

IPAD TECHNOLOGY ADDS CHOICE AND OPENS OPPORTUNITIES

Apple's increasingly ubiquitous iPads are set to make their mark as powerful business management tools for the pest management industry.

Using web-based communication to provide real time (do it now, see it now) functionality, these almost A4 sized ultra slim line, fingertip controlled tablets (the official description is "slates"), with their:

- ultra high resolution displays;
- finger powered navigation;
- zoom-in and zoom outability; and
- lighting fast communication speeds

... are currently being hooked up to remote servers to take reporting, scheduling, job tasking, and even pest management sales and marketing into an exciting new age of streamlined effectiveness and efficiency.

Mobile communications have come a long way in the nine years since Temisoft first unveiled hand-held personal digital assistants (PDAs)



Check on your jobs.

loaded with ServicePRO software onto the fledgling computerised pest management market at AEPMA's National Conference at Caloundra in 2002.

Back then being able to not only schedule service calls, allocate jobs and tasks, measure client activity, generate service reminders, but – most importantly, thanks to the new

devices – actually send technicians into the field with fully loaded hand-held computers so they could record inspection findings and prepare reports, monitor and report on bait station activity, and easily check what jobs they had coming up next.

Little worry that the technicians back in those days had to physically return to the office to download their

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reports and pick up their upcoming work. The huge leap in efficiency in simply having them able to access and use up and downloadable technology in one small package and avoid the risks of preparing, committing to and potentially losing paper made it all worthwhile.

But, like the man on the telly used to say: "Wait. There's more". Or, at least, there soon would be.

Before long, a matter of a few years, these hand held gizmos became blessed (some philistines may say cursed) with the ability to communicate over Australia's burgeoning array of wireless telecommunication networks.

They were a bit clunky to start with. But soon wireless data transfer became fast, efficient and increasingly mainstream. And with an expanding choice of mobile communication hardware and telco/ISP carriers also came an expanding array of operating systems.

For Temisoft, which had been founded on the principles of customisable service and support for service industries, especially pest management, the challenge was to keep not just up with but one step ahead of these fast moving changes: to exploit their ever more rapidly emerging advantages and benefits, and ensure that whatever choices clients made in terms of in-the-field technology they would not be left behind.

"Our aim has always been to ensure that, through the use of ServicePRO, and, more recently, our remote server-



Touch and go.

based ServicePRO-On-Line and ServicePRO Internet Dispatcher (SPID), our clients stay ahead of the pack when it comes to performing and managing their businesses," Temisoft founder and CEO, **Keveork Temisgian** said.

He said, regardless of whether Temisoft clients choose to stay with and use existing hand held technologies, including the specialised bar code readers; move over to latest mobile phone technologies (for instance, Windows Mobile 7, Nokia's Symbian, Google's Android, or Apple's iPhones); or move on to the new slate devices such as iPads and soon to be released Android-based iPad look-alikes (Pioneer, Samsung etc), Temisoft sees its role as "looking after and fulfilling client needs and requirements, helping to improve their efficiency, and getting the very best and most out of their investments".

"But, having said that, and acknowledging they perhaps won't be for everyone, we reckon these latest

(iPad and other slate) devices will, for most pest managers, play an increasingly powerful role in helping drive business communication and business management efficiency into the future," Keveork said.

Temisoft began work on developing software for and connectivity to iPads at the beginning of 2010 to develop a "prototype suite of programs with all the functionality and more that we had developed for the most commonly deployed hand held devices" in time to be unveiled at the 2010 RAPID Solutions' conference in August.

"The prototype had all of ServicePRO-On-Line's now familiar look, feel and functionality, but with a whole lot more options and goodies on top," Keveork said.

"For a start, on the iPad, we had access to a whole lot more screen real estate.

"Instead of having to deal with a typical 50mm by 25mm screen (about half an A5 sheet), with small fonts and graphics, we had a 210mm by 170mm screen with far larger, easier to read fonts and more easily managed, easy to see graphics."

Keveork said there are a few things new iPad users will have to get used to.

"For instance instead of having to use a stylus, you simply use your finger," he said.

"You also get far more flexibility in how you use and view what's on the screen. If you don't want to look at text, a web site, or graphics in landscape, simply turn it around and you have a portrait presentation."

One of the benefits offered by iPads and other, still to be released slate devices is their "zoomability".



Site plans easy to see.

△ “Simply stretch apart your fingers on the part of the screen you want to see in more detail, and, presto, you’ve got it magnified. Pull the fingers back together, and the expanded text or graphic is back to normal size again,” Kevork said.

“Push the screen up with the finger, and it scrolls up, or pull it down, and you move on down. It’s so easy.”



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Working with building or site plans takes on a whole new dimension, according to Kevork.

“Because you are in continual contact with your server you can call up a site plan or part of a site plan of the building you are inspecting in an instant and work with it, make adjustments, add notes, move markers and symbols around while you are on the job,” he said.

“Alternatively, while it may be a bit rough to start with, you can draw your own plan from scratch.

“For instance, if you have bait stations set up in particular locations and you want to change them around, you can make those changes on the site plan. Or, if you find moisture or a suspect area during an inspection, you can, in real time, note what you see or suspect.

