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Inventique©

The newsletter of Wessex Round Table of Inventors July 2008

15-18 October THE BRITISH INVENTION SHOW www.britishinventionshow.com

BRITISH LIBRARY

The business of invention

BRITISH LIBRARY'S INVENTOR-IN-RESIDENCE TELLS PUBLIC ALL AT WRTI ANNUAL KEYNOTE LECTURE

THE WRTI ANNUAL Keynote Lecture 2008 takes place at 6.30pm on Wednesday 9 July at Southampton Solent University. Admission is free and the lecture is open to the public.

The lecture, by Mark Sheahan, Inventor-in-Residence at the British Library, is entitled The Business of Invention and addresses such issues as adding value to an idea, routes to commercialisation, business development, intellectual property and contractual options for successful financial outcomes.

Mark, above, is a popular and entertaining speaker, an entrepreneurial inventor and a director of PlasGen Design – an award-winning packaging design company – and Compgen Limited, a licensing company for his unique Squeezeopen™ and Popi™ packaging closure technologies.

He is also a Fellow of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, and a member of the British Library Business & IP Centre's 'Ask an Expert' advice panel. ■

● *The WRTI Public Keynote Lecture takes place in room HC 005, Herbert Collins Building, Southampton Solent University on Wednesday 9 July, commencing at 6 for 6.30pm.*

Contact: secretary@wrti.co.uk
Tel: 01420 562378 www.wrti.org.uk
British Library Business & IP Centre: www.bl.uk/bipc

$6.5m FOR INNOVATION NETWORK

INNOCENTIVE, the online marketplace for science, engineering and technology, has raised $6.5m in new venture capital to expand its network of 'solvers' – the diverse global community of innovators who submit solutions to product development challenges in the hope of winning awards ranging from $10,000 to $1m.

InnoCentive was spun out of pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly as an independent company two years ago. It has since diversified beyond the life sciences to a wider range of disciplines including computer science, engineering and environmental technology. ● ***www.innocentive.com***

WRTI Annual General Meeting WEDNESDAY 9 JULY

The AGM will be held after the Annual Keynote Lecture in room HC 005, Southampton Solent University, commencing at 8pm.

● ***Members wishing to add an item to the agenda should e-mail: secretary@wrti.co.uk or tel: 01420 562 378***

EU seeks home for R&D hub

FIVE EUROPEAN CITIES – in Austria, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Spain – have placed their municipal hats in the ring in a bid to host the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT).

Wroclaw in south-western Poland, the Hungarian capital Budapest and Sant Cugat del Valles near Barcelona all tendered their candidacies, alongside a joint bid by the Austrian and Slovakian capitals Vienna and Bratislava.

An expected bid from Munich to become the headquarters of the future institute did not materialise.

The EIT – which will cost over 300m euros and is intended to bridge the innovation gap between the EU and its major rivals Japan and the USA – is an attempt to integrate the three sides of the 'Knowledge Triangle' – higher education, research, and business innovation.

The project has faced frequent criticism for being another costly research project which does not solve the main problem of European research: a lack of funding. ■

● **ec.europa.eu**

Wessex Round Table of Inventors meet at 6.30pm on the second Wednesday of each month at Southampton Solent University SO14 0RP

<LINKS> Sir James Dyson • Proof of principle • free4all • Peter Eales • womenintechnology etc...

The biggest space prize yet

THE GOOGLE LUNAR X PRIZE is a $30m international competition to land a robot safely on the surface of the Moon, travel 500m over the lunar surface, and send images and data back to the Earth.

One of the main requirements is to have as little government involvement in the project as possible; teams must be at least 90% privately funded and be registered to compete by 31 December 2010.

The first team to land on the Moon and complete the mission objectives will be awarded $20m (this full first prize is available until 31 December 2012; after that date, the first prize will drop to $15m). The second team to do so will be awarded $5m. Another $5m will be awarded in bonus prizes.

The final deadline for winning the prize is December 31, 2014.

The Odyssey Moon team is considering this rover concept for their Google Lunar X PRIZE mission.

Thirteen teams from all walks of life are officially competing in the race, but the X PRIZE Foundation expects that number to grow to about 25 by registration deadline day. The multinational line-ups include Americans, Italians, Romanians – and a mystery team (which under the rules can hide its identity until 20 July next year). ■

● **www.googlelunarxprize.org**

INVENTORATOR Sir James Dyson

The business of engineering

GLOBALISATION OPENS UP MORE OPPORTUNITIES

Continued from last month...

