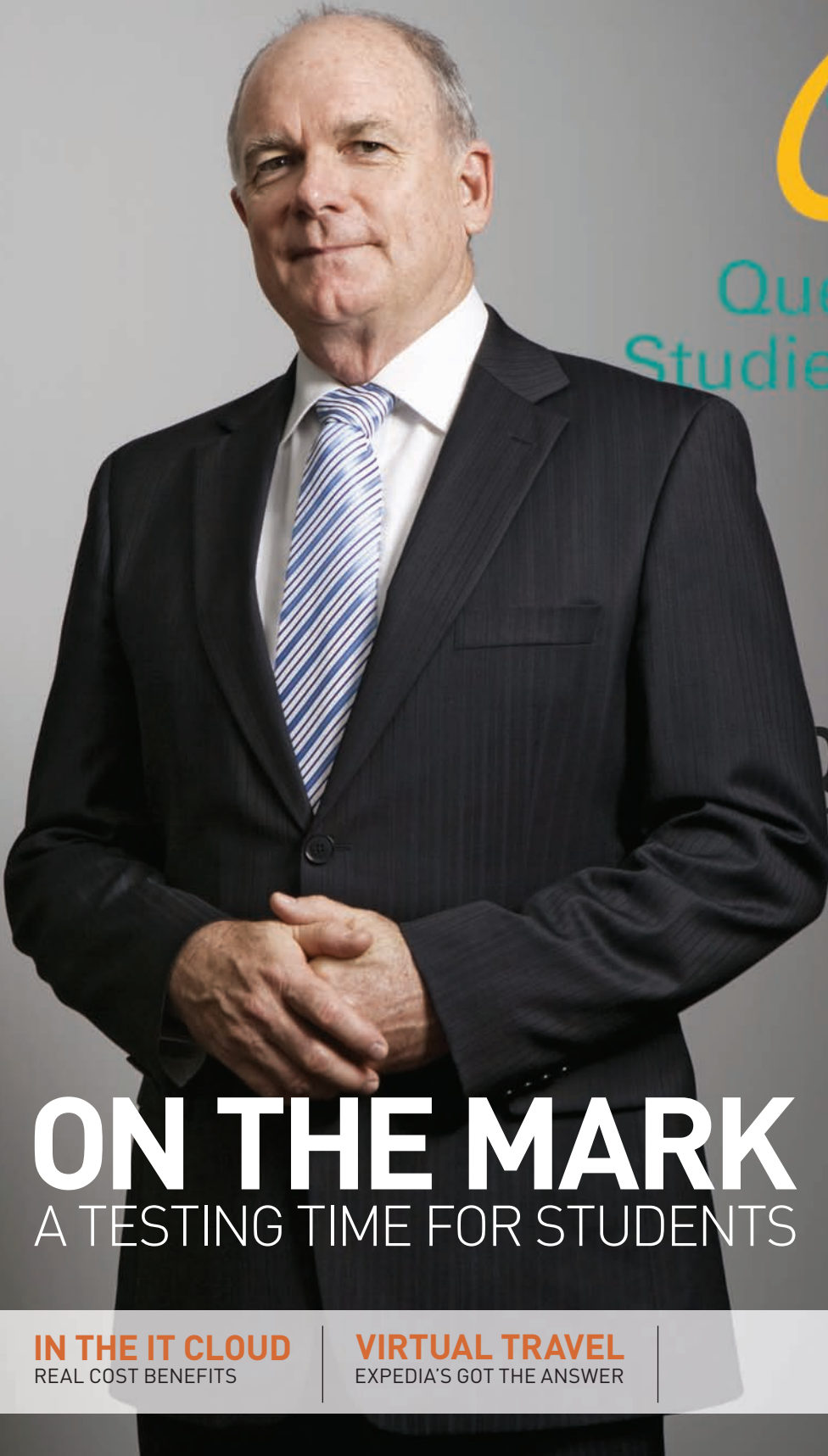


COMMUNICATIONS SOLUTIONS FOR THE REAL WORLD

# Innovations

Issue three, Spring 2010



Queensland  
Studies Authority



Queensland  
Government

## ON THE MARK

A TESTING TIME FOR STUDENTS

**IN THE IT CLOUD**  
REAL COST BENEFITS

**VIRTUAL TRAVEL**  
EXPEDIA'S GOT THE ANSWER





WELCOME...

Welcome to this Spring issue of *Innovations* magazine.

