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The Internal Newsletter of IONA Technologies

Orbix 2.0 is very nearly here! Engineering has done a superb job in bringing a very complex jigsaw together. We have met exactly on time the scheduled dates for the betas (two on Solaris, one on NT) and I am confident the team will meet the dates for the full general release next month.

I'm particularly grateful to Kevin Sullivan who has stoically coordinated the NT beta; to John Moreau who has quietly but confidently orchestrated the UNIX team, and to Paula McGrath who has kept a caring eye and co-ordinated with the marketing team. However the most praise must go to Paul O'Neill who has done an incredible and magnificent job in the core 2.0 development group. His quiet determination and attention to detail have demonstrated his high professionalism, and I believe have provided an inspiration to many of those around him.

On 24th and 25th November next the management team will be taking some time off-site to reflect on 1995 and look forward to 1996. It will be an opportunity to review the current structure and operation of IONA, and also consider the market conditions in which we are operating and the positioning of IONA in the market in 1996 and 1997. It will be an opportunity for brain-storming, with all ideas and opinions accepted as input. I hope it will be a focal point for setting the stage for 1996. Those attending include Sean Baker, Margaret Gallery, Paula McGrath, Barry Morris, Orla Murphy, Colin Newman, Annrai O'Toole, and myself. I have also asked for two further nominations from the engineering team - Oisín Hurley and Myles O'Caobhain; one from professional services - Karl McCabe; and one from marketing and sales- Paul Hickey. If you have any views and positive suggestions on the Company's operations, market, products, or possible new product directions, please approach one or more of those attending and make your suggestions available to them.

Finally, December 23rd will be our Christmas Party! This year it is being held in the idyllic Killiney Court hotel where we have hired the main function room, with bar, for ourselves. A four course dinner, with wine, will be devoured (!) and afterwards we will have a chance to dance with our favourite partners. Buses will be laid on from Percy Place to and from the event. Your better half is encouraged to come, but will need to meet the cost of the meal (about 25.00). More details in due course.

Chris

Orbix 2.0 Takes Off To The Sound Of Success.

With the strains of "Start Me Up" still ringing in our ears after the marketing blitz accompanying the launch of Windows95, plans are being hatched to follow a similar line with the new Orbix 2.0 product. Young executive Lean Doody, in charge of looking after the look and feel of the new product, is impressed with the success of Microsoft's strategy. "Windows95 is expected to reach sales in excess of 50 million - I'd be happy with only half that figure", she told i-contact.

With this in mind, the search is on for the top pop song to feature in the worldwide television advertising campaign. "Ideally we'd use someone not quite as famous as the Rolling Stones, as \$8 million is a lot of money", says Lean, "and an Irish song would obviously be more suitable".

Although Lean is already considering "In Your Eyes" by Niamh Kavanagh (an offer of £50 is on the table as we speak), she has decided to include all staff in what us marketing folk call 'the loop'.

So here it is - the chance for you to shape our future marketing strategy in our "i-contact name that tune competition". Simply send your choice of song, including reasons for your selection, to the usual address, and you could be dreaming of ways to spend 10p next week.

Don't forget, i-contact is an internal newsletter. Send all your contributions, letters and news to tfarrell@iona.ie The next i-contact should be out on 8/12/95.

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Marketing News

Marketing is yet again all 'abuzz' with plans to promote Orbix around the world. Meanwhile products 'tussle with the muscle' plotting the exact specifications of our future ORBs. Said Barry Morris, "We must realise that we don't own these ORBs, we only have them on loan from our children. I'm doing it for the kids."

And for those more concerned with news than idiocy....

