

International Trade Financial Solutions Newsletter

'Minimising Commercial Risks When Trading Abroad'

Issue 11

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Hello. Well, that was Summer. Everyone's back at school/college and, if the hype is to be believed, we're now all waiting for the swine flu epidemic, and several [larger] shops already have their initial Christmas sections open for trade. Roll on Easter - it can't be far away, and then we'll be back to Summer!

Talking of Christmas [sorry], many of you may see this as one of your busiest periods of the year. It can be all too easy to focus on the goods and overlook the money side - cashflow and, if you're bringing in goods from overseas, the exchange risk factor. Many small businesses were badly caught out last year by the fall in the Pound, when it almost reached parity with the euro. Take time to think about doing something to protect your profit margins this year, so you can have a prosperous time and not have to fret over rates, etc. If you're not sure what to do, give me a call.

This month, the glossary of terms has a month off; instead there's a piece on Computer Confidence Ltd, who have built my new website [more below], as well as something of an 'odds and ends' section.

Enjoy.

Ray Stannard
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It's Here - The new ITFS Website.

On the basis that everything has gone to plan, the new website was launched over the past week-end and is now up and running. I say this since, as many of you will know, I try to write these newsletters a few days in advance and timetables were such that I will not have time to write this between web launch and newsletter publication, the latter of which is always on the 15th of the month. If there have been any hiccups, therefore, then I foresee a large omelette about to break all over my face.

So, what's in the new website? In short, lots more information, including links to all previous newsletters, for those who may wish to re-visit or have not been with me since Issue 1. It is also my intention to add other articles, etc. from time to time so as to build up further the information available. There's also an enhanced set of links to other businesses with whom I have either dealt, or who provide high standards of service and professionalism in their fields and I will/would use them if the need ever arose. I have to add the usual disclaimer that these links are for information and that, in all cases, you are strongly urged to make your own independent investigations before you go ahead and engage them. As before, there's bound to be changes to these links in the future as necessary, so make sure you have a look at them from time to time.

Please take a few minutes to have a look at the new site and let me know your thoughts; I'm sure there is still room for further development and enhancements. You can use the 'Contact Us' form or any of the 'E-mail Us' links, which appear on every page. In future, newsletters will be uploaded to the site within about 2 weeks of issue [i.e. by the end of the month].

Turning now to every Academy Award event you've ever seen, I must thank Nigel and Elaine from Computer Confidence Ltd, who have built the new website and provided me with a lot of useful information about how it should look. They were also happy to deal with everything that I asked - and some of it must have been basic questions. As a further 'Thank You', there's a piece below about all of the services - not just website development/hosting - that they provide.

Computer Confidence Ltd.

With my new website live, below is a summary of all of the great services that Computer Confidence can offer both new and existing businesses. Also, as you will see, it doesn't just stop with web building/hosting, but also encompasses a wide range of other services that are ideal for smaller sized businesses, who may work to tight budgets but, nevertheless, need access to reliable systems and information. So, read on and, if you are interested, give them a call. Mention me - I can't promise any reduction in what are already very reasonable fee scales, but if you like my new site.....

Website Design and Hosting

Within the next five years virtually all businesses, large and small, will be on-line. The potential benefits are huge for small businesses, using their website as a pivotal point for displaying information, on-line brochures, capturing prospects, and most importantly being competitive by simply having web presence. In fact already, not having a website, is driving business away! A website costs less than most other forms of advertising and can be updated instantly, keeping the interest of the target audience.

Many small business owners need help with the complexities of generating a website and Computer Confidence are supportive have the experience of helping many businesses launch or re-develop websites.

They provide original, practical, functional sites and you get full free initial website consultancy with a comprehensive design and development advisory service and ongoing support. Often, people don't know what to include on a website, how to display the information, how to get a domain name and hosting space and what it will all cost - It can be quite overwhelming. But Computer Confidence will guide you simply through the process giving you the best advice and value for money.

Bespoke Software - Make your software work smarter for your business

- Are you struggling to find an off-the-shelf system that will do what you want?
- Do you want your IT systems to be more productive?
- Is your business demanding functionality that doesn't exist in your current systems?
- Do you want your existing systems to deliver what your competitors are offering *or be the first to do so?*
- Do you need to integrate new and existing systems?
- Your business is unique! Do you need software to cope with your specific needs?