In our first case study we examine the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA), responsible for the literacy and numeracy testing of 230,000 Queensland students each year. The QSA began working with Salmat in 2007 to develop an online marking assessment solution, FlowMark, that enables the printing and distribution of test materials, including about 690,000 test booklets personalised with school location and student names. The next step involved the development of an online environment that will create further savings for testing authorities.

Our second case study looks at how Salmat developed a skills and knowledge-based routing system for global online travel operator, Expedia. The Expedia virtual travel centre seamlessly manages calls from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Malaysia and China to deliver not only customer satisfaction, but also a very efficient conversion of calls to sales. Calls are directed to agents based on a range of customer requirements, such as language spoken and the type of call (customer service or sales enquiry).

This issue's special feature reviews cloud computing and Software as a Service (SaaS), and the potential benefits for businesses seeking cost and operating efficiencies. We discover that this technology can reduce entry barriers for companies unable to afford the 'big end of town' technology now available.

**Grant Harrod,**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Creating a "mobile" mobile network



There may be a way to make mobile phone calls even when a disaster has brought down the network.

Researchers at Adelaide's Flinders University aimed to provide a fast, cheap, robust and effective telecommunications systems for where conventional phone infrastructure has been destroyed or is not cost-effective. Innovatively, they have developed a way to expand the reach of mobile phone networks by turning each mobile into a mesh network node using standard wireless technology.

By using each phone as a mobile "repeater" for Wi-Fi signals, an ad hoc communications network can be used to carry phone calls where there is no regular mobile service. Most modern mobile handsets have Wi-Fi signal support built-in. ☞ Source: [www.techworld.com.au](http://www.techworld.com.au)

## That's not a battery...

Giant batteries could be the way to store energy generated by solar and wind power off-peak to be reused later.

In Presidio, Texas, a giant \$25 million battery is the solution to the town's single outdated transmission line and power outages. Power authorities have installed a 4mW sodium-sulphur (NaS) battery system consisting of 80 modules, weighing 3,600 kg, and built by the Japanese firm NGK-Locke.

While sodium-sulphur batteries are not as well known as the lithium-ion batteries that power our laptops, it's not new technology.

Calvin Crowder, president of Electric Transmission Texas says, "Japan has been at this for a decade or so. As price becomes less through mass production, there will be opportunities for wind and solar to improve the economics of their power." ☞

Source: [news.nationalgeographic.com](http://news.nationalgeographic.com)





## Computers help translate 'lost' languages

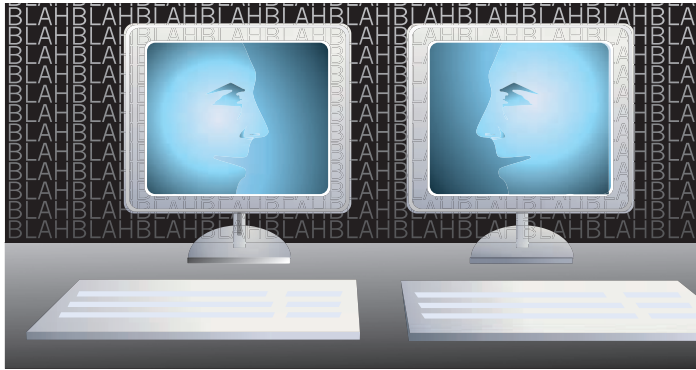
Scientists have used a computer program to decipher a written language that is more than 3,000 years old.

The program translated the ancient written language of Ugaritic within just a few hours.

Scientists hope this could be the breakthrough needed that could help them decipher other ancient languages that they have been unable to translate so far.

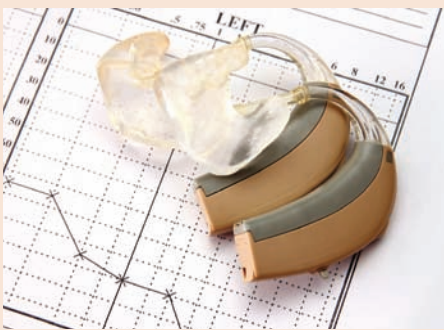
Ugaritic was last used around 1200 BC in western Syria. It consists of dots on clay tablets and was not deciphered until 1932, even though it was related to a known language, Hebrew.

The key to the software program is that it is able to make assumptions about the way different words are formed.



Source: [www.dailymail.co.uk](http://www.dailymail.co.uk)

## COMPUTERS HELP STUDENTS TO HEAR



New technology may allow deaf students to take part in mainstream education.

Under the system, the teacher wears a lapel microphone that transmits the audio

to a captioner who uses a voice-to-text program to send the words to the student's laptop in under seven seconds.

