

In Focus

In this issue we have a view from ICS Fellow Peter Lawless on the benefits, or not, in mobile technology for the sales force. The Honeynet article gets serious in tackling distributed denial of service attacks. Ronan McGuirk of the Visually Impaired Computer Society highlights developments and challenges for the visually impaired in the ICT workforce. Daragh O'Brien highlights the importance of information quality underpinning e-government efforts. Kelvyn Taylor dispels IT myths that could be less than amusing to encounter.

Value Points:

ICS Fellow: Technology can only benefit the mobile sales force if implemented correctly and, equally important, if used correctly.

Honeynet: Though difficult to defend against, the impact of distributed denial of service attacks can at least be mitigated if there is enough information.

Human Computer Interface: More can and must be done to aid the visually impaired in interacting with ICT to achieve full potential in the workforce

IQ: Information quality must be the basis for any information system

IT Myths: While some IT myths are amusing after dinner anecdotes, others can bite the unwary

• If you have any feedback or comment on Tech Focus, please e-mail paul.hearns@mediateam.ie with the subject line Tech Focus.

As we embrace the information age, there are more gadgets available to the average sales person than there were weapons for medieval warriors. So does this add a credible advantage to the guy or gal on the road? Early sales reps had their wares and their wits, with which to earn a living, however as technology advances, does all of the constant flow of information actually make today's well trained professionals any more adept than their medieval counterparts?

CRM customers

In the 90s, customer relationship management (CRM) was the saviour of the world. With this great tool, customers would be treated the same when they interacted with a company regardless of the channel they used. I could look at the latest bells and whistles microwaving on the Web, see

it was in stock and go down to my local bricks and mortar version of the same shop and pick one up. That is to say, it was in stock according to the Web.

Joe behind the counter would knowingly tell me that this particular microwave was not actually on the market yet, and that the marketing guys had just got

Early sales reps had their wares and their wits with which to earn a living'

ahead of themselves. All of this would happen as I spied the Joneses from next door walking out with one under their arm! What was more, I actually did not have any money in my account, because Jean at the bank had cross sold me the latest

critical illness cover, to ensure I could still get paid, even if the intended microwave I intended to purchase blew up in my face!

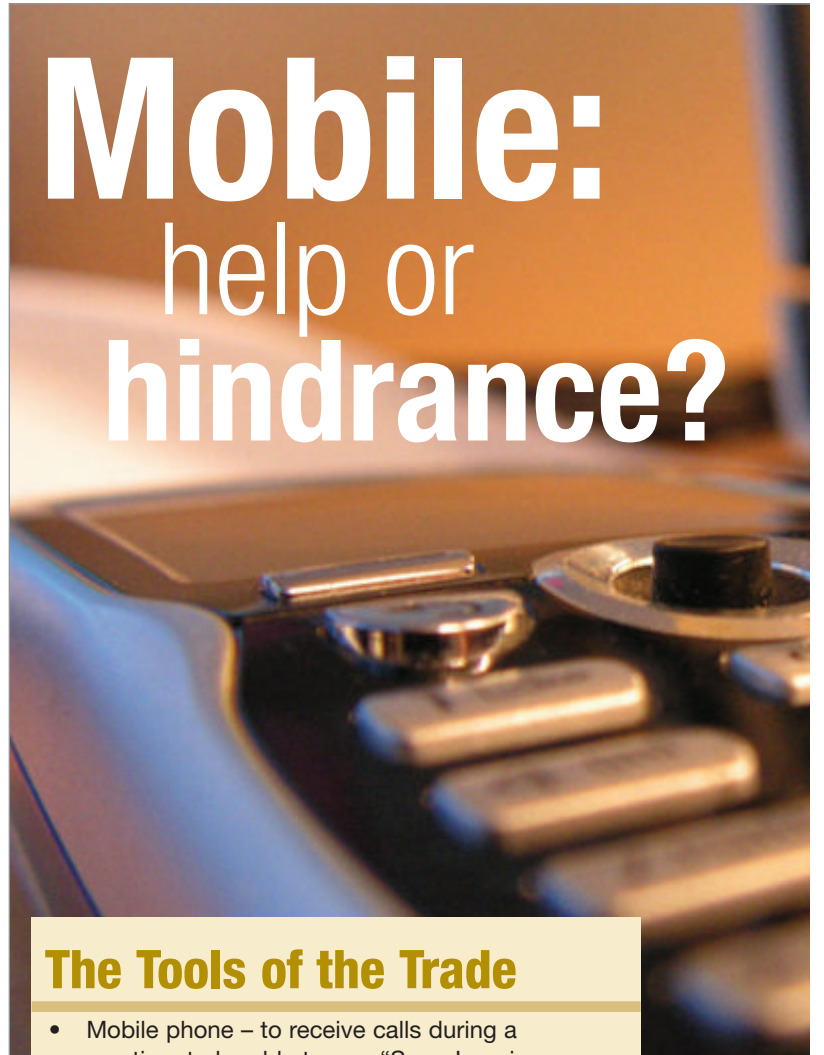
That was how Joe Public, the humble customer fared with CRM, but how did Jimmy Rep on the road feel about CRM? This amazing management tool, which would help customers achieve Nirvana, actually had another great benefit. It meant that rather than spending hours preparing Excel spreadsheets for the boss, the sales manager could put all of the onus on Jimmy Rep, who would have to spend hours after each sales call filling in hundreds of meaningless fields, that no-one seemed to care about.

