SAM & Orion NEWS

SAM Computer Systems Limited

April 2012

TSI Group *Expansion continues*

2011 was a huge year of change and growth for SAM and for the entire TSI Group.

At the very end of the year SAM's sister company Systime Automotive Solutions was appointed as the sole distributor of the UK-based Autoline Dealer Management System into Australia (having been the New Zealand distributor for the last 12 years).

Almost simultaneously with this appointment, negotiations were finalised allowing SAM to purchase Christchurch based Synergy Business Solutions, another company specialising in business software for the automotive industry, and especially the service and repair market.

TSI Group general manager Darryn Crothall says that the intention is to have Synergy clients able to access the same range of services available to SAM clients.

"Many Synergy users are in some way connected with the automotive industry - which is our bread and butter - so we expect this to be a very natural and seamless transition."

"We're sure that access to the combined resources of TSI Group will offer Synergy clients a lot more choice in the future. Obviously from our point of view having more users gives us a larger potential pool of clients for our additional services like server hosting and computer hardware."

Read more about these changes on page 7

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF THE WEB

Web-Enabled Technologies.

Connecting remote and mobile staff is becoming commonplace and all businesses now have the potential to reach customers and suppliers in ways and places that were not possible in the past.

There are clear operational efficiencies and cost savings to be gained from improved and more convenient remote connections for example, but possibly even more exciting will be finding new strategic opportunities to reach, interact with and ultimately do business with more customers.

Like other forms of CRM and marketing, it will be those businesses that combine the benefits of new technology with good common sense and a structured trial-and-error approach that benefit the most from these opportunities. Social media is a case in point. Used well and constantly maintained it can be an enormously positive connection point with customers. On the other hand it represents a significant risk of negative publicity if not well managed or poorly used.

Information Security.

In the 21st century electronic data is becoming more and more valuable and therefore controlling access to it is becoming more and more important. With electronic storage and remote connectivity comes the risk of losing private information and worse, having competitors gain access to it. Whether it is payroll records or pricing information, security of sensitive information is an ongoing issue.

As more and more internet and cloud access becomes the norm, business owners and managers will gain comfort from knowing exactly by whom, from where, and when access is provided to their information.

Graphical image map of the activity and interconnectivity on the internet on a single day. Asia Pacific region is the red area. Courtesy OPTE project.
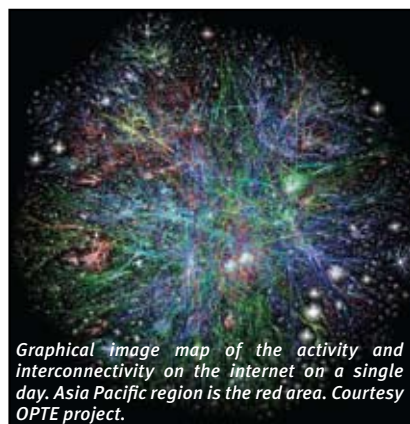
To this end dealing with a very limited number of trusted suppliers for I.T. services (just like your accountant, lawyer and doctor) will become standard, and TSI Group's future strategy is based on this expectation.

Moving from a physical server located in your building to a private cloud based should increase the security of information, not create more opportunities for loss of this data.

Platform Independence.

One thing that has been amazing in the past 5 years has been the explosion in the variety of devices that people are using to connect to each other. Ipads, tablets, smart phones, laptops and PDAs are now all common remote access tools. Within these groupings there are a multitude of operating systems, some of these - like Linux - having ever more sub-options within them.

After a few previous false starts. We are now moving to a new, exciting phase of remote connectivity where **true platform independence** is starting to emerge. A new internet standard called HTML5 is opening up amazing possibilities using any device with an internet browser - which of course means virtually all devices. Access from almost anywhere to anything will be available in the future. Whether you sit at a desk PC, use an iPhone or use an Android tablet, access to the same applications and programs will be standard fare. Exciting times ahead.

DISASTER RECOVERY

A recently published survey reported that 1 in 3 Australasian businesses had no disaster recovery plan at all for their I.T.

According to the survey, smaller businesses are worse than larger ones when it comes to planning for disaster. 36% of small businesses in the survey lacked the ability to revive computer systems within 24 hours.

It's easier than some may think. Read more about what TSI Group is doing to promote disaster recovery capabilities on page 3.

A MILLION INVOICES IN SAM!

