立法會
Legislative Council

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Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

Meeting on 8 April 2005

Background brief on IT Easy Link

Purpose

This paper summarizes members' views on the IT Easy Link implemented since June 2002.

The scheme

2.   IT Easy Link is an IT support service jointly organized by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer[1] and the Hong Kong Computer Society (HKCS) to provide free advisory service to members of the community on general problems which they may encounter in using basic IT applications. The objective of the service is to encourage and assist the community at large to adopt IT and harness the benefits of IT development.

Mode of operation

3.   IT Easy Link was first launched on 20 June 2002 on a pilot basis for one year until 30 June 2003.   Questions or requests for information/advice can be submitted by phone, fax or e-mail.   The telephone hotline service operates from 9:00 am to midnight from Monday to Sunday, including public holidays.   The annual cost for running the service is in the region of $4 million and the funding

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[1] The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer was established on 1 July 2004 by merging the functions of the former Information Technology Services Department and the IT-related division of the Communications and Technology Branch of the Bureau.   Prior to this, IT Easy Link was jointly organized by the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau, the Information Technology Services Department and HKCS.

has been met by the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau from its own allocation.   HKCS is responsible for operating the service.   As at March 2004, there were 16 full-time and 10 part-time staff providing various services under IT Easy Link.   A dedicated website, with frequently asked questions and answers posted on it, has also been set up for general reference.

Service scope

4.   In early 2003, after reviewing the scheme with HKCS, the Administration extended the IT Easy Link for another year from July 2003 to June 2004 with an expanded scope of service to cater for users' needs.   Moreover, starting from July 2003, a dedicated enquiry service for the business sector, known as IT Easy Link for Businesses, has also been established to assist the business sector, in particular small and medium enterprises (SMEs).   The current scope of enquiry services available under the IT Easy Link is at **Annex A**.

5.   The first year of operational experience also revealed that some SMEs that intended to adopt IT had encountered difficulty in obtaining neutral and credible advisory service on the types of IT solutions to use.   To fill this gap, the IT Easy Link for Businesses also provides free face-to-face advisory service to SMEs in areas ranging from initial planning of IT adoption to selection of business applications.   The service is provided by experienced IT professionals on an honorarium basis.   While the advisory service is product/vendor neutral, HKCS has worked with major IT industry bodies to make available product literature of the business applications offered by members of the industry bodies for reference by SMEs.

Usefulness of services

6.   According to the Administration's information provided to the Panel in May 2004, the services under IT Easy Link have been well-received.   During the period from July 2003 to March 2004, the daily average number of incoming calls for general enquiry was about 480.   The average rating given by randomly selected callers on their satisfaction level of the service provided is 8.8 on a 10-point scale.   On the enquiry service for businesses, an average of about 60 calls were received during the aforesaid period.   Randomly selected callers gave an average rating of 9 on a 10-point scale.

7.   Regarding the IT advisory service for SMEs, as at end March 2004, a total of 41 advisory sessions have been held.   The average rating of the usefulness of the advisory sessions was 4.5 on a 5-point scale.

Members' views

8.   Issues related to the implementation of IT Easy Link have been discussed at the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting at its meetings on 11 March 2002, 14 April 2003 and 10 May 2004.   Members note that IT Easy Link

is one of the Government's initiatives to promote IT adoption and the development of e-business in Hong Kong. There is general support from Panel members for the continuation of the scheme after its current extension ends in June 2005. They have also expressed the following views :

(a) At the early stage, some members have highlighted that publicly-funded services should not duplicate similar services provided by the private sector. They have noted the Administration's assurance that the IT Easy Link only serves to fill the gap by providing support to those SMEs which experience difficulty in the early stage of IT adoption.

(b) Members consider that the scheme should not be terminated since it has proved to be effective and well-received by ordinary users and SMEs, in particular at a time when Hong Kong is encouraging community-wide adoption of IT.

(c) As running the IT Easy Link does not incur substantial costs but can benefit a wide spectrum of the community, members consider that the scheme is cost-effective. They urge the Administration to explore other sources of funding such as commercial sponsorship or greater collaboration with the industry in order to sustain the operation of the scheme. Some members also suggest that consideration may be given to suitably lowering the existing level of services (such as shortening the enquiry hours) in order to retain the scheme.

(d) Despite the Administration's assurance that it will explore other ways to provide comparable support services, some members are of the view that the Administration should continue to pursue projects with proven success such as the IT Easy Link instead of embarking on new measures the success of which is not yet known.

Latest position

9. The Administration has considered the mode of collaboration with HKCS on how the IT Easy Link should be taken forward and will report to the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting on 8 April 2005.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
1 April 2005

Service Scope of IT Easy Link (for General Community)

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
   ✧ Computer inter-networking
   ✧ Basic hardware failure recovery
   ✧ Operating system installation, upgrading and troubleshooting

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
   ✧ Using basic multimedia tools

7. *Basic Database Management System*

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

Scope of Enquiry Service for the Business Sector

The enquiry service for the business sector covers the following in addition to those for the general community :

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