to venues are also available on this page.

LINKS - establish contact points for user group committee members. Sage Resellers are listed here. There is also useful information about specialists you can call upon to solve some of your technical issues.

UPDATE - use this page to tell us when you change your system, DO IT ONLINE.

NEWS - all items of general interest are posted on this page, including past online copies of our newsletters (unlike the online copies in the members club, they are not linked to the speaker presentations, or the MBE listings etc.)

JOIN - if you are not a user group member, join online.

MEMBERS CLUB - Where appropriate there are directory listings on the pages like the Open Site. Many facilities are very similar to the open site but more in-depth. In addition there is a fully threaded Discussion Forum and Web pages for Special Interest Groups. The aim of this site was to give our membership access to information of a commercially sensitive nature that could not be published on an open web site. The major additions by web page follow.

NEWS - Presentations from our meetings – most recent and previous. Sage Customer Day presentations. Online newsletters linked to the presentations and other useful information.

SPECIAL INTERET GROUPS – Distribution, Finance, Manufacturing and Reporting - This is where members gain visibility of the MBEs to be voted upon, what has been accepted, and the MBEs currently delivered as the result of voting. In addition meeting details, agendas and minutes from the SIG meetings are all shown here.

LINKS – in addition to the information carried by the Open Site, this page holds information about the Sage Training Courses available (did you know these were available to you?).

TECHNOLOGY BLOCKS – access information on third party, Sage-compatible applications. Similar products have been grouped so you can see what is available, who supplies it, look at reviews and presentations, and even find out who already uses the products. This useful feature cuts out a lot of potential leg work, saving you time – and money.

DISCUSSION FORUM - the most significant area of the Members Club. This is what end users told us they wanted and was the driving force in the creation of the members club website. It consists of two main areas: FAQ pages and a fully threaded question/answer discussion forum. Both areas are split into the most frequently used modules and were reviewed in some depth, showing the scope and range of information available.

The above was a revelation not only to those present who are not yet members of the users group but also to some of our members. It was pleasing to note the many members in the room who do make good use of the site by asking questions and helping other members by submitting responses. It is hoped more will be encouraged to do so.

THIS IS THE BEST INDEPENDENT KNOWLEDGE BASE OF
INFORMATION FOR USERS OF SAGE ENTERPRISE
SOFTWARE - LETS KEEP IT THAT WAY

SAGE PRODUCT MARKETING UPDATE



Graham Cardwell, Head of Product Marketing at Sage Enterprise Solutions Division delivered an update on product development. Online readers will be able to view Graham's presentation in the ISTUG Members Club.

Those present were given an review on the current delivery status of version 5.0. Online readers can read the Sage "What's New" brochure that details enhancements contained within version 5.0.

Graham continued by detailing the main areas that will be examined over the next 18 months, and approximate delivery timescales.

Online readers will be able to see what is anticipated and the effect it may have on their business. One major statement is the clear intent to stop any further development on C-ISAM. It should be noted that v5.0 will not be released on C-ISAM.

The extent of support and likely termination dates of support on C-ISAM systems is yet to be published. A key benefit will be a product that runs faster and has even better facilities.

RESELLER OF THE YEAR 2003

ISTUG will be opening up its 2003 Reseller of the Year voting facility very shortly.

This as always is your opportunity to tell us how your reseller performs and the quality of the service they deliver. All the members of the reseller channel watch with a great deal of interest to see the verdict you deliver on who you consider to be the winner.

This is yet another area where YOUR VOICE REALLY MATTERS. The voting process is open to all companies that use the Sage Enterprise product range.

Keep an eye on the News Page of the ISTUG web site at www.istug.com and simply submit your vote online.

ENHANCEMENTS - What your votes are delivering.

The 10 MBEs selected from the voting process of the ISTUG Special Interest Groups have now been issued and this information has been posted on the ISTUG Members Club web site. In addition, the information has been added to the overall listing of MBEs on the ISTUG Members Club web site.

The overall listing has been updated based upon the progress report given by Graham Cardwell in his Development Report. It has been agreed that both Sage and ISTUG will be closely monitoring the overall report listing to ensure its absolute accuracy to increase end user visibility of the MBEs. These can be requested via your reseller.

Dates for Your Diary in 2003

- 30/04/03 - FSIG Meeting (Note - this is a change of date.)
- 30/04/03 - Committee Meeting (Note - this is a change of date.)
- 06/05/03 - 1st Sage User Conference & Exhibition - IBM Bedfont
- 07/05/03 - 1st Sage User Conference & Exhibition - IBM Warwick
- 08/05/03 - 1st Sage User Conference & Exhibition - IBM Manchester
- 14/05/03 - E-Commerce Awareness Day (venue SES)
- 11/06/03 - ISTUG Meeting (venue SES)
- 13/08/03 - FSIG Meeting
- 13/08/03 - Committee Meeting
- 17/09/03 - ISTUG Meeting (venue SES)
- 15/10/03 - FSIG Meeting
- 15/10/03 - Committee Meeting
- 22/10/03 - Awareness Day (venue SES)
- 10/12/03 - ISTUG AGM (venue SES)

Note - The venue for 17/9/03 has been altered to Sage Winnersh. This is due to IBM insisting on having an equal footing for any meetings held on their premises unless we agree to pay the full hire fee for the room.

The agenda for all the above meetings, where relevant, will be published on the ISTUG Web Site at www.istug.com. Full online booking facilities exist, non-members may be asked to pay a guest fee. Where this is the case full details will be given at the time of booking.