Challenge Matamata Service Station and AA Auto Service and Repair Centre, owner Dave Harris has just passed the milestone of one million invoiced transactions in his SAM system.

Read more on page 8.

Orion Software Update
THE NEXT ORION RELEASE, VERSION 2.002
is due out May / June 2012.

Due to delays in getting the previous SAM software release out, Orion 2.002 has been delayed.

It was originally planned for November 2011 but has been held back a few months. This extra time is being put to good use however with some development that was originally planned for the subsequent version (2.004) brought forward.

In the last newsletter we mentioned a few significant changes coming in Orion 2.002. These included:

- PARTS BACK-ORDERING AND THE COMBINING OF ORDERS
- WEB-ENABLED ORION
- AUTOMATICALLY CREATING TASKS FOR SALESPEOPLE BASED ON MARKETING
- DEALER MANAGEMENT REPORTS

New functionality being added in the extended development period includes:

CONTRACTING MODULE WITH PROGRESS PAYMENTS

Demand for contracting style invoicing from a variety of clients and markets has seen the scoping of a new layout including the ability to track progressive charging and reconciliation of contracted quantities of goods/services. Within this Orion delivers the ability to invoice in progress portions on a scheduled basis or as contracted goods/services are consumed.

EXTENDING PARTS TRANSFERS TO A FULL PARTS REQUISITION SYSTEM

The existing parts transfer funtions will have an internal purchase order system integrated. This will allow parts managers to control stock movement between departments on a requisition and authorisation basis.

EXTENDING WEB-ENABLED ORION TO INCORPORATE ANY PLATFORM

Orion's web connectivity can now be accessed from any internet capable device including tablets, smart phones and PDAs.

A full list of Version 2.002 changes and features will be available shortly in the version release notes.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. WE HAVE A JOB THAT HAS GROWN INTO TWO SEPARATE JOBS AND WE WOULD NOW LIKE TO INVOICE THESE SEPARATELY. HOW DO WE DO THIS?

A. Firstly you need create the new job. Then it's simply a case of selecting the job lines on your original job that you wish to move (using CTRL-T to "tag" them - denoted by a blue highlight appearing) and right clicking directly on the lines selected. The message box on right displays allowing you to choose the new job and complete the transfer. Note that postings will keep their order and that as in the message on right, any repricing and discounting needs to be done manually after transfer..
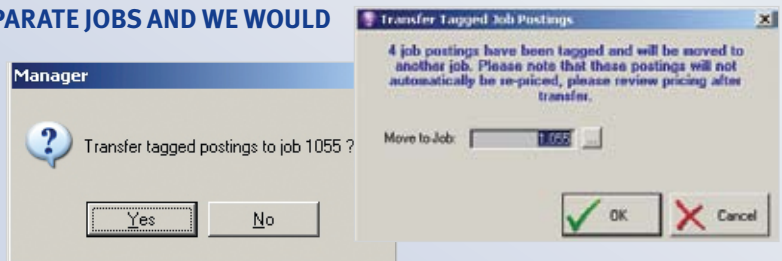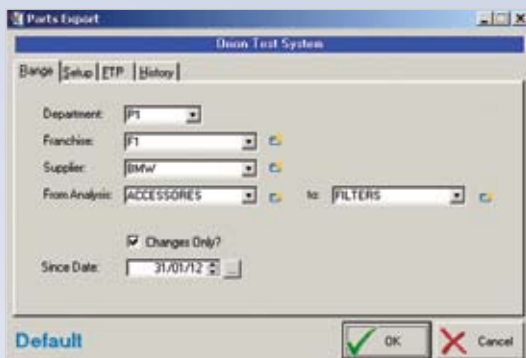
Q. CAN WE HAVE AN EXCEL EXPORT FOR A REPORT?

A. Generally speaking any report can be exported in a format that Excel can open, but we need to have a programmer set this up in each case. If there is any report that you would like exportable, just ask the help desk and we can put this into the development list.
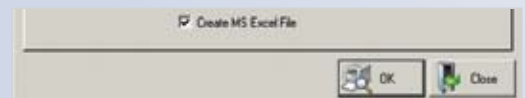
Q. WHEN PROCESSING PARTS PURCHASE ORDERS TO CREDITORS I NOTICE A WHOLE LOT OF PINK HIGHLIGHTED CODES IN THE GL LIST. WHAT ARE THESE?