EVEN TODAY my delight in engineering and manufacturing is seen by many as eccentric or downmarket: "So *that*'s what you do, is it?"

And then there's the geek factor. Engineers, like scientists, conjure up stereotypes of bearded men with a questionable taste in sweaters. This misperception of engineering and science jobs as geeky, dirty and dull puts young people off from what in reality has the potential to be a bright, exciting and profitable future.

The result is that we produce only 24,000 engineering graduates a year, compared with 300,000 in China and 450,000 in India. And don't imagine that Indian and Chinese engineers are stuck forever at the 'grunt' end of the market. China's education minister has commendable ambitions to change the ubiquitous 'Made in China' label to 'Made and Designed in China'.

And look at Tata, the Indian conglomerate famous for buying up the likes of Tetley tea and Corus steel. Like Henry Ford in turn-of-the-century America, Tata is working to create an Indian 'people's car', at a cost of just over £1,000 (and, in a strange twist of fate, has gobbled up Jaguar and Land Rover).

But Tata is not all about acquiring foreign brands – it has also made research and development central to its strategy; the company realises the value of intellectual property.

So, what to make of the rise of Tata? Quite simply, Britain has to go back to its roots. As our balance of trade sinks into the red, we have a choice: do we want Britain to become a theme park, or a hub of creative engineering?

Trading places

We are currently on course to shuffle into a sort of residential home for retired great powers – but it doesn't have to be like that. In fact, the globalisation of business and trade opens us up to more opportunities than ever before; global warming, for example, which was caused by engineering, must be cured by engineering.

Britain was the first nation to trade globally, through the rapid expansion of the Empire, but we've lost the confidence to engineer and make things that we had in the 19th and early 20th centuries. ■

Continued next month...

● *This is an edited extract of a Podcast first broadcast in January 2008, reprinted with permission. Sir James Dyson is best known as the inventor of the Dual Cyclone™ bagless vacuum cleaner. With his research team he has developed products that have achieved global sales of over £3bn.* **www.dyson.co.uk**

US STILL LEADS IN R&D

THE UNITED STATES remains the dominant leader in science and technology worldwide, according to a recent study, accounting for 40% of the world's total spending on scientific research and development, employing 70% of the world's Nobel Prize winners, and home to three-quarters of the world's top 40 universities.

US investments in R&D have grown faster than those in Europe and Japan, while China is investing heavily but does not yet account for a large share of world innovation and scientific output, which continues to be dominated by the US, Europe and Japan. However, China and the EU graduate more university-educated scientists and engineers each year than the United States. ● ***Source: RAND Corp***

PROOF OF PRINCIPLE

Oarsome potential

PULLING POWER Rower Emily Webb, above right, dreamed up her unique Webbway Handle when representing Wales, and created the initial design while at school.

THE VALUE of design through observation is highlighted by 19-year-old Emily Webb, who has created an ergonomically-designed handle for top-class rowers.

Emily, from Monmouth in Wales, dreamed up her Webbway™ Handle as a member of the Welsh Junior Women's Rowing Squad, and developed the idea during her school Design & Technology course.

The design, for 'sweep' rowing (where both hands hold the oar), initially focused on reducing friction to help prevent tendonitis, repetitive-strain injury and blisters – all common problems for rowers. However, testing on the Olympic rowing course in Barcelona showed that it also improves performance.

It incorporates an integral two-piece mechanism with an elliptical profile, which enables rowers to turn the blade whilst minimising the strain on their wrists and hands.

Prototypes of the Webbway Handle, which is patented in five countries, were made by carbon-fibre specialists Nomad Composites in Llangollen, and the device is now in production in Newport.

"The Webbway Handle reduces the risk of injury, corrects technique and helps improve the performance of both novice and competitive rowers – which makes it an ideal training aid," said Emily, who has been rowing for six years and is now studying for a BA in Business Management at Exeter University.

The youngest inventor ever to be supported by the Wales Innovators Network, Emily has won awards for her product at the British Invention Show, the British Female Inventors and Innovators Network Awards, and in Geneva and Taiwan. ■

● **www.oarsome-potential.co.uk**

COMING TO A PATIO NEAR YOU?

