



Under new management

Brighouse-based Avocet Hardware, a leading designer, manufacturer and distributor of locks, handles and DIY hardware, has been the subject of a management buy-out. A management team led by Finance Director Ian Jones and Sales & Marketing Director Michael Tuck has acquired the company for an undisclosed sum from US-based Masco Corporation. Avocet operates two divisions — the Door & Window Division manufactures door and window hardware in its two factories in China for PVCu windows, doors and conservatories; the Hardware Division sources

and imports fixings and hardware products from overseas for the UK DIY and builders' merchants markets.

Ian Jones now becomes Chief Executive while Michael Tuck takes on the role of MD, Hardware Division. Kevin Harvey, a former Sales Director of the firm, rejoins as MD, Door & Window Division. Ian commented: "The acquisition reflects the management team's confidence that the business is well placed to enter a new and exciting phase of business growth, which is great news for our staff and great news for the area."

Meet and greet

Merseyside's longest established timber importer, Beers Timber & Building Supplies, is holding its first bespoke 'Meet the Supplier' trade event to celebrate the first anniversary of its move to a purpose-built 30,000 sq.ft. depot and Head Office in Boundary Street, Liverpool. The company has had a continuous presence in the city since 1916 and is now run by the fourth generation of the same family, operating from four depots in the North West.

Director Alan Beer said: "To celebrate the first anniversary of our move to Boundary Street, we wanted to give our suppliers the opportunity to come face to face with their target audience in Merseyside. With over twenty five suppliers confirmed already, the event is already creating a lot of interest from our extensive customer base, which includes national contractors, local developers and self builders. It is a great opportunity for them to meet the leading manufacturers and discuss their projects for 2008."



Top Tips

Over the last 12 months Blue Rock Systems has received many questions from merchants relating to the points raised in its series of articles. George Troullis now becomes the IT sector's very own 'Dear Diedre' to address the merchants' concerns...



The first — and most controversial — question is why is computerisation so expensive?

Well in reality it isn't of course. In real terms, the cost of IT has fallen sharply over the last two decades whilst in contrast the level of functionality and performance has risen exponentially. Very few people "like" computer systems but you'll be hard pressed to find a merchant that will revert to a manual or part manual system after their software has been installed and settled down.

Hardware is cheap, and should be treated as a commodity item; software has dropped in price but does so much more and daily rates have not, typically, risen with the cost of labour. However, it is this final element that can catch end users unaware and is typically the cause of "spiraling" installation costs.

Be realistic. Unless you are equipped and prepared to install the system yourself you will need a high level of service from your provider. Most of the software products in your market place are not complicated but they are sophisticated and therefore will require a reasonable level of consultancy and training — if not then you might as well buy a non-merchant / standard accounts application because you will not make the most of your investment.

If you cut back on the installation services then you are likely to adversely affect the "go live" period — and this may cost you a lot more in lost business.

Unfortunately, for the smaller merchant, the level of services required is disproportionate to the number of users you are installing — your business is virtually as demanding as a company 10 times the size of your own — and typically you are at the start of your IT learning curve. Most larger merchants have been "around the block" a couple of times.

In reality you should be able to get a fixed job price for most of the services that you are buying with the exception of training and consultancy — and these are very much dependant on your level of knowledge and the time you can commit to the project.

The first 50 entrants will be entered into a draw to win a day's free consultancy with one of Blue Rock Systems' highly experienced consultants. For further information circle readerlink 303

If you would like to ask George a question please email him via pbm@hamerville.co.uk