A. The pink highlight denotes a non-posting account. These are accounts that are locked out for system only use. Administrators may occasionally access them for reconciliation purposes but otherwise they should not be used.

Q. WE HAVE A WEBSITE SETUP TO SELL PARTS. IS IT POSSIBLE TO EXPORT AUTOMATICALLY FROM ORION?

A. More and more customers are doing this all the time. Orion has an export application that we can customise for each client, so no matter what the file formats or how the website operators wants data presented, we can usually provide this fairly easily. A range of filtering options can be set up in the export application. Also as a standard feature Orion is capable of flagging parts or groups of parts that you do not want to export.

If you would like to receive more than one copy of this newsletter please contact Lenka on (09) 583 2451 or lenka.trefulkova@sam.co.nz

Server Hosting - *Zero Stress for Less*

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

In Jeopardy - the US TV game show - contestants are told the answer and have to come up with the correct question to win. So, if "Hosted Server" is the answer what's the question? Actually there are several questions that Hosted Servers resolve.

Q1. Say I buy another business or have staff on the road. How can I then have my staff connecting from anywhere at any time via a range of devices without expensive IT hardware and infrastructure costs?

Q2. How can I cut my computing costs while retaining or increasing our capabilities and reliability?

Q3. How can I utilise all the benefits of cloud technology without risking my data privacy?

Q4. How do I go about future-proofing I.T. in my business as it grows and evolves?

Q5. Can I avoid backing up along with all it entails like remembering every day and replacing back up media etc?

Q6. How can I go about setting up a decent disaster recovery platform if the worst should happen? What is a decent disaster recovery platform for my business?

TSI GROUP'S HOSTING AND DISASTER RECOVERY STRATEGY

TSI Group's customer base now encompasses around 9000 users in 15 countries. We support a huge variety of business environments, sizes and requirements, including our own three offices (Auckland, Sydney, Christchurch) and several staff who work either permanently or occasionally from home.

Increasingly our clients are demanding remote connectivity, and using a variety of devices to achieve this.

At one end of the spectrum we have clients who simply want to use their home broadband to do a little extra work in the evening and mobile staff needing wireless or mobile connectivity as they move around during the working day. At the other we have users in extremely remote areas of Asia connecting to their system via satellite modems and users who are in a different country to their head office systems.

Providing resilient, efficient and cost effective access is an ongoing challenge, and demand is growing quickly as are the number of device and connection types customers are using. The move from PCs to laptops has already leapt ahead to laptops being abandoned for Tablets and Smart Phones. Then there is Windows vs Apple vs Android (ignoring the manufacturers who still have their own propretary operating systems!). There are also a plethora of specialist PDAs in use as well.

Overall, computing prices are reducing and mobility is increasing, but this should not be at the risk of reduced data security, privacy or system access and useability. This is where TSI's computer engineering division steps in.

Driven partly by the growth of remote connectivity and partly by a continued drive to lower costs, TSI's hosting services grew steadily throughout 2011 and the data centre was literally starting to run out of space. A huge amount of investment has now been made to significantly increase hosting capacity for the future.

In the first half of 2012 an entirely new virtualised hosting system is being installed in the TSI data centre. Built exclusively on IBM server hardware, and eventually, migrating to Cisco networking hardware, this will immediately triple the hosting capacity of the data centre with scalability for significant further growth available.

The existing off site backup systems will be progressively increased as hosted clients are added. TSI's in house power generation capacity is also being increased in line with growth, ensuring that the data centre can maintain its ability to run entirely "off grid" at all times.

Various projects are underway to provide or increase software-as-a-service (SAAS) capabilities in all of the group's software systems. This will ensure that clients will have access to cloud technologies as well as choices of connection types and prices.

For obligation free advice about how a hosted solution could benefit your business call Kayleen Currie - Technical Operations Manager +64 9 583 2482 or email kayleen.currie@tsinz.co.nz

KEY BENEFITS OF HOSTING

- SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED HARDWARE OVERHEADS
- REMOTE CONNECTIVITY COSTS REDUCED
- HIGH LEVELS OF RESILIENCE
- INCREASED REDUNDANCY
- 24/7 CONNECTIVITY
- GUARANTEED UP TIME
- FREEING UP OF IT STAFF TIME AND RESOURCES
- FACILITIES AND OPTIONS NOT OTHERWISE VIABLE
- VITAL DATA STORED IN SECURE FACILITY
- OFFSITE BACK-UP CAPABILITIES

DISASTER RECOVERY

Lessons From Christchurch

One lesson learned from Christchurch is that faithfully performing a backup routine isn't enough. It sometimes isn't easy to foresee every eventuality.