Deaf students and disability experts say it could revolutionise how those with hearing loss are taught during secondary and tertiary education. The system, Access Innovation Live, was developed over three years by the Sydney company Access Innovation Media.

It is being tested at Robert Townson High School in Raby in Sydney's southwest, and the company is expanding the pilot scheme nationally.

Source: [www.smh.com.au](http://www.smh.com.au)

## E-books begin to impact

It has finally happened. Online retail giant Amazon reports that sales of electronic books for their Kindle reader has overtaken hardcover book sales.

It now appears the number of people with readers has reached a critical mass, largely on the back of pricing cuts.

Amazon dropped the price of its standard black-and-white screen Kindle to compete with Apple's iPad tablet computer. Then, in July, Amazon unveiled a new large-screen version of its Kindle and cut the price by \$US110.

Apple's cheapest iPad, currently the Kindle's chief rival, is about \$US100 more

expensive but features a colour e-reader screen compared with the black-and-white Kindle, which is devoted exclusively to digital books.

"Amazon.com customers now purchase more Kindle books than hardcover books," says Amazon chief executive Jeff Bezos. "It's astonishing when you consider that we've been selling hardcover books for 15 years, and Kindle books for 33 months."

Over a one month period, Amazon sold 180 Kindle books for every 100 hardcovers sold. These figures do not include sales of paperbacks.

Source: [www.smh.com.au](http://www.smh.com.au)

## Listen to your email



Reading emails while driving is illegal and widely recognised as dangerous even when stuck in traffic.

A solution is at hand. Software developer Text'nDrive's iPhone app can read your email aloud when your hands and eyes are otherwise occupied.

Text'nDrive supports most major email providers, and has been specifically tested with Gmail, AOL, Hotmail, and MobileMe. When you're on the road with the app open, it checks for messages, reading aloud (via any Bluetooth-compatible speaker or headset) the first 45 words of new emails. The pro version increases that limit to 500 words and enables the ability to reply via dictation.

CEO Daniel Robichaud describes Text'nDrive as an "innovative solution which we hope will entice more responsible driving habits and ultimately make the roads safer for everyone."

He says SMS functionality for the software is under development.

Source: [www.pcworld.com](http://www.pcworld.com)

## World record storage

Scientists at Tohoku University in Japan have recorded data at a density of 4 trillion bits per square inch, which is a world record for the experimental "ferroelectric" data storage method. This density is about eight times the density of today's most advanced magnetic hard-disk drives.

The data-recording device scans a tiny cantilever tip that rides in contact with the surface of a ferroelectric material.

The scientists believe this ferroelectric data storage system may succeed magnetic hard disk drives or flash memory, at least in applications for which extremely high data density and small physical volume is required.

Source: [www.sciencedaily.com](http://www.sciencedaily.com)

# ON THE MARK

The Queensland Studies Authority's move to online marking for the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy has brought greater efficiencies and accuracy for students, markers and the QSA itself.

Each year the Queensland Studies Authority oversees the administration of NAPLAN in Queensland – a task that involves providing students with test materials, and marking and reporting the results of those tests.

In an average year, the QSA arranges tests for 230,000 students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 who are enrolled across 1,800 schools.

The system enables the printing and distribution of test materials, including approximately 690,000 test booklets personalised with school location and student names.

Additionally, the solution supports the distribution, tracking, auditing and collection of test materials, the high volume

scanning of completed exam scripts, secure storage of data, and the secure destruction of student test booklets.

In 2008, when NAPLAN was introduced, the QSA had already begun work on streamlining its State-based testing program, aiming to improve consistency, quality and accuracy without increasing costs.

In 2007, QSA had begun working with Salmat to develop an online marking assessment solution, now known as FlowMark.

"When making the procurement decision, a factor taken into account was the functionality of the online system," says Peter Luxton, Acting Director of QSA.

"We wanted the marking process to be efficient, we wanted ease of access to the program, and we wanted a system that met all the stipulated management, database and reporting requirements."

## SALMAT PERSPECTIVE

Speed and improved accuracy are two of the key benefits of the FlowMark system, according to David Sutherland, Market Manager, Education & State Government – Salmat Business Process Outsourcing. He says both of these attributes are vital when it comes to providing test results for Queensland's students.

"Better accuracy was a key issue," says Sutherland.

"It's far easier to monitor online what each marker is doing. In a paper-based test system you could probably check two in 10 test papers, perhaps. FlowMark provides immediate feedback to be able to get on top of any marking issues quickly.

"There is also a facility to be able to send a script electronically from a marker to a team leader if a marker wants to check and clarify something in that script.

