

## Out with the Old and in with the New

### Perspective from the Top



2007 is here. The last of the Christmas decorations have been put away, our diets have begun (or already ended) and we're starting to implement our New Year's resolutions and goals for 2007. Before we look ahead, let's take a quick look back at a solid 2006.

### Recapping 2006

2006 was a tough economic year for much of Michigan and many of our clients. They looked to us to provide the same expert services we have always offered with even more value for their overall investment, and we accomplished that across the board.

The objective we set for 2006 was to "Keep Pace with the Client," and our theme in '06 was to "Turn it up a Notch" by increasing overall performance on all levels.

Thanks to everyone's hard work and dedication, we achieved our 2006 goals in many ways. We secured renewal of the Blue Cross Blue Shield blanket status, Epitac earned the third largest market share ranking at Ford Motor Company's B2B Division and we were awarded and have successfully executed the first of a three-year networking project. DaimlerChrysler ranked Epitac sixth

out of 31 IT service vendors for overall quality, our team continues to hold "Preferred Vendor Status" with the City of Detroit for IT staffing needs and additionally, we added Comerica Bank to our already solid lineup of clients.

On the employee front, we increased our headcount by more than 34 percent in 2006. In the technology arena, we implemented iPay services so employees can view and print pay stubs conveniently online. We also held the first Epitac sponsored training session, a Project Management Certification Preparation class. Several of the attendees are scheduled to take their certification tests at the beginning of 2007.

### Make it happen in 2007

Last year was good. And we can do even better in 2007.

The Epitac Group's objective for 2007 is . . . **Exceeding Customer Expectations**

Our goal is to be one of the top three suppliers for each of our customers. By providing excellent service and giving 110 percent, Epitac will achieve this lofty goal. In 2007, Epitac's focus is to be the "go-to" resource for our entire client portfolio. We should be their first choice whenever they are considering an outside resource for an IT project. We also will expand our coverage at on-site client locations by adding additional resources to client teams. This will allow us to provide enhanced service and quicker solutions for our clients. Finally, we will continue to foster and upgrade our Employee Care Program, including an "Employee Touchpoint Plan" that creates additional value to employees.

We need to keep these goals and objectives in mind to elevate our game in 2007 both internally and externally. Keeping pace with our competition and clients is no longer sufficient if we want to remain competitive. Let's **"Make it Happen in 2007!"**

# 2006 2007

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## YouTube and You

When a Web site is honored as *Time* magazine's "Invention of the Year," one must know it offers something for everyone in a new and exciting way.

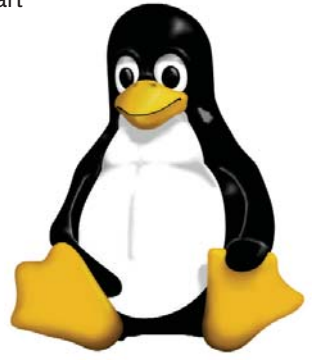
YouTube is a Web site that allows you to watch and share videos globally including music videos, video blogs, interviews and television episodes. It is a forum for people like you and me to engage in new ways by sharing, commenting and communicating visually.

YouTube was created in 2005, and since its inception it has steadily grown to include 20 million users and 100 million videos. It receives 65,000 new video uploads daily, and recently the Web site caught the attention of Google, which bought it for \$1.65 billion.

YouTube is a resource for a variety of people and audiences. You can find, join and create video groups with others who have similar interests. You can even integrate YouTube videos into Web sites and blogs. You can watch interviews from the Late Show with David Letterman, or view the latest U2 music video. YouTube is quickly growing to incorporate just about anything, so go ahead and "broadcast yourself," as creators of YouTube say, and share your latest adventure or silly moment with the world. You can experience YouTube yourself at [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com).

## Open Source – Software and More

Open source software applications start as far back as 1950 with IBM, but open source manipulation didn't become mainstream until the 80's. Most of us have seen or used some sort of open source program. Applications such as the Linux-based operating system, the OpenOffice suite, and the Mozilla Internet browser code are examples of successful, mainstream open source innovations.



Tux the Linux Penguin

program is sponsored by Sun Microsystems, and Sun continues to support development and contribute code to new OpenOffice software applications. OpenOffice is a multi-platform office productivity suite. It includes key desktop applications, such as a word processor, spreadsheet, presentation manager, and drawing program, with a user interface and feature set similar to other office suites. It does not provide all the functionality and support that Microsoft programs do, but it is a cost-effective alternative for home users and fledgling businesses.

