Enterprise mobility comes of age

Mobile computer networking and connectivity have been talked about for years, even though few people really understood what they mean, and fewer still believed they meant a great deal.

Now however, the words have taken on a new meaning and importance, especially for pest managers who would rather be out managing pests, or at least managing their businesses, than spending hours trying to fathom out or fix up their computer systems.

These days most people agree or at least accept that modern businesses cannot function and communicate efficiently and effectively without computers.

But, while they acknowledge that computing systems have made it easier to collect, compile and manage information, and also to communicate, they sometimes wonder if it's the computers running them or them running their computers.

Until now, the working day generally hasn't finished until a pest manager gets back to the office to work on the computer or hand all the stuff over to the girl/wife to log in, write up, sort out, fix up and send out.

Now a purpose-built system is available – for the largest down to the smallest pest management company – to connect pest managers in the field with their businesses and at the same time add real value to business management processes.

Temisoft – the specialist Australian software company which first started to tailor information retrieval and management systems for pest managers in the late 1990s – is about to launch a major breakthrough in mobile anything from anywhere business management. They call it *"enterprise mobility"*.

According to Temisoft founder and managing director, Kevork Temisgian, ServicePRO.Connect will not just let pest managers off the office/IT leash but put them back in real control of their businesses.

"If my years working with people in the industry across Australia have taught me one thing it is that pest managers are far more comfortable managing pests and running their businesses than trying to run their IT systems," Kevork said.

The Temisoft approach to business has always been to develop what its customers say they want.

"We don't go around dreaming up you beaut new software ideas and then forcing them down our customers' necks. Rather, we have always asked, 'What do you really need?' and 'How can we help you do what you want to do?'," Kevork said.

Until recently, Temisoft has built its business around specially designed systems such as ServicePRO, Report Writer, and Bar Coder, which have taken a massive load of repetitive drudgery off the shoulders of pest managers and their office staff.

Importantly, these products have continued to evolve as customers' needs have changed and software design techniques have developed.

"But now, suddenly, with ServicePRO.Connect, we are able to take our business solutions to a whole new level," Kevork said.

"This breakthrough came about at the same time as our customers were literally pleading with us to come up with something to connect them directly with their technicians in the field. In short, they were demanding enterprise mobility but it was just too cumbersome and for most too expensive.

"The problem we faced … and they faced … was that while communication hardware technology was becoming increasingly available at ever more realistic prices, the data handling and data management requirements of all but the smallest operators were making any investment in 'true connectivity' horrendously expensive.

"For the last few years the computer industry has been talking about the term 'service oriented architecture' (SOA). It wasn't until last year, however, that we started to really come to grips with this radical departure from the traditional single program approach and began to fully appreciate the value of all the new tools which SOA could make available to us and our clients.

"Indeed, from the time we first heard about SOA we thought, 'With this, we can finally give our clients what they have been waiting for'".
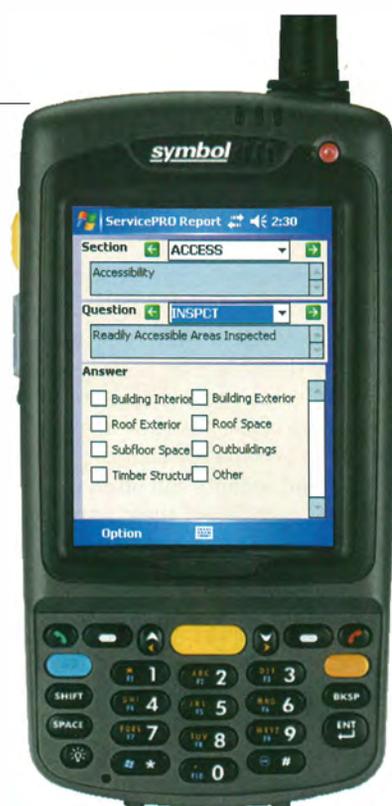
Connect with anyone, to anything, from anywhere.

Back to school

Kevork said first his team had to master it and really get to know how to make it work.

"It meant our whole team virtually going back to school to learn about the new approach. And it also meant us having to rewrite much if not most of the software code we had already written, in a new format," he said.

"But, most importantly, what it meant was that we could now deliver a complete range of modular systems to enable pest managers – large or small, wherever they or their team members were, anywhere in Australia – to take charge of and get maximum value from their data management and processing without having to even know what an IT system was.

"In the old days we had one program that did everything including screen design, database access, business logic, and the user interface. SOA dismantles that old model.