With FlowMark we know how fast a marker marks, how many times they send a script to be checked, and the accuracy of their marking.

"This system is all about students' results and we want to make sure students get accurate results in a timely fashion. The FlowMark system helps achieve that."

Sutherland says the state of the art solution could offer potential benefits to other education authorities nationally and overseas, with the ability to tailor the online assessment system to a client's specific needs.

"Next year we are looking at starting to build an online testing environment as well and that technology will create huge savings for authorities like QSA," says Sutherland.

## INCREASED EFFICIENCY

FlowMark is a comprehensive technological and logistical package customised to meet QSA's stringent requirements.

Marker efficiency has been increased with the provision of an audit tool for the online display of exam content and marker results. The 400 or so markers using FlowMark are assisted by a flexible interface that replicates paper-based marking. They are able to use zoom, tilt and image enhancement tools to better view the test scripts online.

Paper-based test booklets are scanned to translate them to an online format. Multiple choice tests are then marked automatically and essays or scripted answers are forwarded to the FlowMark system to be assessed by markers.



David Sutherland, Market Manager, Education & State Government – Salmat Business Process Outsourcing (left) with Peter Luxton, Acting Director of the Queensland Studies Authority.

Data capture capabilities, verification of all required fields and the printing of personalised student reports in full colour are also key features of the solution.

“We have strict timelines to meet in terms of national requirements,” says Luxton.

“This system improves efficiency and we can monitor markers to ensure consistency by randomly inserting control scripts. Markers don’t know they’re marking a control script and that enables us to check that markers are sticking to the agreed marking rubric.”

### OPTIMISED FLOW

FlowMark has also optimised the flow of scripts through QSA’s marking centre, reduced movement and transportation costs, and helped the Authority cope with an increase in student numbers when Year 9 students were built into the testing cohort for the first time in 2008. This

brought an extra 55,000 to 60,000 students into the system.

FlowMark has since been enhanced to ensure it works efficiently and meets all of QSA’s requirements.

Luxton says the Authority is satisfied with the current system produced in conjunction with Salmat. “Our relationship with Salmat extends back some years and it’s a very positive one. There is a keen desire to work in partnership and people are proactive in identifying and heading off problems.

“In an electronic marking system there is always room for improvement and Salmat improve from year to year and we’re pretty happy with where the FlowMark system sits at the moment.”

**For more information contact David Sutherland, Market Manager, Education & State Government on (02) 9311 9780 or 0409 911 110 or [david.sutherland@salmat.com.au](mailto:david.sutherland@salmat.com.au) or visit [www.salmat.com.au](http://www.salmat.com.au).**

## KEY POINTS

- The Queensland Studies Authority is the statutory body of the Queensland Government responsible for administering NAPLAN in some 1,800 schools.
- Around 230,000 students a year sit NAPLAN in Queensland’s primary and high schools.
- In 2007, QSA began investigating shifting from a paper-based marking system to an online system to improve efficiency and accuracy.
- The online assessment (FlowMark) system was first piloted by QSA in 2008 and has undergone a series of enhancements since then.
- FlowMark has improved marker consistency and accuracy via features including the ability to monitor how fast a marker works, how they mark control scripts, and how often a team leader amends a marker’s original marks.
- Other key benefits of FlowMark include the distribution, tracking, auditing and collection of test materials, secure data storage and secure destruction of test booklets, flexible interface replicating paper-based marking and printing of personalised student reports.

# BUSINESS MOVES

A growing number of businesses, both in Australia and around the world, are waking up to the benefits of cloud computing.



Illustration: Alastair Taylor

# INTO THE CLOUD

Cloud computing is a relatively new development – but IT specialists believe it will have a resounding impact on the way businesses operate in the near future.

An InformationWeek Analytics 2010 Cloud Computing and IT Staffing Survey in July this year found 60 per cent of strategic IT managers have either adopted cloud services, or plan to adopt them, within the next two years.

Meanwhile, Gartner, a leading information technology research and advisory company headquartered in Stamford in the US, estimates that by 2015, enterprises will have spent around \$125 billion on cloud computing solutions.

“IT managers are thinking strategically about cloud service deployments; more progressive enterprises are thinking through what their IT operations will look like in a world of increasing cloud service leverage,” says Ben Pring, Research Vice President at Gartner.

Pring says the trials of the recent economic climate have only hastened the move towards cloud computing.

“The financial turbulence of the last 18 months has meant every organisation has been scrutinising every expenditure,” he says. “An IT solution that can deliver functionality less expensively and with more agility – remembering that time is money – is hard to ignore.”