EDWIN L. DRAKE launched the modern petroleum industry by drilling the first oil well in Pennsylvania in 1859. Hand-operated petrol pumps were then developed in the early 1900s by other Americans so that fuel could be conveniently delivered to the growing band of automobile owners.

So it comes as little surprise to learn that yet another American, Thomas Quinn, may have come up with the petrol pump's even-more-convenient successor: a new invention that allows car drivers to top up their tanks at home rather than the petrol station – for as little as 50p per gallon.

Thomas, who patented Nintendo's Wii motion sensor technology, has launched a new company to sell the E-Fuel 100 MicroFueler, a portable ethanol micro-refinery no bigger than the clothes-dryer in your local laundrette.

Any vehicle that runs on petrol can run on ethanol. But ethanol (like biodiesel) attracts water and thus cannot be delivered through existing pipelines. The MicroFueler solves that problem by distilling ethanol on-site, enabling its owners to top-up their tanks at home. ● **www.efuel100.com**

● **ROBO-WARS Four of Japan's leading robot startups joined forces last month, bound by a common concern that South Korea could pull ahead in the race to transform robots from science fiction fantasy to commercial success.**

Japan, which has long led the world in robo-technology, has created machines that can clean, dance, greet, feed, monitor, relax and befriend.

But so-called 'intelligent service robots' have been slow to penetrate the average home, which is still more likely to shell out for the latest flat-screen TV than a pricey humanoid.

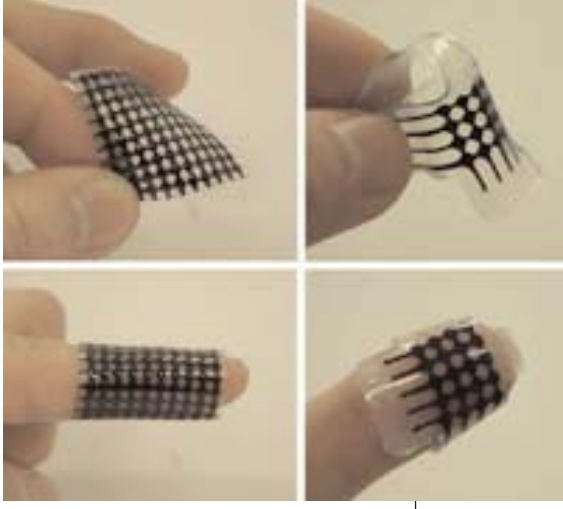
The companies say that new South Korean robot legislation passed earlier this year compels them to cooperate in research, development and marketing.

The South Korean government is aiming to put a robot in every household by 2020, and has mobilised companies and scientists to help integrate robots into Korean society. The country plans to build two robot theme parks by 2013 – and even drafted a Robot Ethics Code last year to prevent robot-human abuse.

Faced with low birth rates and long lifespans, populations in both Japan and South Korea are aging quickly. Both nations are turning to robots to replace disappearing workers as well as care for the elderly. ■ **Source: Associated Press/R&D News**

PROOF OF PRINCIPLE

'Tactile feedback' film



THE THIMBLE LIFE Along with a protective layer to separate the electrodes from the skin, the entire polymer sheet is about 210um thick.

WE GET MOST OF OUR information from computers through visual and audio features, yet the only whole-body sense is touch. While some tactile computer devices do exist, Korean researchers are trying to take full advantage of this overlooked sense with the development of a tactile display that can be wrapped around your finger like a band-aid.

In the June issue of *IEEE Transactions* on Robotics, Ig Mo Koo and fellow researchers from Sungkyunkwan University and the University of Nevada explain how they have designed a tactile display based on soft actuator technology, soft and flexible enough to be wrapped around almost any part of the human body.

"The big advantage of a wearable tactile display is flexibility," says Koo. "When you apply a normal device to a non-flat surface like human skin, it is impossible to stimulate the whole skin through its shape. In the case of a wearable tactile display, however, it can be applicable to many kinds of surfaces without the limitation of stimulus area because of its flexibility."

The researchers hope that the soft display might provide a means of communication for the visually impaired (for example, as a Braille display). It could also have applications as a tactile display cloth, virtual reality keyboard, tele-surgical glove, tele-feeling transferring system, and more.