Netscape launched its successful Mozilla project in 1998. This was a defining moment for the open source movement, as Netscape became a leader and partner in open source development, by providing low cost and alternative choices for technology. The release of the Mozilla source code, from Netscape's Navigator Web browsing program, led to the creation of the Firefox Internet browser and the Thunderbird e-mail application. Both programs now have millions of users and are among the largest distributors of open source software. Firefox is a user-friendly Web browsing program that is less susceptible to spyware and pop-ups. However, most Web sites are designed for Microsoft's Internet Explorer and Firefox can sometimes distort Web page layouts and images.



Firefox

In 2007, Unisys experts predict even more open source architectural approaches will be adopted as people are looking for a more holistic approach to their IT resources. Organizations and general users will see open source as a way to reduce costs for both technology acquisition and ongoing ownership. Unisys expects strategic users in 2007 will be looking to open source advancements to develop an "edge" to increase their competitiveness and drive innovation. This trend will allow employees, customers and general users to utilize applications that aren't available to the masses on the shelf of Best Buy.

So what's the definition of open source? Open source essentially describes practices in production and development that allow users access to a product's nuts and bolts, typically software code. This philosophy allows people the freedom to use, modify and redistribute any open source application and make it available free of charge. A person can create and modify a program to do, look and feel anyway he or she wants. The overall idea of any open source program is to eliminate access costs for both the consumer and the creator by reducing restrictions and copyrights.

One of the most widely used open source creations are Linux-based operating systems. At first, personal computer users were the only ones using Linux operating systems, but now companies like Unisys, Novell and even IBM have widely adopted the system to create solutions based on the source code.

It is hard to tell exactly how many people use a Linux operating system versus the widely popular Windows operating system. Some estimate there are almost 29 million people using Linux around the world, where others think the number is a little smaller, coming in around five million. Either way, it is an operating system that is giving people choices and giving software giant Microsoft a run for its money.

OpenOffice is another widely used open source product that operates similar to the Microsoft Office suite, only it is free. The

## What's Hot and What's Not for 2007

### HOT – anything connected to Apple's iPod

This portable audio device is still one of the hottest technologies on the market. There are now a number of gadgets that plug into an iPod to add features. Griffin audio sells portable iPod Karaoke machines that connect speakers and a microphone to your iPod for hours of embarrassing entertainment. Nike's even gotten on the iPod bandwagon with a new Nike+ iPod sport kit that has a receiver that clips onto an iPod Nano and an electronic pebble that slips into your shoe to track your pace and provide verbal encouragement during runs or walks.



### HOT – cell phones that do everything except walk the dog

The days of having a separate pager, cell phone, laptop, digital camera and MP3 player are almost extinct. Devices like the Palm Treo, Motorola Q, Blackberry Pearl, and T-Mobile Dash are becoming affordable all-in-one solutions. These devices are easy to network and sync; you can actually read letters and numbers on the keypad and there are enough features built in to entertain for days.

### NOT – voice-activated television remotes

How lazy have we become? This Intel technology is in its prototype stages, but it has trouble hearing the user when there is background noise. It also will change the channel in response to voices coming from the TV, however it can't help you find it when its lost between the cushions of the couch.

### WARM – Nintendo Wii

Who names their brand new video game system Wii (pronounced wee)? Even if this new technology has advanced graphics and gaming devices, this system will have toilet humor attached to it for all of 2007 and maybe into 2008.



### NOT – laptops powered by Sony batteries

Sony had a little problem with its laptops spontaneously bursting into flames (definitely HOT but not in a good way), and it doesn't look like Sony has solved the problem completely for 2007. It started with Dell, and now it has spread to Apple, Lenovo, Toshiba, and Fujitsu. Double-check the battery provider before purchasing your next laptop.

## Traveling with Technology

Cnet.com has developed a list of ten technologies you need to take on vacation. The list ranges from digital cameras to portable DVD players. We wanted real world input, so we asked Eptec's Josie Sheppard and Maria Sitarski what technologies they used the most to stay connected while recently visiting family in the Mediterranean. It seems the mobile phone wins hands down.