- Orbix has been voted "An outstanding product of 1995" in Unix Review. Tom Golden is said to be ecstatic with the praise heaped upon our ORB. "No money changed hands", he said. See cartoon elsewhere in this issue....
- Selfless marketing staff are heading off to Las Vegas to fly the IONA flag. Says wide-boy Paul Lowry, "in Las Vegas, as in business, everything is a gamble. In the great scheme of things, the difference between shooting craps and selling ORBs don't amount to a hill of beans".
- Annrai and Fergal are setting off for Japan, to take part in the Object World spectacular in Tokyo. Apparently Annrai is having all expenses paid, due to his appearance as a speaker. I guess you have to pay for the best..
- Colin and Annrai are at present winding up an exhaustive tour of analysts over in the US, showing off their OCX 'stuff', and keeping up the IONA profile.
- Sales are busy re-organising their operations to keep ahead of the game, with hot new lead management and tracking systems helping the team keep up to speed with their status.

USA News

- A 64k internet link will be set up in early November, hopefully allowing more speedy access for our curious customers.
- Halloween went with a bang, with Catie presenting all the staff with pumpkins stuffed with sweets.
- Graham Walsh is strangely quiet.

Training And Consultancy News

Training and Consultancy has now become so secretive that the staff of i-contact had to agree to meet Sean Baker in the Gents toilets in order to be 'filled in' on T&C events. "Preserves secrecy" was all Sean would tell me. Here, at the risk of blowing someones cover, is the news as I can remember it (I wasn't allowed to take notes).

- The record month of November is successfully underway. Too many courses are being held to list here. Suffice to say - everyone is being kept busy.
- Ken has been involved with some top-secret naval affairs. Apparently whilst on site he had to be escorted at all times whilst wearing his security clearance badge. Not satisfied with his role as an elite undercover agent Ken has now set to work on an all new OLE course. Looking forward to it, Ken.
- Charlie has arrived back for a spell. Why not stop and say hello?
- The rest of the crew seem to be busy writing for i-contact. Sean and Ciaran - I couldn't have done it without you.

The Man with the Golden Orb (since Ed is in Las Vegas, we've gone for a Bond theme - move over Pierce Brosnan, Ed is moving in)

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Engineering News

Still the Orbix 2 struggle continues, with a high ranking source describing the work rate as 'feverish'. With the 2nd beta already out on Solaris, the WinNT gang are pedal to the metal in their efforts to catch up with the UNIX boys across the corridor. Take a bow Kevin O'Sullivan, James Grimes, Austin O'Brien and, making a special return appearance, Adrian Treneman. Said Adrian yesterday, "I just can't stay away from the place. I love you guys". And meanwhile, elsewhere in the engineering complex....

- Sam is spreading the Orbix and OCX gospel to anyone who'll listen. Having run out of victims here he is now off to face 50,000 of them at COMDEX, Las Vegas. "Sam Joyce has left the building".
- Stephen McNamara has apparently merged something called iio, and is now building and testing as we go to press. Sounds like the plot for a dodgy science fiction film....
- Ann Barry, aside from her late bid to snatch the Nobel prize from Seamus Heaney, has upgraded the manuals to Orbix 2.0.
- Terence Cross has now joined the UIM/Orbix team, working with Black and White Software to provide graphical interfaces that are the talk of the town.
- The QNX cauldron has been requisitioned by engineering as suitable storage for their sweet surplus. What about some wealth distribution in this area?
- Technical support, feared to be a 'department in crisis' after their separation, have bounced back. Not only do they now provide what they describe as "our best support ever", new recruit Donal O'Carroll has been brought in to steady the ship and take some of the load off Alan and the boys.

Staff News

Still more staff populate the office. Top architects now fear the building is now too top heavy and "may keel over at any time". So who's who and who's new? Read on....

- Conor Pierce starts in Marketing on November 13th, as a Product Manager, no less.
- As is Conor Halpin, who starts on December 11th.
- John O'Toole is now a full-time sales 'bod', starting on the 6th November in lead management.
- And Eileen Nolan has also joined sales, helping in the running of both direct and channel sales. Both Eileen and John have been around for a while, but that's no excuse not to make them and Conors H and P welcome.

And amazingly enough, that's about it as far as confirmed staff news goes. We do have reports that US sales staff are about to join the party - which I'm sure we all agree can only be a good thing. Meanwhile the jury is still out on the location of our new office, although rumours abound that marketing are not to be invited along for the ride. "We can do without them", an anonymous board-member told i-contact yesterday.