## DEFINING CLOUD COMPUTING

Gartner defines cloud computing as “a style of computing where scaleable and elastic IT-related capabilities are provided as a service to customers using internet technologies”.

In a nutshell, cloud computing is internet-based computing that allows shared

resources, software and information to be provided to computers on demand, similar to the setup of the electricity grid. Customers do not usually own the physical infrastructure. Instead they are billed depending on how much they consume or on a subscription or time-based model.

“In modern business speak it’s a form of outsourcing of IT services; both hardware and software,” explains Professor Bernard Pailthorpe, Professor of Computational Science at the University of Queensland.

“The most common experience of cloud computing would be using Facebook or Google, but of course those scales are far different from enterprise computing.”

Macquarie Telecom says there are three markers that identify a cloud service – an underlying supporting infrastructure architecture that is shared, the ability to scale quickly and so create elastic expansion, and a charging system based on variable or fixed operational expenditures instead of large upfront investments.

## SaaS GROWTH POTENTIAL

Interest in the SaaS (Software as a Service) element of cloud computing is particularly strong according to research by analyst firm IDC. It predicts revenues for SaaS will rise from US\$13.1 billion in 2009 to US\$40.5 billion by 2014.

Companies say they are moving towards SaaS because, as with cloud computing generally, it offers faster deployment, easier upgrades, and reduces the costs and headaches associated with buying and maintaining hardware.

Gartner says the financial services and manufacturing industries are the largest early adopters of cloud services such as SaaS, with communications and high-tech

## KEY POINTS

- Cloud computing is internet-based computing that allows shared resources, software and information to be provided on demand, similar to the setup of the electricity grid.
- Interest in SaaS (software as a service) is particularly strong, according to research that predicts revenues for SaaS will reach US\$40.5 billion by 2014.
- Companies are moving towards SaaS because, as with cloud computing generally, it offers faster deployment, easier upgrades, and reduces the costs and headaches associated with buying and maintaining hardware.
- Security and jurisdictional issues are an ongoing concern for businesses considering migration to a cloud computing model. For example, questions arise over who can access and view data when it is stored overseas by cloud providers based in other countries.
- Large Australian organisations and businesses have become early adopters of cloud computing and expect it to become an increasingly prevalent and significant technological advancement in Australia.

industries not far behind. Within Australia, early adopters of cloud services include Toyota, Visy, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, the University of Melbourne and RMIT University.

Michael Harte, Commonwealth Bank of Australia Chief Information Officer and Group Executive for Enterprise Services, says the CBA has been investigating cloud computing possibilities since 2007.

“All we want to do is buy software and infrastructure as a service over a network,” he said in a July interview with *CIO* magazine. “We only want to pay for what we use. And we only want to pay on demand.”

Harte says the CBA has built a comprehensive stack of database services using cloud technology, with the ultimate goal being to deliver customers ‘anytime, anywhere real-time convenience and real-time value’.

“We’ve got to free up the systems and move out of that clunky infrastructure into far more dynamic front-end content and capability,” he says.

### AUTOMOTIVE TO UNIVERSITIES

Michael Jenkins, Manager of Enterprise Architecture and Strategy at Toyota Australia, expects cloud computing to play an increasingly significant role in the company within the next five years.

“Our ultimate goal is to consume automatically self-regulating IT services supplied on a just-in-time basis,” he said earlier this year.

In July last year, Visy also committed to cloud computing by signing a five year \$50 million deal with Telstra to provide a whole of business network and an enterprise cloud computing platform. The move is expected to deliver Visy a 30 per cent cost saving.

Ken Major, Visy’s Chief Information

Officer at the time of the announcement, said the arrangement would allow Visy to focus on utilising rather than maintaining technology and will enable the company to improve core business efficiencies and increase overall productivity.

“In order to remain competitive and achieve our commercial objectives in a tough economic environment, we need to change the way in which our IT resources are utilised and look at more innovative offerings around a user-pay model with our vendors, so we can share the risk and reward and grow together,” he said.

RMIT University in Melbourne also plans to increase its use of cloud computing, according to Allan Morris, Executive Director Information Technology Services.

“I believe the days of university IT groups, and universities themselves, hosting all of the solutions that they would normally host within the walls of a university are gone,” Morris told *The Australian* in June this year.

### CLOUD BENEFITS

For businesses, what are the major benefits of cloud computing solutions such as SaaS?

Professor Pailthorpe says cloud computing may be cost-effective, particularly for small to medium-sized businesses. Because there are reduced upfront costs, cloud computing removes entry barriers for companies that may otherwise be unable to afford the kind of technology on offer.