The key material to the display is an electroactive polymer that can stimulate the skin without using any additional electromechanical transmission. The polymer consists of eight layers of dielectric elastomer actuator films which have been sprayed with electrodes in a specific pattern.

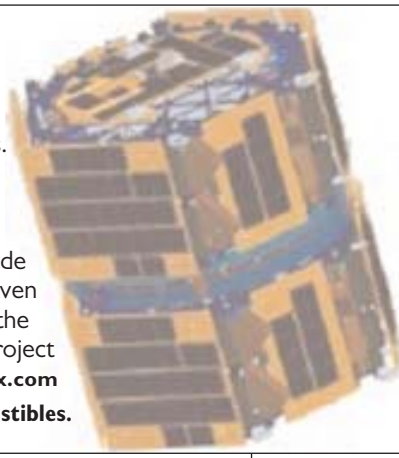
The display conveys information to the wearer when the electrodes induce a voltage across the films, causing the films to compress down and expand outward, inducing a mild pressure on the wearer's skin, Like most polymers, the device is hyperelastic, meaning that it can experience large amounts of elastic strain yet recover its original shape.

One of the greatest advantages of this simple stimulation mechanism is that it doesn't require complex electronics. Other benefits include efficient power usage, cost-effectiveness, and easy fabrication.■

Sources: PhysOrg.com, IEEE, R&D News

● **www.ieee.org**

Student-built nanosatellite lines up for launch



STUDENTS AT Cornell University have built an innovative satellite system as one of three payload item finalists for the imminent SpaceX Falcon 1 launch in the Pacific Marshall Islands. Cornell has built the pair of identical-twin satellites – designed to separate in orbit so that one can obtain 3D images of the other – with funding from the US Air Force.

The decision to launch the CUStat or one of the two other payloads – the USAF Research Laboratory's Plug and Play satellite with multiple payloads, or SpaceDev's Trailblazer – will be made prior to SpaceX's pre-launch flight readiness review. CUSat was selected as the winner from eleven entries in the Nanosat-4 competition, sponsored by the American Institute of Aeronautics and the USAF to link education and space exploration. 225 students have worked on CUStat since the project began in 2005. ■ Sources: Cornell University, R&D News ● **www.cusat.cornell.edu www.spacex.com**

Right: CUStat's thrusters burn solid Teflon, a much safer propellant than compressed gas or combustibles.

● 'PAPER TOWEL' FOR OIL SPILLS

A spaghetti-like mat of nanowires with the touch and feel of paper could be an important new tool in the clean-up of oil and other organic pollutants, Massachusetts Institute of Technology researchers report in Nature Nanotechnology.

The scientists say they have created a membrane that can absorb up to 20 times its weight in oil, and can be recycled many times for future use. The oil itself can also be recovered: some 200,000 tons have already been spilled at sea since the start of the decade.

"What we found is that we can make 'paper' from an interwoven mesh of nanowires that is able to selectively absorb hydrophobic [oil-like] liquids from water," said associate professor Francesco Stellacci.

A water-repellant coating prevents water from penetrating the potassium manganese oxide membrane. Oil, however, isn't affected and is captured for later extraction. The mat can remain in the water for months at a time.

The nanowire paper could also make an impact with filtration and the purification of water, and could be inexpensive to manufacture.

Sources: MIT, R&D News ● ***web.mit.edu www.nature.com***

Lean, clean or green?

IS YOUR BUSINESS a good place to work? Do you save energy and recycle? Does your business support the local economy?

If you have a good green story to tell, you still have until 11 July to enter the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Sustainable Business Awards.

With five categories celebrating the best of local business, the awards seek to recognise and reward those companies in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight which are taking positive steps to improve their environmental, social, and economic impacts.

Sustainable business doesn't have to be difficult; many companies find that sustainability is already an everyday part of life. Perhaps you don't even think about the little things you do, such as paper recycling, or donating to local charities – but customer demand for companies to be green has never been greater, and you can boost your environmental credentials *and* ensure your recognition as an ethical company by winning an award.

All you have to do is explain why you should qualify for a Sustainable Business Award in fewer than 300 words and you could be shortlisted to receive one at a ceremony on Friday 21 November at the De Vere Grand Harbour Hotel, Southampton. ■

● **Sustainable Business Awards 2008 Tel: 01962 845591 sustainable.business.partnership@hants.gov.uk www.the-sbp.co.uk**

Ten Habits of Incompetent Managers

IN AN ARTICLE in Fast Company magazine, Margaret Heffernan gives some handy tips for identifying incompetent managers.

