

Parity Training pilots world-first Microsoft v-tailing solution

Submitted by: AUGUST ONE COMMUNICATIONS

Monday, 11 March 2002

Parity and Microsoft-branded Book Stop machine to debut at London Book Fair

11th March, London: Microsoft Ltd has today launched a v-tailing solution designed to sell computer books and TechNet subscriptions to customers of Microsoft Certified Technical Education Centre (CTEC) training partners, starting with Parity Training. The scheme is based on automated retail machines that incorporate credit card payment features and use a GSM link to feedback on purchasing patterns and simplify stock control.

Parity will pilot the scheme on site at selected training centres across the South East, and a v-tailing machine will be on show at the London Book Fair (stand C85) at London Olympia, March 17th-19th.

The v-tailing scheme is designed to make it easier for training companies to give delegates access to valuable training resources, whilst eliminating the burden of stock control and ordering. Training delegates will have immediate access to high quality computer books and subscriptions to TechNet, the IT professional support tool; a development that will clearly enhance the learning experience.

Barbara Greenway, managing director of Parity's training division sees v-tailing as another way of extending customers' learning opportunities. "Books are excellent learning tools and the high-quality publications available through the v-tailing machines will complement the training we deliver and help our delegates develop the skills they need."

Microsoft plans to extend the availability of its v-tailing solution to many more Microsoft CTECs in the near future, when the pilot stage is complete in early May 2002.

William Hawkins, Business Development Manager at Microsoft Press, stated "Microsoft Press is constantly looking for new ways to make it easier for Microsoft CTEC partners to provide delegates with access to Microsoft training resources, and v-tailing has obvious benefits. I believe we have developed a solution that will benefit our training partners and Microsoft customers.

"V-tailing provides a no cost means by which Microsoft CTECs can give their customers access to Microsoft self-paced learning, whilst training delegates have instant access to resources that will enhance their understanding of Microsoft product and, ultimately, the value they will get out of them."

Developed by v-tailing specialist, Book Stop Ltd, the machines will enable delegates to buy any top 10 Microsoft computer book and subscriptions to TechNet by credit or debit card. Although Microsoft has more than 800 titles in print, the machines will focus on the most popular titles, including those focussed on Programming Windows with C#, Windows XP and Visual Studio.NET. In the future, Microsoft intends to add a facility to allow customers to request alternative titles via a touch screen and GSM link.

“It’s knowledge on tap,” added Barbara Greenway. “It’s probably the easiest possible way to get hold of a Microsoft Press title. I’m glad Parity’s delegates will be the first in the country to take advantage of this new delivery mechanism.”

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A picture of the v-tailing machine can be gained from the Microsoft Press Centre

About Parity Training

Parity Group is a leading provider of IT services, technology staff, training and human capital management solutions operating from 50 offices across the UK, mainland Europe and the USA. It comprises three key areas:-

Business Solutions designs, builds and operates complete systems covering a variety of business functions. Focusing on maximising investment returns, its consultants specialise in interactive commerce, customer relationship management, content management, Web-enablement, security and applications management, providing services across a range of vertical sectors.

Resourcing Solutions is a professional services supplier providing permanent and interim technology staff. It advises companies on how to optimise the deployment and utilisation of staff and skills. It also supplies technology and consultancy to maximise the effectiveness with which its customers use external suppliers and internal resources. The division has also been selected as a finalist in the ‘Best International Recruitment Firm’ Professional Recruiter Awards 2002.

Training delivers bespoke and public scheduled courses in technology, management and business skills at eleven training centres nationwide and at customer sites. Blending traditional training with e-learning, it provides services that range from complete vendor management to fully outsourced training and development.

Customers across the group include AT&T, CSFB, HP, IBM, JP Morgan Chase, Shell, WorldCom, and in the UK, Barclaycard, British Aerospace, BT, Consignia, Food Standards Agency, Lloyds TSB and Scottish Power.

For more information on Parity, visit <http://www.parity.co.uk>. or contact Lucy George (PR Manager) on 020 7632 8702.

About Book Stop

Book Stop Ltd manufactures, implements and manages the largest UK based network of state-of-the-art v-tailing machines for the sale of paperback books. Book Stop v-tailing machines utilise the most cost-effective distribution and revenue collection systems and provide consumers the flexibility and convenience of purchasing books at the right place and the right time.

For more information about Book Stop, visit <http://www.book-stop.co.uk>.

About Microsoft

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and Internet technologies for personal and business computing. The company offers a wide range of products and services designed to empower people through great software -- any time, any place and on any device.

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For customer product enquiries please advise readers to contact Microsoft Connection on 0345 00 2000.

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