

## The way forward

Prophet Group MD Mark Peachy discusses the challenges ahead.

Some years ago, Prophet decided to take advantage of the new database technology and development tools to redesign and build its market-leading solution into the Pr2 product. This strategic decision ensured that our product portfolio meets the needs of current and prospective customers.

Not only was the challenge to develop a new industry solution, but to maintain an existing user base with 'older' technologies, providing a route to migrate business software onto the latest technology platform. This has been achieved and clients wishing to migrate can do so confidently, knowing that it will involve minimum disruption and effort.

Today, the Pr2 solution is a stable and effective system holding its place high in the top quarter of its market sector,

operating in many large businesses in the UK, USA and South Africa. As the product continues to mature and increase in functionality, we aim to have a version appropriate for both the European and global market places in the near future. With many of our UK customers being supplied globally, there are synergies for parties up and down the supply chain.

The key difference between the Prophet solution and our direct competition is the use of appropriate current technologies for the most effective business solutions. Our aggressive growth plans over the next few years will be possible through continual product and delivery mechanism improvement. This will guarantee that clients have access to more functionality to run operations effectively and efficiently.



One of the unique features of the Pr2 solution is the user interface that provides access to end user needs. As an example, each cell within our grid layout provides direct access to other context relevant information, be they Crystal reports, other forms or analytical tools. All of these help the end user to

interrogate, enquire and analyse a specific situation, issue or requirement.

Where do we take the product from here? The short answer is to: simplify it; remove redundant specialist features by incorporating more operational functionality and take away the need for exceptional requirements; introduce more end user configurability; de-skill the operation; increase security control levels; and embrace features such as on the fly calculations within any grid layout.

We invite all existing and prospective Prophet QX clients to join our annual QX User Meeting from 10h00 until 14h00 on 9 October 2008 at Ongegund guest house, Sir Lowry's Pass. With the agenda focusing on user queries and suggestions, the purpose of the

## Major QX gathering



meeting is for QX clients to meet one another and discuss ways in which Prophet can make its system work even better. Please confirm attendance by 26 September to [ashleyi@prophetize.co.za](mailto:ashleyi@prophetize.co.za) or [leeh@prophetize.co.za](mailto:leeh@prophetize.co.za).

## Built to last

For the past seven years, Prophet SA has supplied the Dutoit Group with a complete solution in terms of maintaining its custom-built software, computers, network and hardware. This contract has now been extended

for another year. While the group has its own in-house program, Prophet continually develops and changes it in line with industry developments.

The Dutoit Group isn't only about growing, packing, marketing and distributing quality agricultural products, such as pome, stone fruit, cherries, lettuce, onions, potatoes and sweet potatoes. It's dedicated to the people working there. Said Prophet SA managing

director Paul Stofberg, "It's refreshing to work with a people-orientated company and we certainly appreciate the group's continued support throughout the years."

Dirk Volschenk, financial manager at Dutoit Vrugte, one of the group's divisions, was happy about the good working relationship. "If the service levels remain as good as in the past, we'll still walk a long road with Prophet."



# That dreaded support call

Most people consider calling technical support as much fun as a visit to the dentist. But if you have the right approach, that call could make your day. These tips apply outside the computer world too, so keep them in mind when your phone is on the blink or DSTV is stuck on one channel.

## Preparation

Before picking up the phone, prepare what you need to say. If you have an error message: What's the *exact* error message on your screen? If you don't have an error message: What *exactly* is your computer doing? When did the problem start happening? Did anything else happen when the problem started? (ie a blue screen of death, smoke coming from the computer, virus warning, etc) What have you already done to troubleshoot the problem? Has the problem changed since it first started happening (ie computer shuts off more frequently, error message appears at a different time, etc). Write all this down *before* requesting tech support.

## Communicate clearly

Technical support is all about communication. The reason for your call is to communicate the problem to the support person and for him to communicate what you need to do (or they need to do) to fix your problem.

You'll prevent needless confusion and frustration if you talk slowly and enunciate properly. Also, make sure you're calling from a quiet area. Blaring music or office chatter is unlikely to improve a communication problem.

## Be thorough and specific

You have to tell the story in as much detail as possible. By saying, "My computer just stopped working" doesn't mean anything at all. There are millions of ways a computer might not "be working" and the ways to fix those problems vary. Step through the process that produces the problem in great detail.

For example, if your computer won't turn on, describe the problem to tech support like this, *"I hit the power button and a green light appears on the front of my computer and monitor. Text shows up on the screen for a second and then the whole thing shuts off. The monitor stays on but all the lights on the front of my computer case turn off. If I power it on again, the same thing happens over and over."*



Another way to avoid communication confusion is by repeating what the tech support person is saying. If for instance tech support advises you to "Click on x, then click on y, then select z", you should repeat this. In so doing, tech support is confident that you completed the steps as asked, plus you know that you understood what was asked of you.

## Don't get emotional

No one likes computer problems. But getting emotional solves nothing. Try to keep in mind that the person you're talking to on the phone didn't design the hardware or program the software that's giving you problems. He or she has been hired to help solve your problem based on the

information given by the company and from you.

You're only in control of the information you're providing, so your best bet is to take another look at some of the tips above and try to communicate as clearly as possible.

## Get a reference number

Every modern-day tech support group, whether across the hall or across the

world, uses a reference number to track issues that they receive from clients. The tech support representative should log the details of your call, so that the next person you talk to can pick up right where you left off on this call, assuming you need to call again.

## The only thing worse than calling tech support...

... is calling tech support twice. If you're armed with the tips above before you make that first call to support, the chances of what the industry calls "first call resolution" go way up. That's good for the company's bottom line and *really* good for your sanity!

Source: <http://pcsupport.about.com>