And what was more, the filofax in his head was now no longer his ticket to job hopping pay rises, since the company now owned all of the information about his customers which was safely stored away on this database. What's more, management knew where he was, when he tried to sneak off playing golf, and how few sales he really made.

So what did Jimmy Rep do? He did nothing! He forgot to fill in the data, his boss screamed at him, he moved jobs, and started the whole frustrating, non-selling process all over again, albeit on a higher base salary, with still little or no commission!

Tech vulnerability

Information was always being intercepted. Back in the Roman times, it was often good policy to send a number of messengers back from the regions with news to the emperor. It was often the case that the not so fleet of foot got caught, their messages stolen, and they were hung out for the crows. With any luck, one of the other guys would evade capture and bring



The Tools of the Trade

- Mobile phone – to receive calls during a meeting, to be able to say, "Sorry I am in a meeting"!
- Laptop – to power the mobile CRM application
- PDA – with mobile e-mail, because your laptop is too big to carry everywhere
- Wireless Pay As You Go card – to reply to e-mail, while drinking coffee, because the PDA is too fiddly to write on
- Personal Mobile – to avoid the BIK on the work one and to receive calls from the head-hunters
- Broadband with VPN at home – to keep in touch with the office, and print those huge proposals
- Hands Free Car kit – to make those vital calls in the car, to say you are running late for a meeting
- Memory Stick – to keep a back up of the product catalogue on, and to store the latest photos of your golfing holiday in Spain
- Mobile Projector - for those unplanned presentations

tidings to the emperor.

Now I am not saying that our friend, Jimmy the Rep is likely to lose his head when his laptop gets ripped off, unless of course his boss is an ogre! But there are risks and for that reason it is vital

to have a good security policy.

The sales manager who owns the customer information, which is a vital company asset, should ensure that all forms of mobile communication are

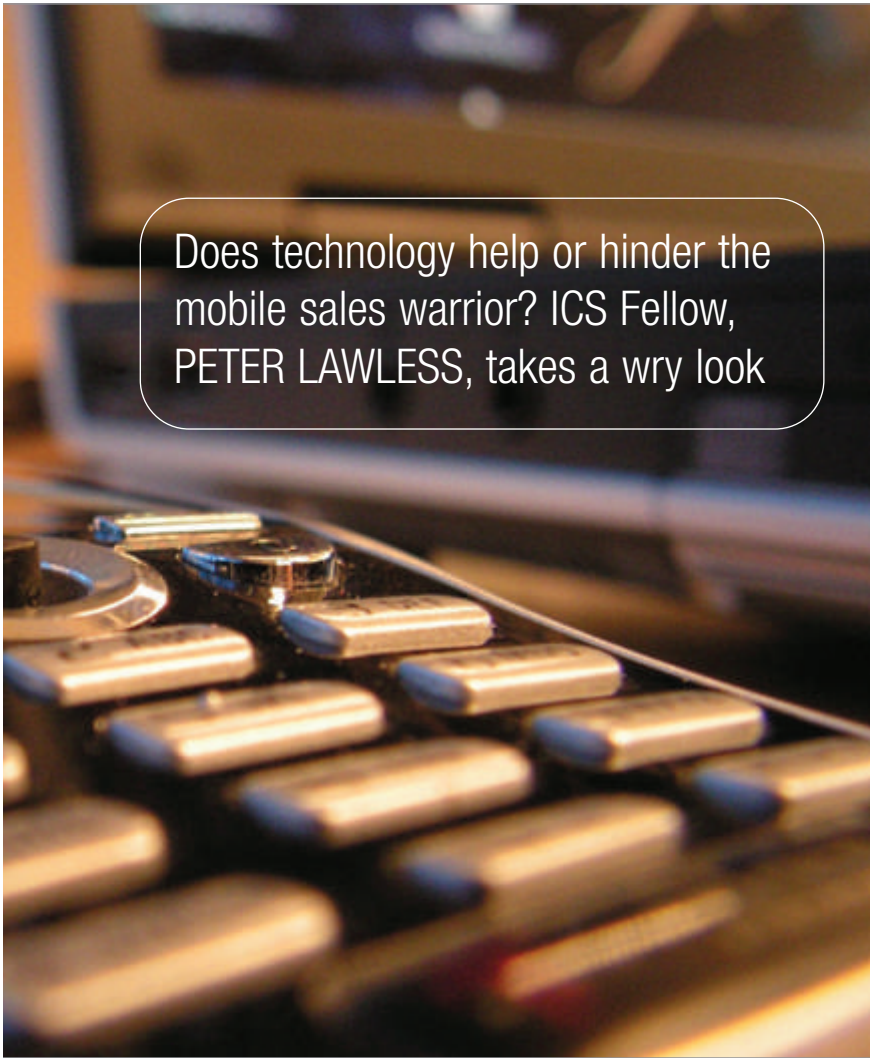
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Does technology help or hinder the mobile sales warrior? ICS Fellow, PETER LAWLESS, takes a wry look

