



RIDING THE IT ROLLERCOASTER

In early August, Campbell Lee Computer Services celebrates thirty rollercoaster years in business. I've always believed IT is the new rock 'n roll. So many things change. So much stays the same. Rebels thrive. As Bob Seger says laconically: "Wish I didn't know now what I didn't know then". You bet.

Campbell Lee Computer Services Ltd is a different company to what it was ten years ago. And, ten years ago, it was different to what it had been ten years before that; twenty years ago. The company is now much more like it was in the beginning thirty years ago; a services and support company.

The factors for change, over time, were external influences. These influences defined the market. The main source of influence lay, originally, with the computer manufacturers. If somebody asked, down the pub, you had an IBM computer or a Honeywell or Burroughs or whatever. This defined you. The computer itself defined your company's IT. As a result, we gained an image as sellers of computers in the first ten years. In fact we never sold a computer in our first twenty years. The contracts of sale were with these very powerful companies.

As "packages" gained ground in the marketplace, our image transformed from computer hardware brand into other brand associations with software applications such as Mapics, CP and JBA. This was because you learned to choose application first and the hardware brand moved to become a secondary consideration. Now you were a Mapics user or a JBA user, and so on. Still today, down the pub, you hear "We run SAP", "We've got Peoplesoft". These applications define IT in your company.

Prevalent today are operating systems. You have a Microsoft infrastructure or Linux or "open source". Of course OS/400, Unix and Z/OS won't go away but are mature enough to tolerate the newcomers. So the pub chat is Microsoft and Mr Gates. Today he appears to define your IT policy.

Truth be told, none of these influences - hardware, applications, operating systems - really reflect anything other than marketing fads. Computer hardware, applications



Press Release

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software and operating systems are a means to an end for us. We procure them, deliver them, implement them and support them.

Today, solutions involve a much broader infrastructure than ever before. Networks and their security and resilience take increasing precedence over servers and their manufacturers. Collaborative tools, necessarily, extend beyond email to workflow and document management. A well-constructed and effective collaborative workplace transforms business processes to a much greater extent than was the case for "application package" implementations. In other words, how you do something in business administration is changing, and the rate of this change continues apace.

As a company, our skills and service coverage have had to extend to new technologies. Our core skills in understanding business information requirements continue. The complementary mix of skills, experience and accreditations provides technology transparency and we remain proud of our "end to end" competencies. We have the diversity of skills needed to make things tick. We provide effective and profitable business solutions. These solutions have different components than we recognised thirty years ago. The delivered solution has the same measurement - effectiveness. Our documented mission was and has remained "to provide effective and profitable business solutions using computers".

Thirty years on, the instruments are different. The music is the key. You see the stars out front on the stage. We are the backing singers, the sound crew, the lighting crew, the roadies, the drivers. I started with Bob Seger; I'll finish with Blood, Sweat and Tears - quite appropriate given our anniversary. "Twenty-nine years and you're over the hill at thirty, they've got your wheelchair ready but your hiking boots aren't even dirty".

Campbell Lee is still rocking, still crazy after all these years.

Jim Lee is Chairman of Campbell Lee plc, Scotland's longest-established computer services specialist.

Ends

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