

AUSTRALIAN PROJECT & CONSULTING SERVICES



**PROJECTIONS**  
...making concept reality

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# Welcome to Projections!

It's hard to believe - but Christmas is upon us once again! Where *did* the year go?

Since last January we have taken on new customers, new projects and some new staff to help carry the load. We've also been busy enhancing our back office systems and processes, running seminars and participating in industry forums. - All while maintaining our high level of professional services to you, our customers. No wonder the team is looking forward to the Christmas / New Year break!

One of our more recent initiatives has been the development of an IT operations management service that is specifically targeted at small business. A number of our smaller customers have found it quite difficult to clearly articulate their strategic IT requirements in a way that supports their business plan. Additionally, these companies often fall under the radar of the larger systems integration firms, leaving the local computer store to pick up the support load. All too often, these small support companies don't have the skills or the experience to provide a genuine commercial grade level of service. Our role has been to work with our customers to develop their IT strategies AND to manage their relationship with the local IT provider. Our goal is to ensure that our customer receives the best possible level of technical support - with the additional benefit of encouraging smaller IT businesses to strengthen their support services. Feel free to pass our details on to any small business that you think might need some assistance.

This month Glen Viney has written an article that discusses the pros and cons of [Voice Over IP \(VOIP\)](#). Glen has practical experience as a project manager on several recent VOIP projects and views this as a rapidly maturing range of technologies.

We also talk about [disk defragmentation](#), the [cultural fit of contract resources](#) and close with the fourth part of Scott Coleman's popular series on [Project Management Principles](#).

Finally, on behalf of all the team here at APCS, I'd like to wish you and your loved ones a safe and happy festive season and a prosperous and successful New Year.

Until next time.

[Craig Dennis](#)

**PS:** If you find APCS Projections interesting you might like to forward it to a [friend or colleague](#).

# IP Telephony - Where is it going?

By [Glen Viney](#)  
**Senior Consultant**

IP TELEPHONY HAS BEEN around for some time, but where is the integration of voice and data networks headed? With the advent of structured cabling systems, opportunities arose for the network vendors to expand their market share. Initially, network vendors such as Cisco and 3Com released IP Telephony systems that integrated with their network products to challenge the voice market dominated by the traditional PABX systems.

As PABXs aged, CIOs were faced with a difficult decision – whether to upgrade the existing PABX, replace it with a newer model or replace with an IP Telephony solution. A comment often heard was that the business expected voice services to be available every time a handset was picked up, but the same confidence did not exist for a telephony solution that was based upon a “data network” that had a reputation for “falling over”.

With time and technology maturity, the confidence in IP Telephony has grown. IP Telephony solutions are capable of delivering innovative integration, through softphones, voicemail, call management and reporting to name a few. There are now multiple choices available for call management that integrates with the network vendor’s handsets and switches.

IP Telephony via the Internet is also gaining speed through the use of softphones, which are small applications that are installed on an Internet connected PC and, through the use of a headset/microphone, you can talk directly to someone anywhere in the world - similar in concept to MSN Messenger, but with a voice call.

There are also communication service providers on the Internet that enable you to “hop off” the Internet on to the public telephone network and connect with standard telephones, for minimal charges.

So what does this all mean? It means that IP Telephony is gaining wider acceptance and providing more options for business and private communications, at reduced call rates through the use of existing infrastructure, such as the internet and corporate networks.

In today's text driven communication era, maybe the art of verbal communication will return!

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## Defragmentation

By [Matthew Fisher](#)  
**Technology Consultant**

SINCE THE MIGRATION from the Windows 9x to NT codebase (aka Windows 95/98/ME to Windows 2000/XP/2003) most organisations have updated to the NTFS filesystem. NTFS is the major system that Windows uses to store and retrieve data on hard disk drives.

A fragmented file is a single file that has been broken up into many small pieces that are written to multiple locations on a hard disk. This can make it extremely slow for the computer to retrieve information because the system has to “look” in many places on the hard disk to reassemble the pieces back into the original file.