Try checking her list against the characteristics and actions of your senior team. If two or more apply, the alarm bells should start ringing.

1. **Bias against action**
2. **Secrecy**
3. **Over-sensitivity**
4. **Love of procedure**
5. **Preference for weak candidates**
6. **Focus on small tasks**
7. **Allergy to deadlines**
8. **Inability to hire former employees**
9. **Addiction to consultants**
10. **Long hours**

Source: destination-innovation.com

● ***www.fastcompany.com***

For next year's gizmos, search this year's patent applications

IN MAY, the media was full of stories about how Apple is planning to introduce solar power to its mobile devices.

The online newsletter MacRumors broke the story – simply by checking patent records and finding that Apple had applied to patent a technique for the 'integration of solar panels behind the LCD screen of a portable device' (which would solve the problem of there being no free surface space on mobile phones to place a solar panel).

"The way the media unearthed this story shows how useful it can be to monitor patent applications," said a spokesman for the Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys, which offers free patent advice clinics via their website.

"Patent information gives companies an insight into what competitors may be planning. Research engineers can save themselves a lot of work by checking what has already been patented – it can often be more cost-effective to pay for a licence to use a technology that has already been developed than try to develop it yourself." ■

● **www.cipa.org.uk**

● **SUMMER FUN A residential Young Inventors' Superweek for children aged 10-14 will be held near Ludlow, West Midlands on 5-12 August, hosted by the Active Training & Education Trust. Each child will make a programmable robot to take home at the end of the week-long holiday. ATE has 50 years experience in providing safe, challenging and enjoyable residential holidays for children.**

● ***Tel: 0845 456 1205 info@ate.org.uk www.ate.org.uk***

● **A BIG STRIDE FORWARD Would your business benefit from having a skilled graduate on work placement this summer to help grow your business – perhaps as a pre-employment assessment period or to complete a close-deadline project? Bournemouth University has launched STRIDE, a graduate placement scheme in the Dorset area for placements of 1 to 6 months duration.**

● ***Click here to register your interest in a STRIDE graduate for your business.***

Free seminars

● THE BRITISH LIBRARY Business & IP Centre hosts a free seminar on How To Make Sure Your Idea or Invention Will Sell (a partner event with InventionIntelligence.com) on Thursday 3 July at 1pm.

When it comes to selling or licensing your new idea or invention, there are some basics you need to know right from the outset.

This introductory seminar sets out simple tips and strategies for developing commercially successful innovative products and services.

Find out how to make selling easy, why you are the best sales person for the job (whatever may you think now), how to get appointments, what to build into your idea or invention to spark potential buyers' interest, how to present yourself for most credibility, and more.

InventionIntelligence.com is a provider of success strategies for inventors and innovators.

Business & IP Centre, The British Library
96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB
www.bl.uk/bipc
Advance registration only (click here)
www.inventionintelligence.com

● SHARPEN UP your business image and increase your profits at a morning Design Workshop at the Goodwood Park Hotel, Chichester, from 8.30am-1.30pm on Friday 4 July.

Designing Demand is an innovative programme that helps businesses develop a strategic project by enabling them to use design more effectively. The programme focuses on how design drives improved performance and produces a stronger bottom line.

Design can affect every aspect of your business, from the first impression made by your product or packaging to building customer loyalty with consistent communication.

Five post-seminar days of free one-to-one mentor support are also available to attendees.

To maximise their profits through better design, individuals and companies should register here:

Tel: 01590 626524
design@businesslinksoutheast.co.uk
www.designingdemand.org.uk

Avoiding the Catch-22

MPI

SO, YOU'VE COME up with an idea for an(other) invention. And you've even written the business plan. Let's now make the assumption that your plan forecasts a potential income of £1m per year.

A basic calculation shows that if you're late to market you'll be losing close to £20,000 per week.

Hmm. Can you afford *not* to plan your project properly? But equally, can you afford the popular project planning packages out there?

If this Catch-22 scenario is one you're familiar with, John Cornish at Micro Planning International of Wimborne, Dorset has a solution: he is offering *Inventique* readers the chance to download a free version of Micro Planner X-Pert.