While the I.T. Infrastructure overall stood up remarkably well, some Christchurch businesses - some suprisingly large ones too - that regularly sent their back up tapes in an armoured truck to a bank vault found, come the February quake, that their bank was in the red zone and no-one was allowed in for weeks!

Most of these businesses now have some form of reliable hosted disaster recovery system in place, probably involving offshore data storage. Within hours of any incident, these operations are now capable of having their business systems completely rebuilt, usually without the loss of any trading data whatsoever.

In a hosted environment it's relatively easy to have multiple disk-to-disk backups - one such configuration is called Mirror RAID - as well as offsite backups. These days the offsite backups can be almost instant too, which means that in the event of even a major failure only minutes worth of activity is at risk.

Proper disaster recovery preparations means thinking through what your business might look like for a few weeks after a disaster For a few hundred dollars a month the potential loss of days, if not weeks, of trading can be entirely prevented. You might be in "limp home mode" for a while, but your business will be up and running.

It is possible to partially recover disaster recovery costs because a comprehensive disaster recovery programme can assist with business continuity insurance levies when it comes time to negotiate these.

Funnies

ALERTS TO THREATS IN 2012 EUROPE

The English are feeling the pinch in relation to recent events in Libya, Egypt and Syria and have therefore raised their security level from "Miffed" to "Peeved." Soon, though, security levels may be raised yet again to "Irritated" or even "A Bit Cross."

The English have not been "A Bit Cross" since the blitz in 1940 when tea supplies nearly ran out. Terrorists have been re-categorized from "Tiresome" to "A Bloody Nuisance." The last time the British issued a "Bloody Nuisance" warning level was in 1588, when threatened by the Spanish Armada.

The Scots have raised their threat level from "Pissed Off" to "Let's get the Bastards." They don't have any other levels. This is the reason they have been used on the front line of the British army for the last 300 years.

The French government announced yesterday that it has raised its terror alert level from "Run" to "Hide." The only two higher levels in France are "Collaborate" and "Surrender." The rise was precipitated by a recent fire that destroyed France's white flag factory, effectively paralyzing the country's military capability.

Italy has increased the alert level from "Shout Loudly and Excitedly" to "Elaborate Military Posturing." Two more levels remain: "Ineffective Combat Operations" and "Change Sides."

The Germans have increased their alert state from "Disdainful Arrogance" to "Dress in Uniforms and Sing Marching Songs." They also have two higher levels: "Invade a Neighbour" and "Lose."

Belgians, on the other hand, are all on holiday as usual; the only threat they are worried about is NATO pulling out of Brussels .

The Spanish are all excited to see their new submarines ready to deploy. These beautifully designed subs have glass bottoms so the new Spanish navy can get a really good look at the old Spanish navy.

Australia, meanwhile, has raised its security level from "No worries" to "She'll be right, Mate." Two more escalation levels remain: "Crikey! I think we'll need to cancel the barbie this weekend!" and "The barbie is cancelled." So far no situation has ever warranted use of the final escalation level.

- John Cleese - British writer, actor and tall person

A final thought -"Greece is collapsing, the Iranians are getting aggressive, and Rome is in disarray. Welcome back to 430 BC".

ROAD SHOW SCHEDULE to 2012

PLEASE NOTE THESE ARE TENTATIVE DATES AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE DEPENDING ON SCHEDULING LIMITATIONS AND DEMAND. KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR DATES FOR YOUR AREA.

SINCE THE LAST NEWSLETTER ROAD SHOWS HAVE BEEN HELD IN WELLINGTON, PALMERSTON NORTH, NEW PLYMOUTH AND MASTERTON.

PLANNING IS NOW UNDERWAY FOR THE FOLLOWING:

TOKOROA, TAURANGA, WHAKATANE, GISBORNE, NAPIER/HASTINGS, WHANGAREI, FAR NORTH, PUKEKOHE, AUCKLAND NORTH SHORE, HAMILTON, THAMES/WAIHI, AUCKLAND CENTRAL

ACE

An old Irish World War II Spitfire pilot and flying ACE, was speaking in a church and reminiscing about his war experiences.

"In 1942," he says, "the situation was really tough. The Germans had a very strong air force. I remember," he continues, "one day I was protecting the bombers and suddenly, out of the clouds, these Fokkers appeared."