"My cell phone came in handy, and using text messaging was especially cost effective, 10 cents to receive and 50 cents to send. I just signed up for an international package for a few extra dollars per month. Calls are fairly expensive but very convenient," said Josie Sheppard, Head Coach, The Epittec Group.

"My husband and I used our cell phones and utilized the text messaging feature. We found it wonderful because of the time difference. We were able to send messages without disturbing anyone in the middle of the night," said Maria Sitarski, Coverage Concierge, The Epittec Group.

## Spreading Holiday Joy



Epittec recently helped deck the halls with the local charity Boys Hope Girls Hope of Detroit by coordinating a Christmas party including all the trimmings and presents from Santa. Boys Hope Girls Hope of Detroit is a residence program dedicated to helping children who have experienced social and economic challenges. Each child provided a Christmas list, which included clothing and other necessities. Epittec provided 14 children with new outfits from generous contributions from our employees and matching company contributions.

Boys Hope Girls Hope is dedicated to helping academically capable and motivated children meet their full potential by providing value-centered, family-like homes and a quality education through college. 100 percent of the residents go on to college and 83 percent earn a degree within five years. Boys Hope Girls Hope of Detroit currently operates one home for boys and one home for girls, with the hopes of opening a third home in 2007. You can find out more about the program at [www.boyshopegirlshope.org](http://www.boyshopegirlshope.org).

Please send any questions or comments to [support@epittecgroup.com](mailto:support@epittecgroup.com). Your input may become a topic in future issues of *Epitalk*.

## Industry Insight

### Professor Keith Jewett, College of Technology, Ferris State University



Professor Jewett started teaching at Ferris State University in 1996 in the Computer Information Systems program in the College of Business. He then moved to the Electrical/Electronics Engineering Technology and Computer Networks and Systems program in the College of Technology. Jewett has CCNA/CCAI certifications and teaches Cisco Academy courses and advanced networking classes. He has dabbled in independent consulting and storefront Web site design. Jewett also served in the United States Navy Nuclear Power Submarine Program for twenty years before returning to Michigan to teach.

around for so long that almost everyone takes it for granted, until we are forced to do without it. I challenge you to think of a technology we enjoy that doesn't use electricity in one form or another. Electricity has become so commonplace for most of us that we don't recognize how much we rely on it, and we don't concern ourselves with its generation or distribution. This is an area of great need and should be of interest to all. There are still many opportunities in this area of study if we don't miss them.

**Q:** What types of research are you conducting that will impact the technology we use in the future?

**A:** Ferris State University is a "learning centered" university rather than a research facility, so research doesn't always apply. However, with learning comes research on the part of the students as a method of expanding knowledge. One of the classes I teach challenges students to accomplish the near impossible with limited resources, much like what happens in the real world when restricted resources are given to the IT department. During this process they discover shortcomings can be overcome, and new gadgets are often created. Some of these students plan to go into technology design and will likely create inventions that will impact our future.

**Q:** What new technologies coming down the pipeline in the next 5 to 10 years will improve or revolutionize the way we live?

**A:** Dusting off my crystal ball shows me that the most significant effect on our lives is something far more advanced than the convenience we get from the newest electronic toys; it will be the integration of the computer sciences and the medical sciences. The advancements in medical technologies we see today are made possible by the advances in the electronics and computer industries. These advancements are going to continue to change the way doctors and nurses see and deal with the diseases and patients.

**Q:** What obstacles do you anticipate IT professionals will face in the near future, and what suggestions do you have to overcome these obstacles?

**A:** The obstacles faced by IT professionals have not changed much over time and will likely remain the same for many years to come. A constant challenge is money and resources. More often than not, upper administration is concerned with the bottom line and sees IT as a necessary evil rather than a way to advance the profit margin. This forces IT departments to struggle to obtain minimal funding to accomplish the ever-increasing challenges demanded of them. Overcoming this obstacle requires IT professionals to understand the business side of things and those in the control of the limited monetary resources available. Learning how to communicate with these key decision makers and how the expenditure of funding works, for both employee and equipment costs, can benefit the almighty bottom line and future resources.