Micro Planner X-Pert is a project planning and resource-scheduling application for Windows which is easy for novices to use yet perfect for professional planners and schedulers.

"Within minutes of downloading it you'll be drawing logic diagrams, adding resources, analysing the business plan and carrying out 'what if' tasks," says John. "Your business presentations to banks and angel investors will be professionally presented using PERT diagrams, Gantt charts and cost reports, and clients and partners will receive detailed costings produced on a professional software package."

The free downloadable demo version of Micro Planner X-Pert has all the functionality of the licensed version but is limited to 150 tasks per project file (enough for most new product proposals). ■

● Click here for further information and to download the free demo version at www.microplanning.co.uk

FREE 60-DAY EVALUATION

ENGINEERING BASE is a powerful but easy-to-use solution for electrical/instrumentation/control engineering design and maintenance. A demo version can be downloaded and evaluated free of charge for up to 60 days, limited to ten projects of 20 sheets each. And you don't have to be a CAD engineer to use it: Microsoft Visio and SQL Server means the software is familiar to use.

● Click here for further information and to download the free demo version.

International Trade magazine offer

FOR A LIMITED PERIOD only, new subscribers to International Trade Today magazine are being offered a free 12-month subscription.

First published in 1937 as Export magazine, International Trade Today is the UK's leading independent quarterly for professionals involved in every international trade discipline.

The magazine delivers insightful, independent editorials, extensive news coverage, major interviews and in-depth features that provide analysis while uncovering new trading and investment opportunities. In-depth assessments of the legal, financial and governmental measures that impact on international trade are also featured, as are regular articles on markets and marketing, finance and business travel, logistics and information technology.

The company recently launched a fortnightly e-newsletter for importers, exporters and other companies trading across borders. ■

● International Trade Today magazine
Tel: +44 208 144 8920
info@internationaltrade.co.uk
www.internationaltradetoday.co.uk

Free seminars

● TECHNOPOLE LUNCH CLUB marks the British Grand Prix with a winning formula of their own at the Portsmouth Technopole on Friday 4 July at 12 noon.

Andrew Garbett of Coffin Mew LLP will outline various intellectual property rights protecting different aspects of car design, and illustrating how they can both give protection and cause problems. (For the less mechanically-minded, he will also be mentioning designer shoes...)

To register, Tel: 02392 658200
technopole@oxin.co.uk
www.oxin.co.uk/centre/portsmouth

● SOLENT SYNERGY hosts The Future of Design at the Millbrook Technology Campus, Southampton on Wednesday 9 July at 4.30pm.

Professor Simon Cox, director of the Microsoft Institute for High Performance Computing, introduces cutting-edge examples of engineering design, the semantic web, advances in high-performance computing, and technologies transforming the approach to design at Airbus, BAE Systems and Rolls Royce.

Dr. Peter Collins of dezineforce will describe how these capabilities are now being brought within the reach of the smallest of companies.

To register, Tel: 07835 844665
jackie.coventry@dezineforce.com

● ACCOUNTANCY firm BDO Stoy Hayward hosts Catalyst 2008, an IP planning seminar, at Norton Park, Sutton Scotney on Thursday 10 July from 9.30am-12.30pm, including experts from BDO Stoy Hayward, Barker Brettell patent attorneys and law firm Paris Smith & Randall.

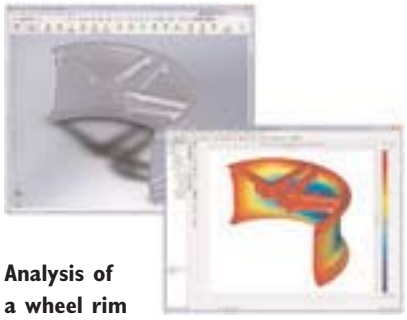
To register, contact Emma Wareham
emma.wareham@bdo.co.uk
Tel: 023 8088 1753 www.bdo.co.uk

● A HOT TOPIC SEMINAR on The Future Impact of the Defence Industry on Portsmouth will be held at the Centre for Enterprise Research and Innovation, University of Portsmouth on 23 July at 6pm.