“It’s about lower cost and less grief. You don’t have the hassle of managing this system and you may also be able to access a richer portfolio of services than you would normally be able to afford,” he says.

Agility is also a benefit. Systems can be accessed via a web browser regardless of a user’s location and cloud computing’s elasticity means resources are automatically

available to manage a business’ peak demand levels.

As applications don’t have to be installed on each user’s individual computer or device they are easier to maintain and upgrades can be rolled out quickly.

“And some of the large corporates offering these services, such as Microsoft and Google, probably have much better security protocols than small business. They know what they are doing,” says Professor Pailthorpe.

Professor Rajkumar Buyya of the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering at the University of Melbourne and Manjrasoft Pty Ltd cites similar benefits.

“You don’t have to invest a lot in infrastructure, you pay for what you use and somebody is managing it for you,” he says.

“Solutions can also be customised according to the needs or standards of different countries and of different industry sectors. And when the new hardware and software is introduced, managing an upgrade is quite difficult and expensive, but with cloud computing the provider delivers that in a seamless manner.”

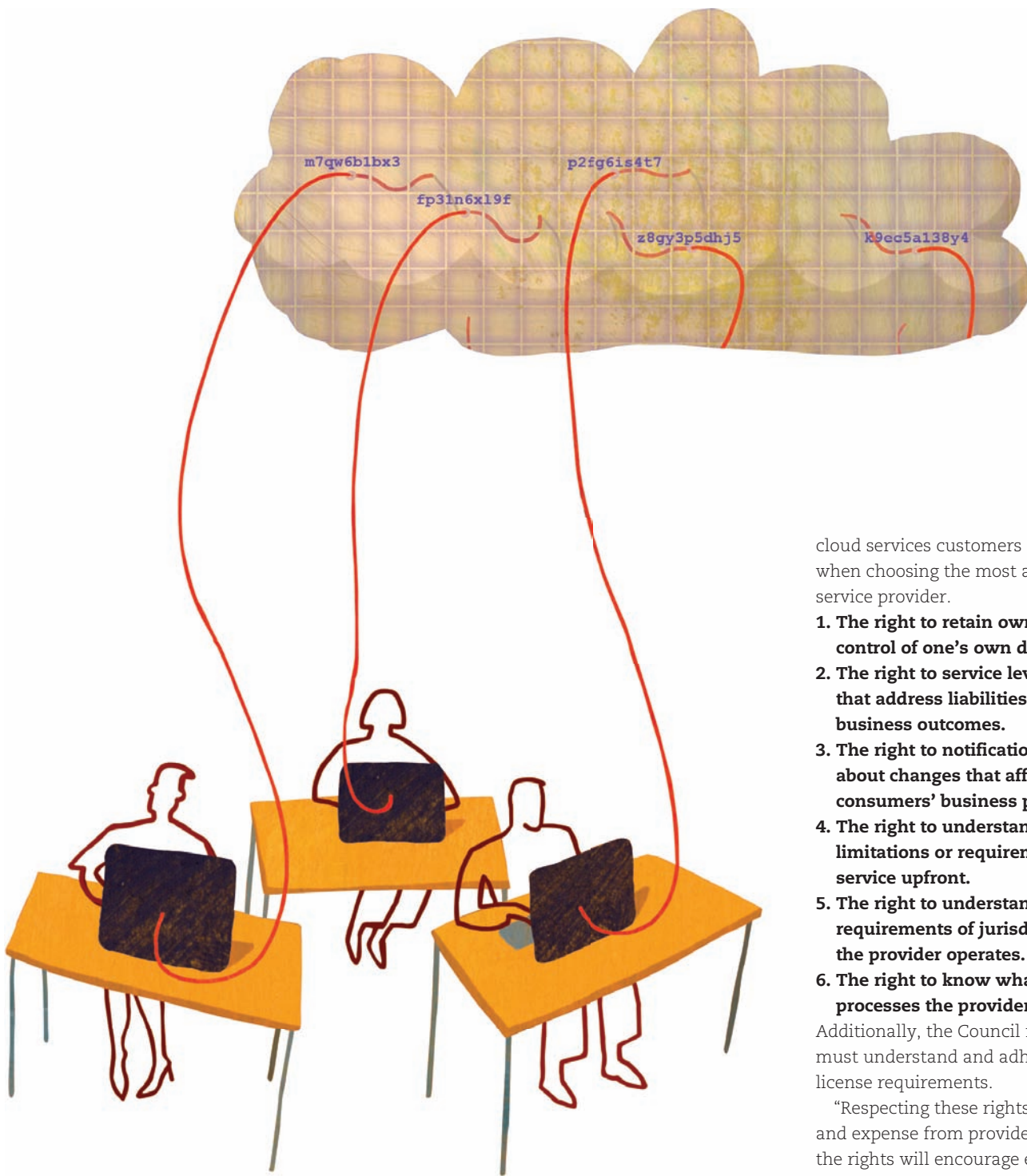
### THE ISSUES

A 2010 report by the Cloud Security Alliance, a non-profit organisation formed to promote the use of best practices within cloud computing, says customers are both ‘excited and nervous’ about the technology.