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How Mission Critical Are You? - With John Moreau

You wake up after a 'heavy night' to find you are literally an 'embedded system' and are unable to get into work. At the office

- a) A board meeting is immediately called at which it is decided to go home for the day as work is impossible without you.
- b) There are a few hitches and hiccups, but the rest of the staff struggle on.
- c) No-one notices. In fact the only people who do seem quite happy with your absence.

Do you see yourself as

- a) The solid rock on which the office is built.
- b) The stylish decor that expresses the company's individuality.
- c) The magnetic "Snoopy" sticker on the fridge door.

A colleague asks if you are able to attend a tradeshow overseas. Do you

- a) Decline the invitation, knowing that deadlines will not be met in your absence.
- b) Go along, but phone back regularly and feel guilty about leaving work behind.
- c) Spend the week in the pub and then complain to Orla about your 'miserly expenses' at the end of it all.

When playing tennis, your opponent's serve continually misses the court. Do you

- a) Ignore it. After all, you are 'fault' tolerant. (ouch)
- b) Berate him. He should have more control over his ORBs.
- c) I don't play tennis. I watch snooker on the telly.

Which of the following best describes your interests?

- a) Real-time
- b) Overtime
- c) Playtime

You are feeling hungry, and decide to go to lunch. Do you

- a) Go out and buy a ham and cheese sandwich, return and eat it at your desk.
- b) Head for BK for a double whopper with cheese and bacon meal. Eat at your leisure whilst browsing through The Guardian.
- c) Nip over to Smyths for a quick pint and a couple of fags. Stagger back some time around four.

A new bundle of business cards arrives at your desk. Are they

- a) Printed in English and Japanese
- b) Printed in English
- c) What business cards?

At the wine and cheese you inadvertently spill beer all over an important client. Does he

- a) Laugh it off - you've been cyberfriends for years.
- b) Complain to Chris about staff behaviour.

- c) Do nothing. He thinks you're the window cleaner.

The Tipperary Water has run out. Do you

- a) Not even notice. You're too busy at your desk 'hacking some code'.
- b) Fill your glass from the tap. It's all the same stuff and you've got work to do.
- c) Pace around muttering about 'appalling work conditions' before making a 'nice cup of tea' and relaxing with today's Irish Times.

You arrive late for an important meeting. How does the chair react?

- a) "Hi Tom, glad you could make it. We're just discussing multi-threading - any comments?"
- b) "You're late Tom. Hand over the sweets."
- c) "I'd love one. Milk no sugar thanks."

How did you score?

Mostly a's: You are mission critical, and the company cannot function without you. You probably work in engineering.

Mostly b's: Whilst you have your plus points, you fail to achieve 'mission critical' status. At best you are Fault Tolerant.

Mostly c's: You are a poor quality application. Perhaps 'Horace Goes Skiing' or 'Manic Miner'.

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Yes! It's The Ciaran McHale Page!

A Girl in Every Port

John "the stud in Engineering" Moreau used to be like the proverbial sailor with a girl in every port. Except that in John's case, the girl went by the masculine name of "fred". When asked about this, John muttered that his name for the communications module in Orbix was "a personal stance against the pervasiveness of three-letter acronyms in computer systems." This may sound like a very noble motive; however, a moment's reflection lead this reporter to see through the hog-wash of John's claim. Under a barrage of probing questions and the promise of an Orbix t-shirt, John eventually admitted the shocking truth: he is an ABBA fan. "I wanted to name the communication's module after the red-headed singer, Frida, but I made a typo and it came out as 'fred'." When I put it to him that he could have corrected the mistake, he replied "Unfortunately not. You see, I don't know the clearcase command to rename a directory." John also explained that he has been a bit depressed lately over the phasing out of "fred", and its replacement with "fred++", written by Chris Horn. He explained "I don't mind my code being replaced by what Chris has written. No, what bothers me is the name change." When asked to elaborate, he simply said "Chris doesn't think that Frida in ABBA is all that great. Instead, he prefers her look-alike in 'Bjorn Again'.