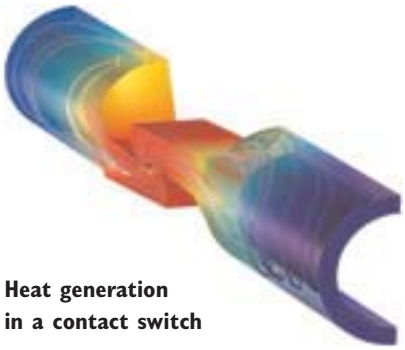
To register, contact: Allyson Hunt
Tel: 023 9284 4046 ceri@port.ac.uk
www.port.ac.uk/research/ceri/events

Free introduction to structural mechanics

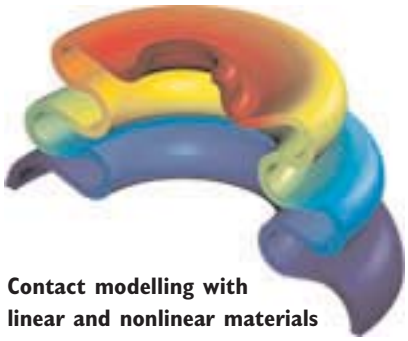
COMSOL Multiphysics are offering structural engineers the opportunity of broadening their horizons in structural mechanics simulations by offering a free introductory CD. ■



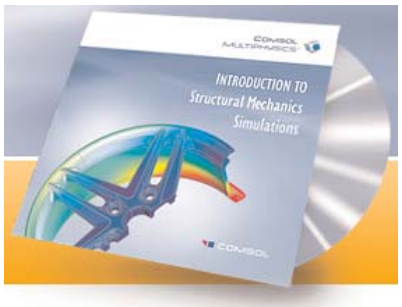
Analysis of a wheel rim



Heat generation in a contact switch



Contact modelling with linear and nonlinear materials



● Click here to request your free CD

PERFECT PACKAGING

Brownell has created a free software to calculate the quantity of desiccant required to protect a package during shipping and distribution.

Based on DIN 55474 and using accurate input data, including barrier materials properties and package volume, the software calculates the desiccant required, and includes a facility to alter the inputs in order to vary the effects on the calculation.

● Email info@brownell.co.uk for further details, with 'send pdf' in the subject line. They will email details on a PDF to you.

The Designer's Handbook

A MUST-READ for all machine designers, this free handbook from Tandler Precision covers the theoretical basics and design of coupling technology, properties of both bellows and elastomer shaft couplings, and different methods of connecting shafts. A separate chapter covers line shafts and also introduces the new TX low-cost couplings range.

In easily-understood terms the book allows readers to familiarise themselves with R+W's state-of-the art coupling technology. ■

● Click here for your free edition.

Generating ideas using Jenni becomes a habit after a while – new ideas become a way of life. Jenni 'gets' you because it's fun, says Peter Eales

WHAT DO healthier crisps, better swimming-pool cleaning products, more efficient water delivery, more creative television advertising and new mobile telephone content products all have in common?

These innovations are all the result of employee ideas captured by Jenni, an idea management software service developed by jpb.com in Belgium and marketed globally through a network of local service providers.

If you think idea management is simply a computerised suggestion box, think again.

"Suggestion schemes are not sustainable," argues Jeffrey Baumgartner, the brains behind Jenni and founder of jpb.com. "After 12-18 months they fall into disuse with few ideas implemented and employees disillusioned."

Ideas Campaigns

Instead, jpb.com has developed a decentralised "ideas campaign" approach to idea management. Based on creative problem solving – a tried-and-tested approach to creative thinking – an ideas campaign includes four phases:

Phase 1: Innovation Challenge
An innovation challenge is a business problem or need translated into a creative challenge, such as "In what ways might we improve product X?" or "How might we improve the efficiency of our logistics system?"

Phase 2: Idea Generation
For a set period of time, employees are invited to submit ideas as well as collaborate with each others' ideas in a transparent idea space. The collaboration part is particularly important. Contrary to myth, most great inventions were not discovered by lone inventors in test-tube filled laboratories. Rather, they come from collaboration between different people and different divisions in organisations.

Phase 3: Idea Review
At the end of the idea generation phase, ideas are reviewed by experts using criteria-based evaluation tools, idea development tools and SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). This allows businesses to identify the ideas with the most innovation promise.

Phase 4: Implementation
The final step is to implement the most promising ideas.

Clear advantages

Ideas campaigns have several clear advantages over suggestion schemes. Most importantly, ideas campaigns generate ideas that respond to immediate business needs. Moreover, since numerous solutions are suggested over a limited time period, it is easier to evaluate ideas against each other, combine ideas and build the best solution – or solutions – for any business need.