The nerves are due to concerns about the risks of cloud computing if not properly secured, and the loss of direct control over systems for which they are nonetheless accountable.

Professor Pailthorpe agrees jurisdiction of data is a key issue for organisations contemplating the cloud.

“At the moment a lot of cloud providers



are located in the US and so they are subject to the Patriot Act. This means national security agencies, such as the FBI, can go and look at the data and records held by these providers and the agencies are not required to tell you," he says.

But he adds that cloud computing providers have resources and expertise to dedicate to tackling security issues and to introducing security measures. This should provide business customers with effective data storage and disaster recovery solutions.

Service reliability and performance is also a serious consideration for businesses entering the cloud computing arena. So providers are offering Service Level

Guarantees (SLGs) and Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to convince users that performance levels will match their requirements and enhance, rather than hinder, their business.

"Since cloud applications are crucial to the core business operations of the consumers, it is essential that the consumers have guarantees from providers on service delivery," says Professor Buyya.

"Typically, these are provided through SLAs struck between provider and consumer."

### MAKING A CHOICE

Gartner Inc formed a Global IT Council for Cloud Services to identify basic rights

cloud services customers should insist on when choosing the most appropriate cloud service provider.

1. **The right to retain ownership, use and control of one's own data.**
2. **The right to service level agreements that address liabilities, remediation and business outcomes.**
3. **The right to notification and choice about changes that affect the service consumers' business processes.**
4. **The right to understand the technical limitations or requirements of the service upfront.**
5. **The right to understand the legal requirements of jurisdictions in which the provider operates.**
6. **The right to know what security processes the provider follows.**

Additionally, the Council found consumers must understand and adhere to software license requirements.

"Respecting these rights will require effort and expense from providers, but securing the rights will encourage enterprises to put more of their business into the cloud," says Daryl Plummer, Managing Vice President and Gartner Fellow.

"However, the six rights will not become a reality unless enterprises insist on them when they negotiate with service providers. We urge all enterprises to do what they can to establish these rights and responsibilities as the standard for cloud computing."

Professor Pailthorpe summarises the elements of an effective cloud computing offering:

"Good quality of service, good security (and) appropriate to the legal domain the business is operating in," he says.

"There must be a cost benefit; and be sure it simplifies your business operation so you hand over the grief to someone else." ☞

# EXPEDIA ON THE LINE

Expedia.com's virtual travel centre is about getting the right calls to the right person at the right time, thanks to an efficient skills and knowledge-based routing system.

For customers, Expedia's customised call routing solution not only ensures that travel enquiries are handled quickly, but it sees calls forwarded to an Expedia agent with the right kind of in-depth knowledge.

So, for example, if a customer has an inquiry about Fiji and also speaks Mandarin, their call will be seamlessly routed to an Expedia agent who is a native Mandarin speaker with in-depth knowledge of Fiji who can offer the highest level of service.

This attention to detail delivered by the fine-tuned skills and knowledge-based routing solution has been part of the online

travel company's success story across the Asia Pacific.

At the end of 2005, Expedia decided to build on its international success by launching a website for the Australian market and creating a virtual travel centre to respond to local customer service calls, sales calls and email enquiries.

Originally, just two people staffed that virtual centre in Melbourne. Today, 110 agents manage calls and email enquiries from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Malaysia and China.

Expedia's presence in Australia has grown to include its popular hotels.com website

and WWTE, a wholesale and competitive retail private label booking solution. Agents in Melbourne manage enquiries for these two brands.

Calls are directed to agents based on a range of customer requirements, such as language, the type of call (customer service or sales enquiry), whether the query relates to a hotel booking, air travel, or travel insurance, and the intended destination.

With expected business growth in Japan, the virtual travel centre has recently established a second base in Manila to help manage calls from Japanese customers. It uses the same routing technology to

## SALMAT PERSPECTIVE

According to Anthony Spadafora, Executive Manager, Optimisation, Salmat needed to respond swiftly to support Expedia's sustained growth and the skills and knowledge-based routing solution enabled this.