Q: How do you recognise new employees in Professional Services?

A: They wear a suit and tie.

Q: How do you recognise new employees in Engineering?

A: They wear a clean t-shirt.

If I was the gaffer...

If I was the gaffer, I would implement the following three-point plan of action to ensure the continued success of Iona.

Firstly, I would put a 60-day evaluation copy of Orbix onto a CD, complete with an on-line programming guide, and give it away on the cover of a computer magazine such as "PC Plus" or "Mac World". I predict that hordes of hackers would give up playing computer games and would instead concentrate on rewriting them using Orbix. The resulting Orbix-Doom integration would be a big hit and we would cash in on the run-time licencing fees.

Secondly, I would buy out Travelwise, rename it "Club #18.30", and sell budget package holidays to Bray. As Chris Horn has pointed out in the past, much of our customer's satisfaction is due to the 3 S's: Shipping, Sales and Support. These readily translate into the holiday equivalent of Sun, Sand and Sex, each of which we can provide: global warming guarantees us sunshine, Bray already has a sandy beach, and the sex part of the deal ties in nicely with my plans for Professional Services as discussed below.

Thirdly, I would prepare contingency plans in case there is a sudden slump in the demand for training courses and consultancy. The "senior technology consultant" title on business cards would be replaced with "Professional Services" in a large, seductive font, and red-haired consultants dressed in a mini-skirt, fishnet stockings and a smile would stand on street corners handing out these business cards to passers by. In addition, our technical support line would be given a 1550 number, Dr Ruth would join our consultancy staff, and we would take out discreet advertisements in the back of "In Dublin" magazine.

CORBA Seminar Update:

You heard it first in I-Contact. The seminars are like hot potatoes (or do I mean selling like hot cakes!!!). The real-time dates for the next series are as follows:

Boston, November 27th
 New York, November 29th
 Washington D.C., December 1st
 Chicago, December 4th
 Dallas, December 6th
 Birmingham, Alabama, December 8th

(What do you mean you knew that already)

At the time of going to print, the IONA bodies are Annrai (eat-your-heart-out-Dave-Walker) Tooler and Colin (in-for-a-penny) Newman for the first three, and John (real-time-not-CORBA-time) McGuire and Sean (what-not-another seminar) O'Sullivan. Brian is in the process of lining up some hot numbers from our customer base and should have it all sewn up in the next week or so.

Juicy comments from the previous seminars include...

"Excellent presenters, especially Barry, he's excellent - I got a freebie and didn't have to pay - but I would have been happy to," said Barry's Mum. (why wasn't she charged?, Ed) (why did she want know to know about CORBA? Barry's Dad) (Who paid for her flight? Orla)

"Enjoyed Annrai O'Toole's and John (aka Alan) Noble's presentations most. They stuck to the topic of CORBA and its implementation," said Annrai's Mum. (was this a PTA meeting? Ed) (no comment. AOT) (Why wasn't I allowed to go? JO'T)

"Please cut a lot of the fluff (but keep the great humour of the first 2 hours)," said a well wisher with the same sense of humour as the tooler. (maybe it was the tooler - the feedback forms were not signed. Ed)

"at \$99 - definitely a bargain," said an anonymous attendee. (I bet that was JG. Ed)

"good one-day seminar, very good value," said another delegate. (ditto .Ed)

"loved the examples and details of Barry's presentation - loved Annrai's sense of humour," said a happy punter. (definitely a family member. Ed)

"lunch was good, as were the cookies!," said another delegate. (must have been a representative of the hotel. Ed)

We'll keep you posted of further responses...the saga continues....

MUSICORNER from the vinyl one

While CORBA, IONA and Orbix continue to receive their fair share of coverage in the press and at trade shows and conferences, a recent phenomenon has seen the music industry turn its attention to world of distributed objects in an attempt to cash in on their rising popularity. We round up the latest offerings.