**Q:** What significant changes have you seen in the computer sciences field over the last 25 years?

**A:** I should start out by stating the obvious, storage size and capacity. In the 1980's we saw the growth of electronic storage go from kilobytes (floppies) to megabytes. I remember my first hard drive was a whopping 20 MB. I also need to mention the rapid growth of memory requirements as software becomes more and more bloated. With this expansion of capacity, we have seen both the explosion of networking, as driven by the Internet and the Web with its graphical attraction, and the implosion of devices that are continually getting smaller and smaller.

**Q:** What recommendations do you have for people just starting their careers or furthering their education in the IT or computer science industry?

**A:** As simple as it may sound, the most significant skill that anyone in IT, or any related field, can develop is the ability to read and learn new information on their own. Traditional organized education will always be important, but the most significant skill that an educator can impart on their student is the ability to think on their own and find their own answers. Once an individual develops the skill set necessary to glean information on their own from any and all available resources, as opposed to being spoon fed by others, they will open the door to success. One additional quality that is necessary for any career is integrity. Life is full of surprises and mistakes, and the one moral quality I try to impart on my students is that they need to take responsibility for their actions. Integrity is a necessity of a successful career, whether you're just starting or if you have worked in the same profession for more than thirty years.

**Q:** Pick a technology you couldn't live without and why?

**A:** The simplest answer would be electricity. Electricity is a technology that has been

## Consultant



### Jeyesh Kurup

#### STATS

**Title:** Technical Lead and Application Architect

**Hire Date:** February 2003

**Responsibilities:** Application design, development and production in support of e-CIMS (Electronic Corporate Issue Management System) applications, define application architecture, implement new tools and technologies, and identify areas for system improvement.

**Education:** Master in Computer Application from Bharathiar University, India

**Quote:** "Epitem's staff provides excellent support to make you feel like an important entity of the organization and takes care of the administrative issues so you can completely focus on client successes and achieve project deliverables."

**iSpot Exclusive:** Jeyesh enjoys playing golf and has a pretty good poker face at the Texas hold 'em table.

## Corporate Employee



### Jessica Kurzym

#### STATS

**Title:** Financial Specialist

**Hire Date:** September 2003

**Responsibilities:** Responding to employee, vendor, and customer questions/concerns, posting cash receipts, issuing vendor checks, collections, purchasing, payroll, and billing for Epitem services.

**Education:** Bachelor of Science in Packaging from Michigan State University

**Quote:** "Epitem is truly a fun place to work. I am surrounded by incredible talent and I'm encouraged by my co-workers to succeed."

**iSpot Exclusive:** Jessica is completing a Master of Science in Accounting from Walsh College. She also is a triplet.



Mark Zuccaro, Robert Stringfellow, Kent Thompson

Epitem is partnering with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan (BCBSM) to provide resources for its Mainframe Testing Support (MTS) team. The MTS team is responsible for ongoing development and maintenance of testing environments and support of overall project testing. This project began in 2005 with the creation of nine new test environments, and BCBSM has been an Epitem client for 10 years.

Thus far, Epitem has provided three personnel resources to the project. BCBSM depends on Epitem's expertise to build and test environments including the loading of flat file datasets, VSAM datasets, IMS databases; the loading and synchronizing of CA-7 job schedules; and, the creation of shadow production elements. The team looks for changes to verify which elements conform to standards and ensure best practices are ready for production. In addition, Epitem consultants execute the CA-7 job schedules to assist developers with challenge and abend resolution and BMC restart issues. This support is provided for full system integration and model office testing environments. "Our favorite part of the project is learning new skills and working with a great group of people on our team," said Robert Stringfellow, Mainframe Testing Support for the Epitem Group.

## Milestones

### October

Siddharth Nakade (3 years)  
 Chung-Jian Huang (7 years)  
 Chankrapani Kanagala (8 years)  
 Diane Madigan (9 years)  
 Jeffrey Bonarek (11 years)  
 Aubrey Roberts (14 years)

### November

Subrahmanyeswara Chitraju (4 years)  
 Paul Brucker (5 years)  
 David Kirunchyk (7 years)  
 Wynett Summers (7 years)  
 Michael Gardiner (8 years)  
 Bavanandan Kanagaratnam (8 years)  
 Mark Ruma (9 years)  
 Kathy Muntz (12 years)  
 Daniel Wiest (13 years)

### December

Greg Meehan (5 years)  
 Tariq Naseem (6 years)  
 Norricky Gibson (14 years)



From Start To Finish, We're There For You.

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