Computer Literacy - Does it matter?

Actual dialogue of a former Word Perfect Customer Support employee (now I know why they record these conversations! - Ed.)

"Ridge Hall computer assistance; may I help you?"

"Yes, well, I'm having trouble with WordPerfect."

"What sort of trouble?"

"Well, I was just typing along, and all of a sudden the words went away."

"Went away?"

"They disappeared."

"Hmmm. So what does your screen look like now?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"It's a blank; it won't accept anything when I type."

"Are you still in WordPerfect, or did you get out?"

"How do I tell?"

"Can you see the C: prompt on the screen?"

"What's a sea-prompt?"

"Never mind, can you move your cursor around the screen?"

"There isn't any cursor: I told you, it won't accept anything I type."

"Does your monitor have a power indicator?"

"What's a monitor?"

"It's the thing with the screen on it that looks like a TV. Does it have a little light that tells you when it's on?"

"I don't know."

"Well, then look on the back of the monitor and find where the power cord goes into it. Can you see that?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Great. Follow the cord to the plug, and tell me if it's plugged into the wall."

"Yes, it is."

"When you were behind the monitor, did you notice that there were two cables plugged into the back of it, not just one?"

"No."

Well, there are. I need you to look back there again and find the other cable."

"Okay, here it is."

"Follow it for me, and tell me if it's plugged securely into the back of your computer."

"I can't reach."

"Uh huh. Well, can you see if it is?"

"No."

"Even if you maybe put your knee on something and lean way over?"

"Oh, it's not because I don't have the right angle - it's because it's dark."

"Dark?"

"Yes - the office light is off, and the only light I have is coming in from the window."

"Well, turn on the office light then."

"I can't."

"No? Why not?"

"Because there's a power failure."

"A power.....a power failure? Aha, Okay, we've got it licked now. Do you still have the boxes and manuals and packing & stuff your computer came in?"

"Well, yes, I keep them in the closet."

"Good. Go get them, and unplug your system and pack it up just like it was when you got it. Then take it back to the store you bought it from."

"Really? Is it that bad?"

"Yes, I'm afraid it is."

"Well, all right then, I suppose. What do I tell them?"

"Tell them you're too f---ing stupid to own a computer."

Needless to say, the Help Desk employee was fired; however, he/she is currently suing the Word Perfect organisation for "Termination without Cause."
*(There is a school of thought that considers this employee should have been given a medal.
 Yes we have had similar calls at the ISTUG Help Desk, dealt with a lot more sympathetically we may add - Ed.)*

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

The SIGs were tasked with discussing the proposals put forward by Bill Hill - Marketing Director, Sage Enterprise Solutions Division on the manner that logs escalated by resellers to Sage should be dealt with, and the degree of involvement in this process that end users wish to have.

Distribution Special Interest Group (DSIG)

Our breakout session was supported by Sheila Briland of Sage. The issue of logs escalated to Sage was discussed with members all in general in favour of being kept informed either by the reseller or by Sage. Members in general would welcome some direct contact on escalated issues if only to ensure that Sage fully understood the nature of the log. It was apparent that those who had direct contact with Sage had good problem resolution. Other requests were for access to the Sage Knowledge Base, currently only available to Sage's direct customers.

Finance Special Interest Group (FSIG)

The users are happy with the process for resellers logging calls but are still not kept up to date with progress or escalation. The general view was that they would like to be told the log numbers, to be kept informed and to be able to escalate direct to Sage if the reseller was not receiving an adequate response, for example, if an answer took months. Some resellers do send weekly logs for users, but even then, they are not always up to date. It was asked if Sage could produce a list of calls on the web, with status, log no. etc, and whether they would be happy to communicate via e-mail with users rather than by phone? It was suggested that a dedicated e-mail address for users to escalate problems would be beneficial. It was also suggested that Sage have an FAQ area of their website so that users could search and perhaps find a solution that way. Graham Cardwell indicated that this could be on the way. A request was made for a reference site on Job Costing. It was suggested that Henry Waters may be the best person to speak to about this.

Manufacturing Special Interest Group (MSIG)

Watch out for a sharp increase in interest in MSIG Members as Sage starts to look at the issues relating to manufacturing, and begins the process of identifying best of breed products in this sector. MSIG will be taking a keen interest in these activities and will want to contribute. There were no specific issues raised at this meeting.

Reporting Special Interest Group (RSIG)

The whole meeting involved a discussion about the future of Sage reporting tools led by David Stokes of Sage who was making a case for a cross product reporting tool that fully met the requirements of end users. Online readers can view the Sage Discussion Document on this subject and forward any

comments to David Stokes. This was generally a very lively and animated session with Sage being left in no doubt the view of end users about the present tools and what was required.



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

“To be the Independent Organisation that represents users of Sage Enterprise products.”

YOUR COMMITTEE - ISTUG Members

Administrator

Jonathan Lassman, phone 01438 717764, Fax 01438 712157 or email tetrausers@aol.com

Technical Director

Jim Wigmore phone 01237 471269 or email istug@aol.com

Technical Director Designate

Nicole James phone 0118 981 3223 or email istug@nj3.demon.co.uk

Chairman

Henry Waters of Suffolk County Council (henry.waters@et.suffolkcc.gov.uk)

Details - all serving committee members can be found on the ISTUG web site, www.istug.com

ISTUG HELP LINE - Phone 01237 471269 or email istug@aol.com.

The ISTUG office is open daily from 09.00 to 17.30 for your calls; a message facility exists when the office is closed.