“Back at the office, the rough drawings or alterations can easily be prettied up and tidied up for any final report.

Being a web-based system, operating in real time, communication with (to and from) the server is instant.

“iPad and Android devices are live the whole time, in constant contact with and always talking with the web,” Kevork said.

“However, that talk can only happen while ever you have a signal ... ideally 3G or, failing that, GPRS wireless connectivity or some form of hard wired connection,” he said.

“If connection drops out, as it can in remote or heavily shielded areas (way underground in deep building basements or mines, for instance), the machine simply won’t function because, unlike the traditional hand-helds, these things don’t have a storage and send and receive later facility. They have to be on the air in order to work.

“Having said that, everything done before a connection goes down is, of course, saved, because it is already on the server. But it is only saved up to the point when connection is lost (when you lose all your bars).

“Of course once connection is re-established, it’s all go again, and away you go.

“These days, in most areas, in most situations, connectivity is not a huge

issue, unless you are operating out in very remote areas or deep inside the bowels of a building or mine.

“And, while iPads and Android devices work preferentially on latest generation, super fast 3G networks, if the local 3G drops out, they look for and lock on to the next fastest system, such as GPRS.

“But for applications where there is no signal available we will have to stay with the hand-helds on which jobs can still be done without access to signal.

“With hand-helds jobs done off line get sent as soon as signal becomes available,” he said.

Kevork believes the real niche for iPads and related devices will be in areas such as job scheduling, technician management, reporting and report writing.

“These slate devices work so well in inspection jobs and monitoring jobs because you have instant access to all the notes, background information, site plans, and, whatever you need in ultra-high definition, in brilliant colour, because it’s live,” he said.

“You don’t have to carry a whole filing system with you because that is all back on the server, waiting for you to call it up.”

And, as the man said, again, “But wait. There’s even more.”

Kevork said he’s been blown away by the myriad of additional applications (apps).

“For instance, one iPad app is a very accurate level measurer ... a spirit level gone digital. And, there is also a decibel meter, which can be used in OH&S situations,” he said.

“iPad also has street maps and road maps on it and acts as a GPS. This means you can not only see where you are, how to get from there to the next job, but the office can also contact and monitor where technicians are at any time.

“This makes urgent job scheduling and rescheduling and allocation faster and easier and also can be used to help protect your business.

“If, for instance, you get a call from Mrs Jones to query a bill for two hours of work, claiming the technician was only there for 30

minutes, you can easily look up when he arrived at Mrs Jones' place and when he left and use that as proof that she was telling fibs," he said.

And there is still more.

"With their brilliant displays and instant communication with not just the home server but also the web, iPads and other slates are ideal for calling up and presenting both sales and technical information to customers, in real time," he said.

"Or they can be used as training aids, downloading and making course material available for technicians to read during their down time or study time.

"On top of all that, of course, there are all the games and access to surf reports, and so on."

Importantly, when the new technology rolls out under ServicePRO-OnLine, all the traditional ServicePRO-OnLine back up, support, customised functionality and system robustness will still be there.

"Simply, what we are offering is an expanded choice of opportunities to use whatever mobile technology you like," Kevork said. ■

WEB PRESENCE MAKES MONEY

Having a web presence can provide a powerful driver for new business.

For many pest managers, developing a web presence ... a web site ... can often seem too hard.

But, according to Qwiklink's founder and CEO, **John Lewis**, gaining a powerful and productive web presence is not just easy to achieve but relatively painless in terms of cost.

"There are two ways of making money from your business. The first is to rely on existing customers and the second is to be continually taking on new clients," John Lewis said.

"If you rely exclusively on existing clients, then one day your client base will no longer exist," he said. "People are fickle. They see an ad for a shiny new toy and they will buy it.

"And remember, your new client was once someone else's existing client."

John Lewis said more and more people use the internet to find things they want.

"Increasingly if you are not on the internet then you won't be found. If you are (on the net) then your new client will be someone else's existing client. Your choice," he said.

"Qwiklink provides its clients with a web presence ... a web site which is uniquely theirs.

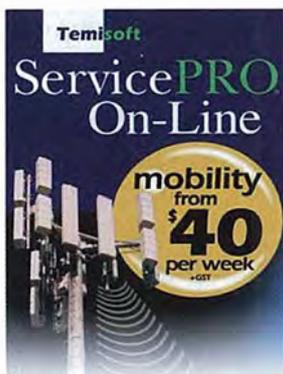
"Each site is based on a template which is full of information about pests. But then you are a pest controller so what other information would it have?"

"Secondly, if you want changes made to your site, ie information about yourself, a pest added or deleted then we will make the change for you. All changes and additions to the site are included in our monthly fee (conditions apply ie, as long as it is something we can do ourselves). Ask us first and we will let you know.

"Thirdly we make sure your site can be found on the search engines - especially Google which accounts for over 90% of all searches in the world. They are the big one, we all know this.

"If you are on the internet then you will be found and you will get business ie new clients from the net. If you are not on the net, then you will not be found. It's that simple.

"The other thing you need to know about us is that we have been doing this now for some ten years and we are still in business. We must be doing something right."



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