A fragmented disk may have hundreds, if not thousands, of fragmented files on it, creating a major performance impact on your system.

Microsoft’s original claim for the NTFS filesystem was that defragmenting was not required due to the advanced nature of its file journaling. This has, however, subsequently been found to be incorrect.

Defragmenting your computer's files can often realise up to 50% in performance gains (dependant on fragmentation etc...). A recent example of this is one of our own users who was complaining that her computer had become extremely slow. While analysing the issue, I found that this user's hard drive had been completely fragmented from start to finish with files split all over it.

Initial defragmentation can take a long time and there are many good 3rd party utilities as well as a built-in utility available to perform this function. Fortunately the amount of time required to regularly defragment is usually shorter than the time it takes waiting for fragmented files and can see a major benefit to the way you work.

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## **Cultural Fit of Resources *How important is it?***

By [Margaret Selianakis](#)  
**Business Development Manager**

MOST COMPANIES FIND IT increasingly difficult to retain sought-after and specialised information technology (IT) staff. This is the result of a shift in attitude towards their work environment by IT specialists, who would rather strive for "employability" other than just having a job.

In the past, a permanently employed IT specialist's main concern was job security, while in the case of independent IT contractors, it was maintaining a cash income. In both cases this has now changed to "employability". Employability means that IT specialists would rather be involved in projects that are challenging and will enhance their skills, making them more sought-after and marketable.

This means that IT specialists have a need for an environment which provides training opportunities together with exposure to multiple client and industry sectors offering additional skills development.

Of course, it is often not practical for companies to offer IT staff roles that meet this fundamental requirement for on the job training. The result is that IT specialists tend to "job hop", resulting in a loss of key business and technical skills to their employers. While the implementation of a solid (and expensive) induction and training program can reduce the impact of staff turnover to some extent, this challenging staffing model has brought about a shift towards the use of contract specialists for company projects. This helps the IT specialist to develop further and to improve his or her employability. It also helps the IT specialist to gain experience in different areas and satisfies the need for challenges.

This shift offers both a challenge and an opportunity for companies looking to augment their existing workforce with contract staff. By clearly identifying the skills shortage in the company, the use of carefully selected contract resources can assist in cultural change; Their independence and lack of involvement in non-productive company politics can ensure processes and procedures are developed that improve workflow and productivity. The company can also use these contractors as agents of change by introducing a different culture and mindset to the business.

Research has shown that 60% of IT specialists see cultural fit as the most important prerequisite to work for a company, 83% are motivated by challenge, 77% by pay, 68% by strong leadership, 68% by flexibility of time and assignments and 65% by career.

Most businesses do not do enough in this regard and far more attention should be given to the work environment of their specialised IT staff. It is important to realise that this shift has taken place against the background of expectation that the demand for specialist IT skills will exceed the supply in the next few years. There is also a definite move away from large software development teams to packaged product integration projects. The outcome of this is an increasing requirement for technical and business integration specialists. Additionally, technical architects, business analysts, certified IT project managers and "in demand specialist skills" will continue to be highly sought-after.

Although there has been a decline in global IT stocks, the IT sector is still considered to be

growing as companies become increasingly dependant on IT. It is forecast that by 2006 more than half of the manpower in the developed economies be either be directly in the IT sector, or will be using IT extensively.

The outsourcing by companies of core IT services to external service providers is a worldwide trend and is an area where professional IT resourcing companies like APCS can play a major role. It is expected that this type of professional service delivery will become virtually indispensable.

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## 12 Project Management Principles

By [Scott Coleman](#)  
**Managing Director**

### Number 4

PROJECT DELIVERABLES and all project activities must be visualised and communicated to the project team in vivid detail. In short, the Project Manager and project team must create a tangible picture of the finished deliverables in the minds of everyone involved so that all effort is focused on moving in the same direction. Project managers need to avoid vague descriptions at all costs; spell it out, picture it, prototype it, and make sure everyone agrees to it.

**Next Month:** The Approval Process

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