Importantly, Jenni allows managers to set up and manage their own ideas campaigns using intuitive on-line tools. Ideas campaigns can be restricted to specific locations, departments or teams and multiple ideas campaigns may be run simultaneously.

Software as a Service

Jenni is not licensed software. Rather it is delivered as a comprehensive service. Each client's implementation of Jenni is installed on a jpb.com-managed secure server – usually within a day of ordering. Clients' employees then access Jenni via a web browser. Clients also get fast user support, innovation coaching, configuration of Jenni and regular upgrades for a subscription fee based on their number of users. In some markets, Jenni can also be delivered as a fully managed service complete with an in-house innovation consultant. ■

● More information about Jenni can be found at www.jpb.com/jenni

Peter Eales is a director of sales & marketing consultancy o i solutions, who market Jenni in the UK.
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● NEED A HUG? Brian Mullen at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst may have the answer. He has invented an inflatable vest that fits inside the lining of a jacket and delivers a 'portable hug' to children with autism. Deep pressure touch stimulation, as the therapy is known, seems to ease these children's anxiety, and Mullen's device provides it without drawing attention to the wearer.

● FAKE TV Now you can convince would-be burglars you are tucked up at home watching TV when you are actually sunning yourself on the beach. FakeTV, by Xenso of Malaysia, projects TV-like light patterns of flickering, fading, onscreen motion and ad-break transitions onto walls and ceilings. The device, which runs on just a few watts, has a small computer that sends the patterns to a bank of LEDs. ● *www.faketv.com* Source: New Scientist magazine

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE women in technology

Career booster

ACTIVE NETWORK FOR FEMALE TECHNOLOGISTS

LAUNCHED IN March 2005, womenintechnology.co.uk is an online job board, networking and event group, enabling female IT jobseekers to apply for employment opportunities and learn about careers in technology via the website.

The organisation has grown into an active network of over 3,000 technology professionals and is supported by a further 9,000 female technologists, all of whom are committed to promoting women in the sector.

The specialist job board offers users access to a range of IT job opportunities with companies which have explicitly open and inclusive recruitment policies, enabling jobseekers to apply directly to those businesses which actively seek to recruit female staff.

In addition, regular networking events play a vital part in attracting (and retaining) women in the IT profession, ranging from informal social get-togethers to interactive audience discussions and debates with guest speakers on such topics as mentoring and flexible working.

"We hope the work we're doing demonstrates to women just how rewarding a career in IT can be," said director Maggie Berry.

womenintechnology has been an award sponsor for both the European Banking Technology Awards and the BlackBerry Women & Technology Awards (see *Inventique*, June'08 issue). ■

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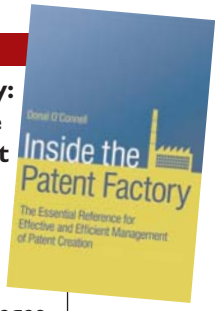
BOOKS OF THE MONTH



Inside the Patent Factory: The Essential Reference for Effective and Efficient Management of Patent Creation

by Donal O'Connell
Wiley Publishers £29.99
ISBN 9780470516409 344 pages

Donal O'Connell is a Director of IPR at Nokia. His book highlights how knowledge and innovation can be utilised and protected – an aspiration which, with the increased importance of intellectual property rights (especially the use of patents), is a prerequisite for every business.

"This new book provides a useful background and reference source for the effective management of a patent portfolio.

It takes you through the whole process, from patent creation to maintenance, and in so doing helps fill-in any gaps in understanding for patent professionals whilst remaining particularly useful for those entering the field.

It will perhaps be of most value to companies – whatever their size – that wish to establish or streamline their patent management processes. Recommended."

– Mike Overy, WRTI Secretary

BUSINESS LINK INNOVATION CLINICS

Are you thinking about developing a new product, process or service? Have you invented something and don't know what to do next? Through its series of free Innovation Clinics, Business Link provides confidential and impartial guidance on such subjects as investigating an innovative idea, product development, working with universities, R&D funding sources, protecting intellectual property rights and licensing. Innovation Clinics are held throughout the SEEDA region.

● ***Advice Hotline: 0845 600 9 006 innovation@businesslinksoutheast.co.uk www.businesslink.gov.uk/southeast***

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