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COME & SEE US...

...at the **ARLA conference 2010**

CML will again be exhibiting at the ARLA annual conference which is to be held on Tuesday 2nd March 2010, once again at the popular venue of Novotel London West in Hammersmith. Put the date in your diary and come and see us on our stand when we'll be delighted to discuss our latest offerings. Further details can be seen at ARLA's website:

www.arla.co.uk



DID YOU KNOW?



Deborah Horsford leads our property accounting team

Did you know that CML has a department within the business which undertakes outsourced property accounting for clients?

The department was established when CML was asked by Unilever PLC to implement its "Triangle" property management system to assist the property team in administering two portfolios of residential property. At the time of the implementation the finance team at Unilever preferred not to become involved with the detailed property accounting so it was agreed that

CML would take over responsibility for what became the "Client accounting" aspect of the Unilever portfolio.

For CML the establishment of a property accounting team was a logical extension of our services offering as within the business we already had the skills, experience and of course the systems to undertake this kind of work. Robert (our MD) was ten years at Savills where he was responsible for client accounting across the Savills business and Deborah is also ex-Savills and knows the property industry and corporate accounting very well. Robert and Deborah are both qualified accountants so there was every reason to offer a property accounting service to the marketplace.

We are now seeing strong interest in the services we offer and hope to be adding a number of new clients over the coming winter. Generally we are finding that businesses with a property portfolio which is a non-core activity can gain real value in passing this work out to specialists such as CML where they benefit from faster and more accurate data processing giving improved quality of management information. If you have a need for this please do contact us!

Hints & Tips

1. When printing reports if you need to print all the reports in a specific folder, as long as they are all crystal reports you can do this by right clicking on the folder where it will ask for any criteria required, and then just print them off.

2. When entering a purchase invoice or purchase order if more lines are required to split out nominal codes press ctrl+I, or to delete a line ctrl+D (1 invoice multiple nominal items)

3. When entering a Journal the line description can either be changed at that point or after posting by clicking on the narrative button on the transaction page.

4. Whilst doing the automated bank reconciliation, the reconciled item appears at the bottom of the page, if misallocation occurs rather than closing the bank reconciliation and starting again, you can drag and drop the misallocated item back across to the cashbook.

5. If you feel that your password may be known by other people it is very easy to change by clicking on file, Change Password.

6. CML also calculates your quarterly Non Residents Landlords Tax, as well as provides the Year End Non Resident Landlords Reports.



When I wrote the spring **Business Update** the FTSE 100 index was just about at its low point of about 3,500 points. Today the market is just about at its twelve month high point at 5,150 points; that's an astonishing 47% improvement in the index. Alongside that we have talk of house prices rising and improving transaction levels. So background confidence seems to be heading north and that can only be good. Unemployment on the other hand is also heading north; not such good news. I think we all recognise that there's a significant lag between the market's perception of what is happening and the more mainstream economy. Let's hope this market rise is not simply a rally but recognition of a real improved confidence and value in the market that will lead the rest of the country up and away from recession.

Our particular marketplace continues to be quiet relative to 2007 and 2008; indeed we are normally attending the PCS Expo show in Islington during October but not this year as it has been cancelled given the circumstances. However we are seeing continued interest and investment in systems from property management businesses that need to continue to manage apartments and estates regardless of the happenings in the property market. The huge growth in the construction of apartment blocks during the early and mid "noughties" has resulted now in a significant increase in the need for block management services; good timing!

BUSINESS UPDATE

We also have seen strong demand from our Student Accommodation clients. The recent increase in higher education admissions leads directly to an increased need for student accommodation so this sector is busier than ever. Over the summer we've developed a number of web based applications to aid the bulk processing of student applications for rooms and the subsequent administration of the rentroll. We're never idle!

We recently exhibited at Resi 09 in Newport Wales, and it was really pleasing to see some of the main players in the residential sector planning the regeneration of the market. The ARLA conference next March is our next planned exhibition when we will be showing our new lettings applications for the first time. Let's hope that by then we are seeing some real confidence coming back to the marketplace.

We've not added to or reduced our team over the past few months; it's very much about serving our existing client base to the best of our ability and taking the opportunity during this downturn to get ourselves in increasingly better shape ahead of things to come. It's very much been a "steady hand on the tiller" during the rough waters of 2009.

It would be fabulous to write the spring 2010 newsletter and to be reporting another 47% increase in the stock market but I fear that's very unlikely! Any takers for a wager on a further 15% increase though to 5,900 points?

Robert Horsford

CLOUD COMPUTING



Everyone is talking about cloud computing these days; every time you turn the page in a magazine or switch on the radio it's "Cloud Computing". It's initially a confusing term; what does it mean? At CML we have decided to spend a little time to help you understand the term and determine for yourself whether it really is a revolution or hyperbole.