"With the new model, each component can be remote from each of the others. For instance user interfaces, be they PCs in the office or laptops or hand helds out on the road, can be way removed from where we drive the business logic (business logic determines what we do and how we do it, as well as what we get or want to get out of it) and also completely remote from the database, where we deposit and store all the information we either need or collect. ▷

◁ "With all of this we can provide and link in all types of services like reporting, scheduling, costing, and so on, as well as add ons such as direct customer interaction/access, bells and whistles like GPS-based tracking systems and, of course, wireless-based telecommunication for data.

"As long as we know how to talk to the business logic … which we do … and we have the business logic talking to the database … which it does … we can give pest managers all the information they'll ever want in a way which is totally secure, protected, flexible, and totally hassle free," he said.

More flexible and expansive

Kevork said SOA is far more flexible and expansive than single program systems.

"It means we and our customers are no longer locked into one particular vendor's product or system or one particular user interface," he said.

Computer technology has come a long way since, for instance, 20 years ago, when all computers had black screens with green writing on a plain background … and even from a decade ago, with Windows-based multi-screens and multi-tasking.

"Today, however, we no longer want to be confined," Kevork said.

"Wherever we are we want to be able to access whatever we need with whatever we've got.… PCs, pocket PCs, laptops, Palm Pilots, Macintoshes, Blackberries, and so forth.

"This is what SOA-based ServicePRO.Connect provides – complete flexibility, functionality and power to meet a whole range of modern and emerging business needs.

"Importantly, all the background stuff is totally transparent. Pest managers won't have to know what it is or worry about it. They can just get on and do their job, albeit with some great new tools."

Available for all

Kevork said ServicePRO.Connect will be available in two basic formats, one for large and franchise based operators, and one for smaller businesses.

"For the large scale business, with lots of people out on the road or a whole lot of franchisees, Temisoft will, if they want, provide a complete IT management service including core

Part of the growing temisoft team, (from left) Denise Temisgian, Geli Nicholas, Kevork Temisgian, Patricio (Pat) Recabarren, and Yi Chen.

server and database management with full backup facilities and inbuilt disaster recovery," he said.

"In this situation, with our terabyte sized storage facility, we will hold and manage the database in our office, providing 24/7 interconnectivity with all offices, franchisees, technicians, and, if they take up our soon to be released document management system, their customers as well."

The new ServicePRO.Connect system will connect everyone to everyone, anytime, anywhere in Australia, across all interfaces (desktops, laptops, hand helds, bar coder readers, etc.).

"This will be far cheaper … less than half the capital cost and a fraction of the operating cost … of a traditionally based (non-SOA) system, and far more efficient and effective," Kevork said.

"Traditional (non-SOA) systems require massive infrastructure capacity because everything – the data, the user interface, the business logic – all have to be transferred up and down the line in a short time.

"Within SOA we only transfer data when we need it, making it a lot easier and cheaper to deploy.

"And it is a lot easier and cheaper to run without the need to worry about what is going on in the background.

"If a business manager wants to start a new franchise tomorrow we simply mail out a little CD, provide a log-in, and they are on line straight away from the hardware they have, wherever they are.

"ServicePRO.Connect is truly a multi-company, multi-branch, multi-user system."

ServicePRO.Connect is equally suitable for smaller pest management operators or companies.

"All the connectivity and functionality of ServicePRO and its associated

products (Report Writer, Bar Coder and, soon, GPS tracking) remain fully available," Kevork said.

"The only difference is that, for the smaller companies, the single users, we don't offer the taking care of the data option because it is simply not cost-effective for us or them.

"But with the base software they will still be able to send things backwards and forwards, have all their work fully scheduled and accounted for, and all their reports generated just like the big guys.

"And, if they want to grow we can help there as well. Say, in 12 months, they want to expand from one up to two, three, four or to five users … whatever … all they need to do is update their license. Or if they want to add modules, like Report Writer, Bar Coder or GPS tracking, or add more handhelds, it's all too easy.

"If they want to upgrade and integrate their communications within the business we can advise on that as well and make sure everything works and fits together in a seamless, worry-free package.

"There are now available some tremendous new communication devices which allow low cost data communication from laptops or hand helds via broadband (EVDO) or CDMA/GSM anywhere in Australia using general packet radio service (GPRS) protocols.

"The most important thing though is that with our new ServicePRO.Connect pest managers, whether they are large, super large, medium or small, now have a management tool available which gives them full management functionality and accessibility in real time, from wherever they or their people are.

"For the first time, the term 'enterprise mobility' truly means what it says." ∎