The Dotwise Suite is specifically aimed at small businesses to provide a business administration tool, but just tell us your requirements and we can help - take a look on the website: <http://www.comfi.co.uk/pages/dotwise.html>
Don't forget! The use of professionally developed bespoke software applications can give you a significant business advantage over your competition - and it doesn't always cost a fortune!

I.T. Support

- Is your I.T. reliable?
- Are you getting the maximum benefits for your company?
- What position would your company be in if your back-ups fail?
- Are you paying too much?
- Do you need reliable support from someone who understands your business and its IT?
- Do you need someone with the people skills to communicate the processes you need?
- Would you like someone to offload the strain and administrative burden of IT support?
- Is your contract flexible?

For a flat fee per month Computer Confidence can provide all your IT support. Whether your business is large or small, having sudden large bills is always difficult to budget for. Have the peace of mind that your IT will remain reliable with a regular payment that suits your budget. Just give us a call to create a package that's right for your business.

Businesses have employed Computer Confidence because of its proven technical expertise to deliver high class functionality and expertise in all areas of IT Support, Website design & Hosting and Bespoke Software.

*Our strapline is **talk to us, we can help** - and we mean it!*

Tel: 01268 566450 Email: enquiries@comfi.co.uk www.comfi.co.uk

Miscellaneous Bits and Pieces.

I've been gathering odds and ends over the past while with the intention of putting them into this newsletter, but I've been having difficulty finding the correct place to put them in. Therefore, in place of the glossary this month, a mish-mash.

Global Trade Network - www.gtnetwork.co.uk run periodic, Country specific 1 day seminars. Future ones include Entering S Africa [tomorrow - 16th Sept], Entering Russia [15th Oct] and Entering the European Market [26th Nov]. If you're looking for new markets, or have identified possibilities, see if they have a seminar coming up. Costs are usually minimal and you also have the chance to set up a stand, for a small additional fee.

Companies Act 2006. For those of you who run limited companies, 1st October

sees the introduction of further tranches of the new Companies Act. Your Accountant should be letting you know about this and what areas, if any may affect you. If he/she isn't, you may want to find out why.

Foreign Exchange Rates. There's no charge as such when you buy/sell currency; it's built into the exchange rate. However, it has been reported that some banks especially, have recently tweaked the rates on smaller deals and widened the margin, i.e. they are giving you a worse rate and taking a larger slice of commission for themselves. Almost impossible to prove, but it re-inforces the need for everyone to review their FX provider on a regular basis and ensure that you're still getting acceptable rates. Benchmark and, if you're not happy, move to someone who is better. Let me know: I can put you in touch with possible new providers.

East of England International. www.eei-online.com is part of UKTI and works with any business in the East of England who is looking to export as well as looking to attract overseas businesses/inward investment into the area. Again, they run regular workshops and seminars at minimal cost, often featuring specific regions.

Business Link East www.businesslink.gov.uk/east provide free business support advisors to any SME in the area and can be not only a useful independent person to bounce ideas off of, but can also help signpost you to other providers which will allow you to take your business onwards. They also have an extensive research department available.

Beware - Scams. There are loads of scams as we all know, but here's one that seems to be re-appearing. If you receive an order for 1 unit only of whatever from an unknown source, be careful if you're product is one that can be copied. Historically, businesses would receive such a request, usually from the Far East, a market in which they were not active, often with payment up front. The goal of the buyer was to obtain a unit, then break it down and put it on the market at a lower cost, thereby undercutting you and taking your custom. Patent/IP rights should have protected you, but recourse would be through the legal system of whatever country the fraudster was based in - a lengthy, costly and worrying process. They seem to have got wise and now the order comes from somewhere closer to home - still usually outside the UK/EU/N America - but areas where your guard may not be as high. Yes, we all like sales, but just take stock to consider whether the order is as innocent as it seems.

If you know of any other business to whom this ezine may be of interest, why don't you forward it on to them and encourage them to sign up for future issues?

The next issue will be out, as usual, on 15th of next month. Between now and then I'll be taking a few days break, hopefully to enjoy the last bit of warmth from the sun before Autumn well and truly arrives.