"The TIEs that _bind()" - Frank Sinatra and Bono

What could have easily been re-heated leftovers becomes instead a glittering return to form for the ailing crooner and his postmodern sidekick. Sinatra delves deep into his famously tempestuous relationship with Ava Gardner, to reveal this heartbreaking tale of a row between them over using the TIE or BOAImpl approach. This is late-night music at its best, and must surely melt the heart of even the most hardened hacker, regardless of preferred approach. Deep in the mix, Bono adds his signature keening, singing "When you left me, you DEREF'd me, baby". A gem.

"Do the colocation" - The Marvelettes

Shameless cash-in time. The Marvel-girls do a straight run-through their old hit "Do the locomotion", with a minimum alteration of lyrics. A distinct lack of feeling for the subject matter permeates this disc - you don't get the feeling that they even care whether objects are local or remote. Disappointing.

"I shall be _released()" - The Band

Who would have predicted that 26 years after "Music from the Big Pink" became the cult album of the year, that The Band would still be turning out classics like this. Showing complete mastery of the subject matter, specifically the tortuous rules of memory management, they deliver this aching ballad, sung from the perspective of an object awaiting destruction. Their ensemble playing reaches new heights, with Robertson's guitar lines creating the haunting atmosphere of an object who knows its time has come, while Helm's drumming makes for a moody sense of forboding on this server-side tale of woe. Buy it.

"I still haven't bound what I'm looking for" - U2

Unhappy with their goody-two-shoes/sincere image after "The Joshua Tree", U2 architected a startling return to form with their follow-up "Achtung ba->b". A "concept" album in the modern sense, the album resonates with a sense of applications falling apart, bad invocations, and a heady cocktail of exceptions. This, the first single release, is typical of the album in its sense of hopelessness (the client just can't _bind() succesfully) and fatalism (turns out the server isn't even registered! Sheesh!). Bleak throughout, elsewhere on the album they present their sometimes simplistic attitude to reducing application problems by cutting down on client programs ("One"), and their sense of uncertainty in the face of CORBA errors ("Mysterious Ways"). A landmark album for the band. Rumours of a quick followup in praise of object-oriented distributed computing (codenamed, OOCORBA), abound.

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MUSICORNER cont.

"Blame it on the putit" - *Jacksons*

By now a favourite anthem of those in Professional Services, the Jacksons supply a funky backdrop for some lighthearted musings on the problems of getting the Orbix examples working. Tongues are placed firmly in cheeks as the chorus proclaims:

"Don't blame it on the Serv - er,
Don't blame it on the Filt - er,
Don't blame it on the Prox - y,
Blame it on the putit!"

Regularly to be heard in Smiths, and soon to be included in the wrap-up session of all courses.

"Havin' Notes I'm Miserable now" - *The Smiths*

A brilliant re-interpretation of their timeless classic, Morrissey et al. pull out all the stops in this reworked tale of an ORB vendor who takes pity on a groupware product and adopts it: "I was looking for a doc and then I found a doc, and Havin' Notes I'm miserable now!" croons the Lonely One, while Marr produces some of the finest fretwork of his career to evoke the lost and confused feelings of all souls who can't find their mail, or indeed anything, in Notes. A slow boiler, this will grow on you. See Paul Hickey for autographed copies.

ORBIGRAMS

Musical Chairs at IONA HQ

As IONA continues to hoover (tm) all available talent in the surrounding area, certain logistical rearrangements have had to be made to accomodate the new recruits. This has made for some interesting power struggles as people engage in territorial jockeying for position:

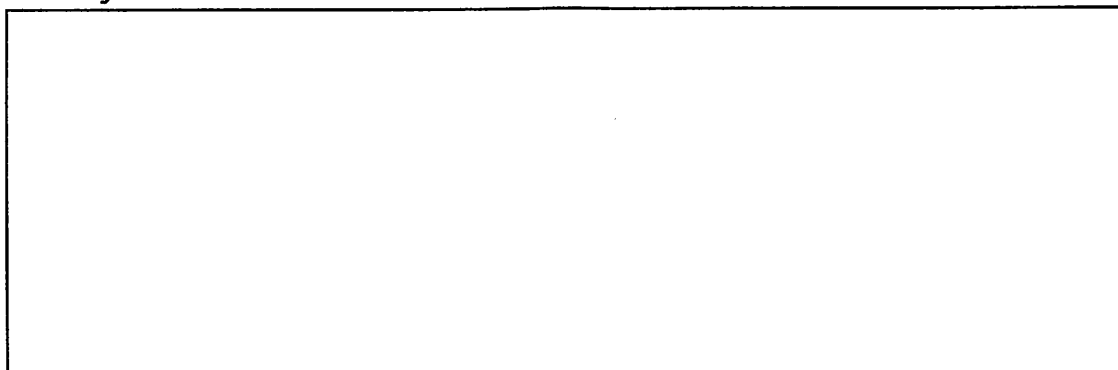
- In one of the most blatant attempts at ladder-climbing yet seen in IONA, Paula and Bridget have upped sticks and literally "moved in" with Chris Horn! Startled engineers' jaws dropped as the dynamic duo literally forced Chris into a corner by moving their chairs, desks, and presumably egos into the cramped space that the surprised CEO once occupied. Chris, ever the gentleman, was circumspect when we sought comment: "I've always been keen to mention that there's no door in my office, I guess maybe they took me up wrong" he said, strapping on rope and tackle in order to get past the "gatekeepers" (as they have affectionately become known) to the kitchen. Paula and Bridget however, remain tight-lipped: "The closer contact will speed up decision-making, open new channels of communication, and generally make us feel very important" said their press office.
 - And speaking of feeling important, new ground was broken in IONA recently when two privileged employees actually obtained an office with a door on it! Rumours abound as to how this real-estate coup was engineered by new-permanent employee Siofra and the understated Tom Golden. "I can't believe it", said a support engineer who asked to remain anonymous, "we're literally sitting on each other's laps out here, while they're playing table-tennis and darts in there, and looking out the window a lot". The ever-ebullient Siofra was keen to play down the whole episode: "Typical sour-grapes from those who just can't see the bigger picture. I may have to consider slapping an injunction on them so fast it'll make their heads spin."
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The Beat Goes On: Expo Trip Report

The Object Expo in London was a resounding social and commercial success. Dynamic Trio Ross O Crowley, Mark Dunleavy and Sean O Sullivan manned the stand for the two-day show, and worked tirelessly to explain CORBA, Orbix and IRIDIUM to the object-starved masses. O'Crowley, despite appearing the day before the show live in 91 countries in the Sun NEO Satellite Extravaganza, alongside such luminaries as Bud Tribble and Scott McNealy, appeared fresh-faced and chirpy, and was eager to discuss projects, proposals, and especially prices with the attendant masses. Strong topics of Ross's apparently included the Iridium project, the Iridium project, and the, eh, Iridium project. Despite various gags concerning a "GUI back-end" (whatever that is) after a visit to a Ross-recommended Indian restaurant the night before, he tirelessly worked the CORBA-seam at the show, and reaped excellent results in the form of two T-shirts and a pen for the freebie-starved Mark and Sean.

Black & White & red all Over

Scurrilous corner: Fiona Hayes recently ventured to Black&White in Deepest California to educate the masses on Orbix. What should she find on her arrival but a star-struck B&W employee, Chris, who queried her endlessly on the whereabouts of one Lean Doody. The techno-Valentine had apparently met "Lee-Anne" at a recent "Object Show", and was mightily impressed. So much so in fact, that he was playing Clannad and Enya Cds endlessly at work, in the vague hope that this would somehow form a "connection" between himself and his Celtic Vision. He begged Fiona to pass on his "regards", and expressed deepest wishes that he would one day "visit" Dublin. We can't wait, Chris!

The view from the editor's desk*

* the first in a series capturing real insights into crucial employees and their creative environments (what no pictures of Mum, pet dog or Chester Football club..?, sub Ed)