intended beneficiary, the customer, is actually the number one beneficiary, then you will truly see a return on your investment. We have all heard the maxim that happy customers will not only buy more from you, they will also refer you to other customers.

Sales success

Meanwhile, the sales reps will benefit from tools that enable them to be more productive, and thus earn more commission by having the support of a CRM system and an appropriate sales methodology. Reps can ensure that success gets repeated and mistakes eliminated. They will have the ability to use all of the

to be their customers' source of information, forging stronger bonds, which results in increased sales.

Having access to the company's ordering systems, while with a customer, facilitates faster and more accurate ordering of what the customer wants and increases what the customer can buy.

Conclusion

Driving to Cork in a tractor is about as smart as using a Mini to bring hay from the fields. Selecting the correct tools, with appropriate training and motivation, will yield tangible benefits by delivering increased sales, higher commission and shorter working hours to a good sales rep.

The job advert 'carrots' of a laptop, PDA, mobile phone and car, are essential tools of the trade, when backed up by systems that measure and assist in sales productivity. When these tools lead to shorter hours and higher commission, then mobile technology will have been used as intended. ■

Johnny rep forgot to fill in the data and his boss screamed at him'

First of all, your customers will be served the way they want to be served. The three key ways in which they will benefit are that they will enjoy a consistent and excellent level of service whatever channel they use to interact with your company. Secondly, they get a visit from either a sales rep or a service engineer, who

will already know all about them and be able to serve them in the best possible manner. And finally, they will only receive marketing communications about offerings which are suitable to their requirements, needs or wants.

company tools, will not waste time travelling to the office and can have all the information at their finger tips to go straight out to customers. This eliminates wasteful travel time and gives them more customer face time. When their company employs internal sales reps, all information, including appointments generated can be passed to the field sales rep in real-time, to keep their commission earning schedule full.

Being able to access the latest company information on the road ensures that the mobile sales rep can be fully up to date, enabling them

Disclaimer

The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official position of the Irish Computer Society.

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extensively audited by an external security company. There should be policies in place, to protect all the data that a mobile rep may have access to. Not only is the loss of your own company's crown jewels serious, but a customer's data falling into the wrong hands could be catastrophic.

Aside from external fraudulent data loss, accidental loss can also be highly disruptive which is why a good backup and disaster recovery plan is very important. Your consultant, preferably one who has a security certification such as BS 7799 themselves, should also be able to provide guidance and services around that.

The most difficult loss, however, to protect against is employee theft. The old fashioned practice of marching a resigning sales rep to the door is no longer practical. Easy access to USB memory keys will mean that any data a rep decides to take will be long gone before any notice is given.

Quantifiable benefits

Enough moaning then about the terrible life of Jimmy Rep. On the other hand, there are immense productivity gains to be had from well employed sales tools.

If your CRM system is implemented in a way that ensures its number one

will already know all about them and be able to serve them in the best possible manner. And finally, they will only receive marketing communications about offerings which are suitable to their requirements, needs or wants.

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