

# SDT - NEWS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | ISSUE 1 | JULY 2009

*Welcome to the first quarterly newsletter from SDT wherein we want to share interesting information with you regarding our industry, our views and exciting events taking place in everyday business.*

## **Message from the COO**

*African economies are not immune to shocks in the global economy, but opportunities still exist if you know where to look. We at SDT believe we can assist you to develop and realise these opportunities. We are refocusing delivery capability to be more business case driven to support the optimisation of your IT spend, without compromising your potential for growth. SDT highly values the relationship we hold with each of our clients and remain committed to your continued success.*

*Gawie Erasmus – Chief Operating Officer*

## **Trends we see in Financial Services**

Cost reduction is the name of the game, in mature industries and economic downturns alike. There are many technology trends vying for prime position in addressing this key business issue. Strategies such as virtualisation, consolidation, automation and business intelligence play an important role. The major ICT firms on the continent are not only advising along these lines but are also implementing these strategies internally. One of the greater focus areas that addresses cost reduction through locating inefficiencies, but also aiding better customer service and hence client retention, is a variety of business analytics. Business Intelligence applications and their simpler but equally effective cousins Management Information Systems play an increasingly important role in product, business unit and business process performance measurement as well as client behaviour analysis. Being able to make business critical decisions in near real time is the new battle ground of finding differentiation amongst competitors. Business analytics is a very important area where not just cost reduction but real business value can be extracted from the mountains of data that Insurers harbour.

*Paul du Plessis – Research Analyst*

## **SDT Quarterly Highlights**

We have just completed the first quarter of our 2010 financial year. During this quarter we experienced an increased interest in SDT's offerings in order for insurers to be able to survive in these tough times.

We have concluded a deal to implement Exergy for Clientele Life to enable a reduced cost of administration. We have also started with the first African implementation for Blue Financial Services in Zambia, which is an Express implementation allowing them to go-live in a very short period of time. Thereafter the plan is that Blue will expand the solution into the Evolution model which will enable them to utilise the full flexibility and functionality of Exergy.

SDT has also made a substantial investment into our Exergy solution, specifically focusing on peripheral tools to enable the user of Exergy to operate with more efficiency. These tools will be launched to our client base in the next quarter.

*Lee Kuyper – Commercial Executive*

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## ***SDT Engage in scrum methodology to enhance customer service***

I cannot believe it is end of June already! As this year speeds along, I want to introduce a new work method we have adopted in the Generic Solution Team, which has helped us to increase the speed with which new development is done on the Exergy platform – SCRUM/Agile.

During March 2009 a SCRUM/Agile development framework was introduced in SDT in order to facilitate the following:

- Increase development productivity without increasing the number of staff
- Visible progress of Roadmap delivery
- Enabling rapid, continuous, bottom-up reengineering
- On-time delivery of industry requirements

We have decided to introduce a two-weekly sprint cycle through which development components will be planned, designed, developed and undergo a complete test cycle. This effectively enables us to deliver a complete working solution within a two-week cycle.

All items developed in a sprint are selected based on Extreme Business value which is made up of cost, time, functionality and quality.

By the time you read this the team will already have started with delivery of sprint 7 of 25 for the year.

Most of the development effort of sprints 1-6 was dedicated to delivering new functionality into Exergy in terms of our Roadmap commitment for the year.

So while 2009 is galloping ahead, the Generic Solution team will keep on sprinting in order to deliver a business valued solution which should enable you to do policy administration more effectively at a lower unit cost!

*Johan Oosthuysen – Generic Solution Executive*

## ***Technology trends we see in Financial Services***

The IT world is alive with buzzwords, and a new and important one, is a RIA - a Rich Internet Application

In order to explain the concepts of a RIA, we need to have a quick look at the history of the browser and web applications. HTML (and the browsers rendering the HTML into readable format) was originally intended to deliver text across the internet. It works on extremely simple principles and because of that it worked extremely well. In fact, it worked so well that people started to piggy-back other things onto the HTML environment in order to deliver more and more functionality to the browser.

While the application requirements for the browser environment evolved at an enormous pace, the browsers evolved slower and unfortunately HTML stopped evolving long ago. Technologies such as client side scripting and AJAX attempted to address this but in the end just added to the mismatch. The result of all this is a mismatched environment in which it is extremely complex (read: expensive) to build and support business applications which run in the browser.

So what is a RIA: Rich Internet applications (RIA) are Web applications that have the features and functionality of traditional desktop applications. RIAs typically transfer the processing necessary for the user interface to the Web client but keep the bulk of the data (i.e. maintaining the state of the program, the data etc) back on the application server. In other words: A RIA is a browser application which looks like and works like a desktop application.

There are a couple of RIA frameworks out there currently, such as Adobe (with Apollo/Flex), Microsoft (with Silverlight) and Google (with Gears). This means we have a RIA war on our hands, with all the advantages and disadvantages it brings.

Will RIA applications replace thick client or smart client applications? Not just yet! Thick client and Smart client applications still have their individual niche areas and will probably always be with us, but we can expect to see a bigger portion of business applications being delivered as RIAs.

*JC Oberholzer – Chief Systems Architect*

***We have done a bit of a spring clean, added new features and changed the whole look***

***Our new website is live, please go check it out at***

**[www.sdt.co.za](http://www.sdt.co.za)**