The term "**Cloud Computing**" is not well defined and seems to mean different things to different people. The term cloud is actually used as a metaphor for the Internet, based on how the Internet is depicted in computer network diagrams and is an abstraction of the underlying infrastructure it conceals.

A purist description of cloud computing is that the user of computer equipment uses applications which are dynamically available as a service over the Internet on a utility basis. Users need not have knowledge of, expertise in, or control over the technology infrastructure in the "cloud" that supports them. Cloud computing services often provide common business applications online that are accessed from a web browser, while the software and data are stored on servers "somewhere in the cloud". To that end the user's only connection to the applications being used or their data is via the cloud and they will often not know where the applications or data which they use/create is physically located.

A technical definition is "a computing capability that provides an abstraction between the computing resource and its

underlying technical architecture (e.g., servers, storage, networks), enabling on-demand network access to a shared pool of configurable computing resources."

This definition states that clouds have five essential characteristics: on-demand usage (i.e. you get to use it when you need it), broad network access (you can access it from wherever you want), resource pooling (computing power is pooled and therefore shared amongst all users), rapid elasticity (the service can expand and contract with demand), and measured service (you have transparency of availability and service).

We have operated a form of "Cloud Computing" here at CML for some years whereby we locate a server remotely from our business. Our clients then use the internet as a conduit through which to connect to that server. You may have seen the "Remote Desktop" application on your desktop and we have used this application to enable such communication, computing resources are pooled, and the number of users that can log into this application flexes with demand. To that extent

characteristics of cloud computing are already met. However in this scenario we have control over the server and we know where it is physically located and we are not making this server available for others to access.

Another characteristic of pure "Cloud Computing" is that there is a direct relationship between the way that the application / service is paid for and the utility of the service / application which is spread over the period of its use (for example a per month per user cost like salesforce.com, or a per transaction cost which is how the London stock exchange works).

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Team Profile



Alexander is a graduate of the University of Hull after completing an honours degree in computer science with software engineering. Alex joined CML in November 2008 to apply the knowledge learnt in his academic career to the development of the company's new fully web-based integrated sales and lettings solution: RADAR. Alex is also a professional member of the British Computer Society and The Chartered Institute for IT, which keeps his technical expertise at the forefront of the industry.

As a developer at CML Alex's roles include development of our new product lines; carrying out planning, implementation and testing of the software and building in the company's versatile experience of agency software solutions under the supervision of our software development director, Paul McDonald.

Outside of work Alex produces content for a world-wide team of game designers and in his spare time travels northern England seeking sunny countryside and quirky English pubs.

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CML's own software has of course been offered on a per user per month basis for years. Indeed the idea of rental, as a method of payment for any good or service, has been around for a very long time, and to the extent that any income stream can be turned into a cash lump-sum (with the appropriate discount for time and risk) and vice versa, this concept is just financial engineering. The key point here is that clients want to be presented with methods of payment that fit around their needs and where the value received can be directly attributed to the cost.

Cloud computing therefore seems to offer the cash strapped finance director the opportunity to outsource a significant proportion of the IT infrastructure costs of the business. Of course you will still need to pay for the devices that are used to access the service or application provided through the cloud – so desktop computers, LANs / WANS, broadband and the "IT crowd" are still going to be a prevalent feature on IT budgets for years to come, however the central data and application storage capabilities might feasibly be outsourced and managed outside of the head office IT function. That is certainly one of the ways that we at CML can already help.

That's a great upside but there is also a downside if you want to go all the way on the cloud, and that is perhaps a loss of control and security over applications and data if the service provider is allowing their application (and your data) to be distributed across a number of servers (possibly each owned by different suppliers) with no one supplier or computing resource being solely responsible for maintaining that service and the data, a fact which pure cloud computing necessitates.

Could cloud computing really offer a solution for a business critical system?

Would the Board really feel comfortable relying entirely on a distant (potentially unknown?) supplier as the platform for their entire business? There has recently been an instance of a very significant loss of mobile phone data in a T Mobile & Microsoft alliance in the US. This system failure has been a real warning sign that data security as yet is far from assured in a Cloud Computing environment.

So, hyperbole or revolution? A bit of both actually. At its most simple it is a method of providing users with remote access to applications that are hosted outside of businesses, using the internet as a transport mechanism, with service cost directly associated with service provision - something that has been around for number of years at CML, and is almost an accepted norm across the industry. In its purest form though, with all applications and data being remotely hosted and widely distributed it is very new. There remain some significant issues to be addressed though before we see a wholesale hosting of critical business systems in "The Cloud".

PLACES THAT WE RECOMMEND

On our website we've added a new section which has nothing whatsoever to do with software. Have a look in "About us" and "*Places that we recommend*" where you'll see some descriptive narratives and pictures of places where members of the team have been to and enjoyed during summer 2009. We're not trying to compete with Alistair Sawday's excellent guide but for sure we have absolutely no axe to grind and you might just enjoy the same places that we did! See here:

www.cmlsoftware.com

and Enjoy!