

# Thus invests in converged communications technology from C3 to enhance its network services portfolio

Submitted by: brooks comm (Formerly Chazbrooks Communications)

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Cambridge, UK, 26th February 2001. Internet and telecommunications company Thus plc has rationalised and upgraded the communications server technology within its IVR Solutions operation. The move has resulted in C3 gaining a major 3000 line order for its digital Apcentia™ call handling and e-business platform technology.

The C3 systems, located at Thus's Glasgow and London call handling centres, have enabled the operation to significantly enhance the network-based call handling and e-business services it offers customers. These include 'internal' customers (such as Demon, Thus's Internet brand; Thus Contact Centres; and Thus's Interactive Media & Content operation that handles a range of media clients and managed services) as well as 'external' Thus corporate customers. Installation of the systems was completed very recently.

Examples of new 'converged communications' services enabled by the C3 systems include:

The ability to pay for goods and services over the phone using C3's PayOnLine™ credit card transaction capability

Enhanced contact centre services (including the use of IVR to filter incoming calls, provide voice-based self service options and handle 'overflow' calls)

The integration of e-mail facilities into voice applications

Thus's C3 systems also handle a range of more traditional voice and fax processing services including:

media promotions/ competitions

pre-paid calling card

disaster recovery/call continuity

online credit card validation

fax-on-demand/ fax broadcast

live broadcast, and

voice recording

call conferencing

In the future, Thus intends to build on the range of network services it offers customers by utilising

the full range of technical capabilities of the Apcentia platform, such as providing access and control of services via speech (using the speech recognition and text-to-speech capabilities of the platform).

The Apcentia platforms use core computer telephony and network interface technology from Dialogic (an Intel company) and from Aculab.

Addressing customer needs

According to Graeme Culloch, IVR Solutions Manager at Thus plc, C3 was selected primarily because of the flexibility of its platform and the responsiveness and enthusiasm of its customer-facing staff. "Right from the outset, C3 came across as a company that was keen to do business with us. It also had a flexible, open and scaleable product that very much suited our needs" stated Culloch.

"Another key advantage of Apcentia is its ability to support multiple applications on a single platform" he added. "We found that many other systems, even those built on open PC platforms, only delivered one application per system. We believe that the C3 approach has not only brought huge hardware cost savings but also given us many operational and programming benefits".

"A good example of this is our ability to develop 'templated applications' where the core functionality of an application can be specified, yet our programmers still have the flexibility to tailor a unique application to the needs of our customers using C3's range of easy-to-use development tools".

About C3's Apcentia

C3's Apcentia is a scaleable NT-based communications platform designed for network operators and service providers and large scale enterprise/ council usage. It is scaleable to tens of thousands of lines and supports: Interactive Voice Response services; pre-paid services; Voice, fax and email messaging; Call switching and queuing; Call centre applications; Auto attendant applications; and Internet services. It is widely used internationally by operators of calling card services, Audiotex services and value added network services.

About C3

C3 is Europe's foremost supplier of NT-based communications platforms for call handling and e-business applications. The company has installed over 60,000 lines of computer telephony technology world-wide for calling card, IVR, Audiotex, Automated Attendant and Voicemail since its founding in 1990. C3 is based in Cambridge, UK.

About Thus

Thus plc is one of the UK's leading providers of voice, data, Internet and interactive services, operating principally under the Thus and Demon brands.

Services

Thus offers a variety of Internet services, principally under the Demon brand in the UK and in the Netherlands. Demon is one of the UK's largest Internet Service Providers (ISPs), serving both the residential and business markets. Demon offers subscription dial up services and business access services, including Web hosting, Web design, leased line and e-commerce facilities, together with wholesale Internet services and non-subscription Internet access.

Demon has already established itself as the UK's second largest web hosting company and one of the largest in the world as reflected in the recent Netcraft survey results. Demon was recently rated as the world's best ISP, by Internet Magazine. It was also ranked as the UK's number one ISP in JD Power's most recent independent customer satisfaction study.

Thus offers a wide range of data and telecommunication services, primarily to the UK business market, including direct and indirect switched, freephone, premium rate and other number translation services. The company provides non-switched products including capacity leased line and managed data services.

Thus is also a leading provider in the call centre services market delivering telemarketing, call centre integration, fulfilment, consulting and disaster recovery services on a fully outsourced basis.

Thus services are available individually or on a fully integrated basis to support individual customer requirements.

#### Network

Thus's National Network is fast becoming one of the most technologically advanced networks in the UK, providing the flexibility to deploy services supported by different switching protocols such as ATM, IP and MPLS. The company is currently extending the National Network to more than 8,100km.

For enquiries, please call:

Susan Hunt

C3

Tel: +44 (0) 1223 427700

Fax: +44 (0) 1223 427711

email: [susanh@c3ltd.co.uk](mailto:susanh@c3ltd.co.uk)

Michael Gray/ Sarra Mander

Gray Associates Ltd.

Tel: +44 (0) 20 8744 9168

Fax: +44 (0) 20 8744 9169

email: gray\_associates@msn.com

Russ Bryan

PR Manager

Thus plc

Tel: + 44 (0) 20 7613 6179

Fax: + 44 (0) 20 7613 7179

email: russ.bryan@thus.net

For supporting photography, please contact either Michael Gray/ Sarra Mander at Gray Associates or Russ Bryan at Thus plc