June 2011

Bleeding Edge

Vicon Solutions

Special points of interest:

- Microsoft Launched their Cloud based Office 365 Solution on 28th June
- Amazon announced they're entering the tablet computing market
- Vicon launches flexible pricing plans for the majority of it's services
- Google releases their Chromebooks and kicks off it's UK marketing assault during the Champions League final

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Our Inaugural Newsletter

Welcome to the first of what will be, monthly newsletters.

The aim of the newsletter is to keep you with up to date with the latest goings on in the world of IT but in a way that is hopefully relevant to your business and with as little geek speak as possible!

In this newsletter we're going to cover some of the new services rolled out this month including our new website which is packed full of information including our new flexible pricing plans.

At Vicon we constantly strive to provide our clients with efficient and cost effective solutions. We don't look at ourselves as just an IT provider, we look at ourselves as a partner in business with you.

Feel free to bounce idea's of us whether it's technology related or not, and as we've been in business for over 24 years we've learnt the hard way of what does and doesn't work and if we can help just one person avoid some of our mistakes then that seems worth it to us.

Moving from a 10,000 user FTSE-100 company with multi-million pound IT budgets did come as a bit of a shock to us when we started selling services to SME's back in 2007, the recession kicking in a few months after we started out really didn't help either! So I'd like to say a quick thank you to those that supported us and believed in us through those formative times.

Since then we've built up a reputation of providing quality services that are backed up by honest advice and for those that have let us delve deeper into their businesses, some advice that's helped them become more profitable too.

Let us know what you think or if there's anything you'd like us to cover in the next issue. If you'd like to get some of these stories as they happen, simply follow us on twitter or keep an eye on our Bleeding Edge blog on the website.

Flexible Pricing Plans

We know how difficult it can be running an SME or a new startup in what are still quite 'trying times'.

Paying out what can be large up front costs for essential IT services can be a bit painful so we've been working over the past few months to try and make things a little easier.

This month we launched our flexible pricing plans for websites, hosting, eMail & Collaboration and Cloud Computing Services.

The idea is to help you get essential services up and running when your business most needs them.

If you've had a bill from us in the past month that is now covered under these plans, just give us a call to talk about the options.

Amazon Tablet to Launch in August

There's not a day goes by without yet another manufacturer releasing yet another tablet, all of them desperate to eat into Apples iPad market share. It can't be denied that no matter how much you may or may not like Apples "pretty" products, they do know how to create a buzz and deliver a quality product, you've just got to accept that you have to play by their rules (flash anyone?)

The main reason why Apple has been so successful where others have failed, is their ability to make their products easy-to-use. Most major mobile and PC manufacturers have a tablet in some form or other running on either Android, Blackberry OS or Windows.

What none of them have yet though is the same level of seamless operation or a similar amount of applications available for download, Android devices come close but their apps market needs work.

Well, that is until Amazon decided to enter the market. When I first read about it I though great, yet another one to confuse the masses until it started to sink in.

Who already has a massive and well known online store? Who already has a successful mobile device and understands the market? Who is one of the leading cloud computing providers?

You've guessed it, Amazon!

If they can get this product right, this is going to revolutionise tablet computing again. Imagine having a lightweight but powerful portable device that can easily download music, books and apps, that can seamlessly link to your business applications you have running on their EC2 Cloud platform and that follows open standards.

Apple watch out, I think this one might give you some real competition at last.

"Apple watch out, I think this one might give you some real competition at last."

Google Releases Chromebooks

Microsoft and Apple have the Desktop and Laptop Operating System market pretty much sewn up, there are some great Linux efforts out there (Ubuntu for example) but all of them have their problems... Windows is bulky, expensive and not particularly user friendly but offers great flexibility, Apple's OS-X devices are expensive, not as well developed for as Windows but easy-to-use and Linux whilst open, free and efficient does not have all the commercial applications you may be used to.

Google has been planning to enter this market for quite a while now, it hit the mobile market first with Android, then it tackled the browser market with Chrome, then it released it's business eMail and productivity suite Google Apps for Business all in preparation for what it believes is a revolution in the computing market.

Chromebooks are web based laptops that are designed specifically for speed, ease-of-use and to reduce administration overheads. They use the new Chrome OS which is a very efficient operating system (8 second boot from cold!) and is built around the Chrome browser. They are specifically designed for Cloud computing, you don't load applications locally in the old fashioned sense, you run them in a browser. This also offers the advantage that it's very secure – no local apps=no viruses!