There are a few gasps from the parishioners, and several of the children began to giggle.

"I looked up, and realized that two of the Fokkers were directly above me. I aimed at the first one and shot him down. By then, though, the other Fokker was right on my tail."

At this point, several of the elderly ladies of the church were blushing with embarrassment, the girls were all giggling and the boys laughing loudly.

The pastor finally stands up and says, "I think I should point out that 'Fokker' was the name of a German-Dutch aircraft company, who made many of the planes used by the Germans during the war."

"Yes, that's true," says the old pilot, "but these fokkers were flying Messerschmitts."!!

UNFAITHFUL

An elderly couple was having dinner one evening when the husband reached across the table, took his wife's hand in his and said, "Martha, soon we will be married 50 years, and there's something I have to know. In all of these 50 years, have you ever been unfaithful to me?"

Martha replied, "Well Henry, I have to be honest with you. Yes, I've been unfaithful to you three times during these 50 years, but always for a good reason."

Henry was obviously hurt by his wife's confession, but said, "I never suspected. Can you tell me what you mean by 'good reasons'?"

Martha said, "The very first time was shortly after we were married, and we were about to lose our little house because we couldn't pay the mortgage. Do you remember that one evening I went to see the banker and the next day he notified you that the loan would be extended?"

Henry recalled the visit to the banker and said, "I can forgive you for that. You saved our home, but what about the second time?"

Martha asked, "And do you remember when you were so sick, but we didn't have the money to pay for the heart surgery you needed? Well, I went to see your doctor one night and, if you recall, he did the surgery at no charge."

"I recall that," said Henry. "And you did it to save my life, so of course I can forgive you for that. Now tell me about the third time."

"All right," Martha said. "So do you remember when you ran for president of your golf club, and you needed 73 more votes?"

STAFF CHANGES:

In the last newsletter we omitted to mention Craig Shaw who transferred into the SAM/Orion helpdesk from the TSI engineering division in 2011. With his considerable hardware and networking experience Craig has proven very valuable to the team. He's a knowledgable ex-Orion user too because TSI uses Orion to run the engineering division.
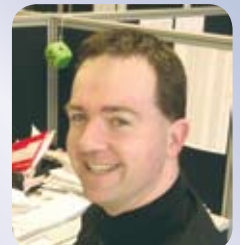
Craig

Georgina Graham also joined the team in January. Georgina comes to us with an extensive background in various operations and at different levels of the automotive industry. Oh, and as you can see in the picture she was an early volunteer to be one of the company fire wardens!

Georgina

Software Support Centre

Hours of Operation

Monday to Friday 7:30 am to 5:30 pm
phone: 09 583 2455
fax: (09) 583 2457

After hours Emergency

Until 8pm daily (including weekends and public holidays)
phone: 0274 286 0940
email: samsupport@sam.co.nz

Unified Communications System

We have implemented a new software based phone system across the entire TSI Group. As part of this, our ability to respond to voice messages in the Support Centre is greatly improved, with each message becoming part of our call queue and maintaining its priority until delivery to the next available consultant.

This means voicemails are now typically responded to within 2 minutes.

If we don't answer your support call immediately **- PLEASE DON'T HANG UP -** leave a voice message - our new call back functionality ensures that your message is treated with the same priority as your original call and will be delivered to a support consultant within a minute or two.

In coming months, emails to the support centre will also be treated as being in the call queue and will be responded to much more quickly.

Housekeeping

Backups

Please remember that if you are sending backup media to the SAM Support Centre, please ensure that it is correctly labelled with your company details and the consultant on the support team who is to receive it.

Faxes

Also make sure that when you are sending faxes to the SAM team that they are also addressed to the appropriate consultant .

Lunch time–reduced helpdesk coverage

We would like to remind our customers that we operate at slightly reduced staffing levels between 12 and 2pm. If your call is not urgent, please consider calling outside of these hours.

Changing ownership

If you buy or sell a SAM or Orion system, it is critical that a Change Of Ownership form is completed and sent to us in advance of the hand-over.

Call Lenka on (09) 583 2451

Please check and order statement supplies a few days before you start your monthly run. We cannot always guarantee that last minute orders will arrive on time.

Stationery

Personalised stationery is an inexpensive and easy way of presenting a professional image to your business.

SAM's collective buying power from our printer allows us to pass on our corporate discount to all customers–including personalised stationery.

