

**For discussion
on 14 April 2003**

**Legislative Council Panel on
Information Technology and Broadcasting**

Extension and Expansion of the IT Easy Link Service

Introduction

This paper briefs Members on the extension of the IT Easy Link service for one year and the expansion of its service scope starting from July 2003.

Background

2. IT Easy Link is an IT support service jointly organised by the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau (CITB), Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) and Hong Kong Computer Society (HKCS). It provides free advice to members of the community on general problems that they may encounter in using basic IT applications including personal computer, file management, word processing, spreadsheet, presentation, and Internet and e-mail operation. The objective is to encourage and assist members of the community to readily use IT, so that they can benefit from the development of IT in enhancing work capability and quality of life. This will help build a digitally inclusive society.

3. The service was launched on 20 June 2002 as a pilot project lasting one year until 30 June 2003. Questions or requests for information/advice can be submitted by members of the public by phone (at 2111 2232), fax (at 2587 8366) or e-mail (help@iteasylink.org.hk). The telephone hotline service operates from 9:00 am to midnight from Monday to Sunday, including public holidays. A website (www.iteasylink.org.hk) has also been set up, with frequently asked questions and answers posted on it for reference by the general community. The HKCS is responsible for operating the service. Twelve full time staff and two part-time staff have been engaged to provide the service.

Extension and Expansion of the Service

4. The IT Easy Link service has proved to be very well received by the public. The number of calls/requests received has been increasing steadily. In March 2003, about 420 requests were handled on average per day, and on some occasions, the number exceeded 600 a day. While the service is intended to cover only basic IT applications set out in paragraph 2 above, about 40% of the requests received were outside the service scope. Nonetheless, the service has sought to address these requests as far as possible.

5. According to the survey on randomly selected callers conducted at the end of their calls, callers are content with the service and on average gave a rating of about 9 on a 10-point scale to the service. Many users have also suggested that the service scope should be expanded and the service provided on a longer term basis. And we have not received any adverse feedback from the industry that the service may compete with what is offered in the private sector. Having reviewed the service with HKCS and examined callers' feedback, we intend to extend the service for another year, and expand its scope starting from July 2003.

6. We have reviewed the capability to expand the service and taken into account services that are available in the market. We will expand the service scope to cover frequently asked out-of-scope enquiries relating to Chinese input; computer inter-networking; basic hardware failure recovery; operating system installation, upgrading and troubleshooting; Internet communication tools; basic multimedia tools; and basic database management system. The expanded service scope is set out at Annex A. The telephone hotline service will continue to operate from 9 a.m. to midnight from Monday to Sunday, including public holidays. Requests for advice can also be submitted by fax or e-mail.

7. The survey on randomly selected callers conducted at the end of their calls also revealed that about 60% of the callers were employed or self-employed. We believe that many of them were employees working in different types of establishments, in particular small and medium enterprises (SMEs), that did not provide internal IT support. To augment Government's efforts in assisting businesses to adopt IT in their operation so as to enhance efficiency and productivity, we will expand the service and set up a dedicated hotline service for the

business sector. In addition to providing businesses with advice on problems that they may encounter when using the IT applications set out in Annex A, the hotline service will also cover server based database management system, system administration, network administration, and system security which are IT issues that SMEs may have to address in their daily operation. Details of the additional services for the business sector are set out at Annex B. The operating hours of the hotline service for businesses will be from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday. Requests for advice on these IT applications can also be submitted by fax or e-mail.

8. We have also received feedback that some SMEs which for the first time plan to adopt simple IT solutions in their operation have encountered difficulties in obtaining advisory services on the types of IT solutions to deploy. To fill this gap and encourage SMEs to adopt IT to enhance efficiency and competitiveness, we will expand the IT Easy Link to provide face-to-face advisory services at the IT Easy Link support centre to SMEs which for the first time plan to adopt IT or have encountered difficulties in IT applications during the early stage of adoption. IT professionals experienced in business applications will be invited to provide such services on an honorarium basis. The advice to be rendered will range from initial planning to business applications selection. HKCS will also work with the major local IT industry bodies to make available at the support centre for SMEs' reference product literature of the various business applications offered by members of the industry bodies. As regards the provision, installation and further development of these applications, we will leave it to the industry to provide the necessary services to the SMEs.

9. To cope with the expanded service, four additional staff will be recruited, including three to specifically deal with the enquiry service for the business sector through telephone, fax or e-mail. With more staffing resources, HKCS will also be able to work on upgrading the hardware and software to facilitate scenario simulation, enriching the IT Easy Link website, etc.

Financial Implications

10. The estimated cost for running the expanded service for one year, from July 2003 to June 2004, is \$4.74 million. The funding will be met by CITB.

Way Forward

11. HKCS will proceed with the preparatory work including staff recruitment and training, site preparation, acquisition of the necessary equipment, and publicity and promotion. The operation and effectiveness of the expanded service will be monitored by a steering committee chaired by CITB and comprising representatives of ITSD, HKCS and the business sector.

**Information Technology and Broadcasting Branch,
Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau
April 2003**

Expanded Service Scope of IT Easy Link

1) Using Personal Computer

- ★ Getting started with your personal computer and operating system
- ★ Operating within the desktop environment
- ★ Starting programmes
- ★ Operating the control panel
- ★ Connecting the printer
- ★ **Chinese input (new)**
- ★ **Computer inter-networking (new)**
- ★ **Basic hardware failure recovery (new)**
- ★ **Operating system installation, upgrading and troubleshooting (new)**

2) File Management

- ★ Managing and organising files and directories/folders
- ★ Using file search features
- ★ Using simple editing tools and print management facilities
- ★ Restoring corrupted files

3) Word Processing

- ★ Creating and finishing a document
- ★ Inserting and modifying text
- ★ Creating and modifying paragraphs
- ★ Formatting documents
- ★ Creating standard tables, using pictures and images within a document
- ★ Using mail merge tools

4) *Spreadsheets*

- ★ Working with cells and cell data
- ★ Managing workbooks
- ★ Formatting and printing worksheets
- ★ Modifying workbooks
- ★ Creating and revising formulae
- ★ Creating and modifying graphics

5) *Presentation*

- ★ Creating and printing a presentation
- ★ Inserting and modifying text
- ★ Inserting and modifying visual elements
- ★ Modifying presentation formats
- ★ Working with data from other sources
- ★ Managing and delivering presentations

6) *General Internet and e-mail Operation*

- ★ Understanding the general Internet operation
- ★ Using modem to connect to Internet services
- ★ Using web browser application
- ★ Using search engine tools
- ★ Using e-mail software for sending and receiving messages
- ★ Using e-mail software for managing address books
- ★ Understanding general virus protection
- ★ **Using Internet communication tools (new)**
- ★ **Using basic multimedia tools (new)**

7) *Basic Database Management System (new)*

- ★ **General use of relational database management system excluding individual product features and administration**

Additional Services for the Business Sector

1) Server Based Database Management System

- ★ General use of relational database management system excluding individual product features and administration

2) System Administration

- ★ Access control and management
- ★ Directory services

3) Network Administration

- ★ Designing and installing simple Local Area Network (LAN)
- ★ File and print services

4) System Security

- ★ Introduction to public key infrastructure and certification authority
- ★ Virus protection