"It's a very smart routing tool that ensures the right calls go to the right person at the right time," he says.

"Incoming calls are identified through a filter and the matching process starts from there, and when a staff member

logs on at the centre, our routing technology knows they are able to handle specific brand calls, specific languages, and sales versus support enquiries."

It took four months for Salmat to develop and deliver the solution. Spadafora says the results are rewarding. "Seeing the virtual travel centre grow has been great. We never imagined it would be the size it is today."

Aziziye Akyuce, Contact Centre Manager, was one of the original two Salmat employees operating the travel centre. She

says the conversion rates achieved are some of the best rates globally for Expedia.

"We've exceeded their conversion targets and we've had visitors from Expedia's businesses globally coming to our centre and listening to how our agents work. They run much bigger centres so it's exciting that they want to see what we're doing in Australia," says Akyuce.

"Our relationship with Expedia has been a partnership. We want to grow with them and they want to grow with us."

Photo: Kristian Gehradte



Aziziye Akyuce, Contact Centre Manager with Georg Ruebensal, Expedia's Director Operations Asia Pacific and Anthony Spadafora, Executive Manager, Optimisation.

maintain efficiency, customer satisfaction and the conversion of calls to sales.

"Once we started the business in Australia the results from the travel centre were very promising and the conversion rate of enquiries to sales was very positive," says Georg Ruebensal, Expedia's Director Operations Asia Pacific.

"We looked at what had been achieved for Expedia quite early on and thought 'why can't we achieve the same results for the hotels.com brand?' So we added hotels.com to the business in Australia and as we were able to add more customer calls to the business we could add more staff, get bigger volumes and that allowed us to reduce our costs and increase our opening hours."

Keen to take advantage of the business potential in the strong Japanese travel market, Expedia initially discussed opening a local virtual travel centre, like the centre in Melbourne, to enable Japanese customers to be assisted by native-speaking Japanese agents.

"At this time I was at a conference in Hong Kong and happened to meet Expedia's Japanese business owner," says Ruebensal.

"He discussed the issues he had in setting up an operation in Japan and in looking for agents who could run the travel centre there. With a brief phone call to Salmat

asking if it would be possible to find native-speaking Japanese agents to work in the travel centre in Melbourne to service our Japanese customers, a solution for the Japanese market was found.

"It was a growth opportunity for our travel centre and it triggered us to look at other areas. We realised if we could do this for our Japanese customers why couldn't we do it for other languages?"

"So we added Korean, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Malay-speaking agents to the operation. Most agents are fully bilingual and handle their native language and English language calls."

Ruebensal says the ability of the travel centre's technology to deliver the right calls to the right agents has undoubtedly played a role in Expedia's impressive sales results.

Efficiency and attention to detail have ensured 40 per cent of customer calls result in an actual sale, and have delivered Expedia a customer satisfaction rating of 85 per cent – results the company plans to maintain and exceed in the future. ☞

**For more information contact Anthony Spadafora, Executive Manager, Optimisation – Salmat Customer Contact Solutions on (03) 8662 6711 or 0417 326 404 or [anthony.spadafora@salmat.com.au](mailto:anthony.spadafora@salmat.com.au) or visit [www.salmat.com.au](http://www.salmat.com.au).**

## KEY POINTS

- ☞ Expedia's virtual travel centre has grown from a two-person operation to more than 110 agents based in Melbourne and Manila.
- ☞ Skills and knowledge-based routing technology ensure customer calls are delivered to the centre agents who are best qualified to assist.
- ☞ The call routing solution sifts through details such as the customer's preferred language, intended destination or area of interest, whether the caller is enquiring about accommodation, air travel, car hire or insurance, and whether the call is for customer service or a sales enquiry.
- ☞ Travel centre staff can answer 1,000 to 2,000 calls a day as well as hundreds of email enquiries.
- ☞ Conversion rates within the travel centre are among Expedia's best conversion rates globally.



**KAREN GRAHAM**  
NATIONAL OHS&E MANAGER

“Salmat’s goal is to ensure that every employee goes home at the end of the day in the same condition as they came to work. We take a proactive approach to risk management. For example, our ‘Pause Gymnastics’ program has eliminated repetitive strain injuries in our scanning and data entry departments.”

## BRANCHES

### AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY  
NEW SOUTH WALES  
NORTHERN TERRITORY  
QUEENSLAND  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA  
TASMANIA  
VICTORIA  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### INTERNATIONAL

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TAIWAN  
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UK  
USA  
NEW ZEALAND

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