Their philosophy is that if you can run all your applications in a cloud then you don't need a bulky, expensive operating system and therefore you don't need a bulky and expensive piece of hardware & software plus the small army of technicians just to keep them running. Of course it has it's drawbacks, No Internet=No Applications, they're currently working on Offline Capabilities.

The Browser War Continues

Internet Browsers used to be easy, you used Internet Explorer if you were on Windows or Safari if you were on an Apple. They got lazy though, and with the help of the worlds anti-monopoly agencies it started to change.

I used to be an IE lovie, refusing to use anything else until it got so painfully slow that I had to try something else, I switched to Firefox which I used very happily for several years until it also got slower (it was still quicker than IE though!)

About six months ago, after constant nagging by Florence at Innerplace, I finally gave Google Chrome a go... Wow!!! It's fast... If your current browser takes any longer than 3 seconds to start up, get rid of it! It made the Internet and the cloud applications I use all day so much faster.

Microsoft have also released IE9 now which is quicker than IE8 but still nowhere near Chrome.

Microsoft Launches Office 365

Microsoft have finally launched their cloud based eMail & Collaboration solutions to complete with Google's Apps for Business.

Google have pretty much had this cloud based market to themselves over the past year or two and it's managed to gain an amazing lead in such a short period of time due to it's ease-of-use, cost and features.

Microsoft have been a bit slow in the cloud marketplace but with the launch of a service that includes familiar products such as Outlook, Exchange, Word, Excel and Powerpoint they've really come out fighting, especially when tied together with their collaboration solutions.

There are several plans available starting at £4.00 per user/month which includes 25Gb of eMail storage and their web based office applications.

They also now provide Microsoft Office 2010 Professional Plus as part of their £15.75 per user/month plan so there's no need to go spending huge amounts of capital on buying or upgrading MS Office anymore.

There's still some fine tuning to do on the office web applications but it offers a very cost effective solutions for those wanting to stay with MS Office and Outlook.

"Microsoft have really come out fighting with a great pricing structure and familiar applications"

High Speed Broadband at Last

BT Openreach, who are the wholesale telecoms provider arm of BT have been for the past few years trying desperately to catch up with the rest of the world by rolling out Fibre Internet connectivity.

As BT are the UK's incumbent provider they have to provide all the ADSL cabling from Exchange to Premises for all the UK's Internet ISP's, so even if you're using Plusnet, Demon or Sky, the link to your house or business is in most cases provided by BT Openreach. Only once your signal reaches the Exchange does your ISP take over managing the traffic.

Once BT Openreach have launched the service in your area, you can ask your current ISP for the faster service. You do NOT need (or I would recommend want) to move to BT.

Visit 'Bleeding Edge' on our website to check out when it will be available in your area.

There are two different methods being rolled out: -

FTTC - Fibre to the Cabinet

In the past your ADSL broadband connection has been delivered via a copper cable to the nearest Exchange. The further away from the Exchange you are the slower your internet will be as the signal degrades over distance (5km is about the maximum). FTTC eliminates a lot of this problem by linking all the Green Cabinets at the end of your street to the Exchange using high speed Fibre cables, and then only using a short copper cable to link to your house. The major advantage is significantly increased internet speeds, by a factor of 10 in some cases!

FTTP - Fibre to the Premises

This takes it one step further and runs the Fibre link directly to the Premises, this is primarily designed for multi-tenant buildings. Offices, Apartment Blocks, etc...

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Efficient Computing Solutions

Vicon Solutions provides an innovative approach to your businesses technology needs, at Vicon we are also experienced business people so can provide a different viewpoint to many other IT providers. We focus on what is the most efficient and appropriate use of technology for your company or particular problem, in some cases that might not even be an IT solution and we wouldn't be afraid to say so!

The current IT provider market has become littered with suppliers that simply want to sell you a solution because it happens to be provided by who they're partnered with, it's what everyone else uses or it's all they know. The fact is, one solution does not fit all and never has.

Of course we provide the usual "foundation" level IT services as you would expect – PC's, Mac's , networks, eMail, etc… but does any of that help to increase your profits?

In today's competitive markets you need to stand out from the crowd, this usually means having unique selling points to offer. What you also need is an independent technology partner that wants to understand your business goals, what's preventing you from achieving them and what the possible solutions might be.

"At Vicon we will cost effectively provide you with the most efficient solution for any businesses technology requirements no matter how big or small. We also offer flexible payment plans tailored to your needs."

If you're a new startup, talk to us for free before you do anything. We can help you avoid early and sometimes costly mistakes.

We're also on the web, Linked-in, Twitter and Facebook.