Compare these prices to what is available locally.

All that is required is a copy of your business logo on disc (if available) and a sample of your letterhead or business card to indicate colours and style.

Stationery Orders

Our Group run pricing (excludes GST & freight)

QTY	1 colour	2 colour	3 colour	4 colour
1000	$169	$265	$354	$445
2000	$122	$172	$227	$267
3000	$111	$134	$174	$214
4000	$99	$119	$150	$180
5000	$93	$106	$130	$152

Remember there is no setup charge for files or plates.

If you would like to receive more than one copy of this newsletter please contact Lenka on (09) 583 2451 or lenka.trefulkova@sam.co.nz

SAM Software Update *THE NEXT SAM RELEASE, VERSION* **6.002**

2011 saw the significant and successful release of SAM verion 6.000. This involved a total upgrade of the Clarion development software platform used to create SAM, several months of intensive work, and a great deal of testing both in house and at our approximately 35 beta test sites.

Now that SAM 6.000 is settling work has started on the next version (6.002) including a number of enhancements that were held back while this major work was underway.

A number of smaller, but important changes are in the process of being added. These Include:

Changes to allow PDFs and other document types to be electronically stored against vehicles.

Various changes and additions to the control log (also known as the system audit log)

SAM's expiry codes are now issued automatically. Each SAM system now periodically checks a server in the TSI hosted data centre and is able to update itself with new licence validation information. This saves clients needing to call the helpdesk to have these codes issued manually (note assistance is available if for any reason automatic updating is unsuccessful).

SAM Version 6.002 is targetted for release in September/October 2012.
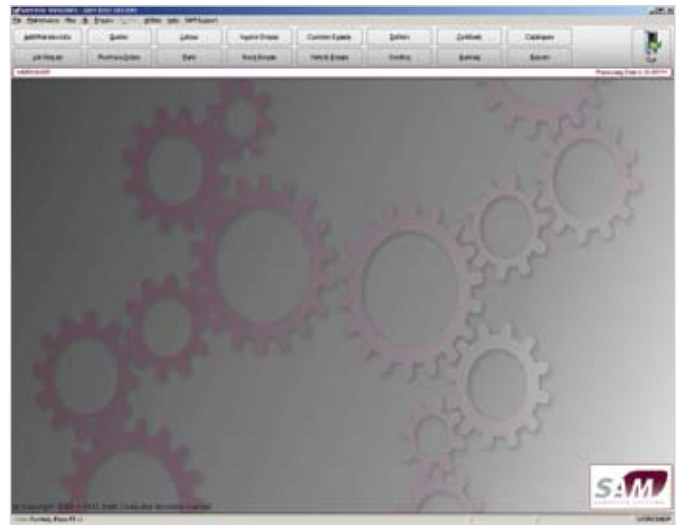
SAM Frequently Asked Questions (WITH END OF YEAR THEME)

Q. AS AN END OF YEAR TIDY UP I'M GOING TO MERGE SOME CUSTOMERS I'VE REALISED ARE DUPLICATED?

A. From Main Menu, System Setup, Customer tab choose Merge Customers. Enter (or browse to select) the customer that is going to be "merged" into the Customer To Delete field. Then enter (or browse to select) the customer that will remain and have the old customer records merged into it. Click Ok to complete the merge. All invoices and records from the first customer will now be permanently attached to the new customer. It is strongly advised that customer merge is run with all other users logged out of SAM

Q. CAN I ALSO RUN THE SAME MERGE PROCESS ON STOCK?

A. From Main Menu, System Setup, Stock tab choose Merge Stock. The process is exactly as for customers above.

Q. WE HAVE INVOICED A CUSTOMER INCORRECTLY, CHARGING HIS PERSONAL ACCOUNT WHEN IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN HIS COMPANY ONE. WHAT CAN WE DO?

A. SAM's credit and recharge facility is accessed from the Invoice Listing screen using the Recharge Invoice button. Simply select /highlight the invoice to recharge and choose a new debtor to direct the charge to. Note this process retains the original pricing and does not alter the invoice if the two debtors have a different discount or pricing structure.

Q. I HAVE LOTS OF SMALL BALANCES - UNDERS AND OVERS - IN DEBTORS. IS THERE A QUICK WAY TO CLEAN THESE UP?

A. From the Misc menu choose Small Balance Writeoffs. In this screen you can set a small balance limit up to $5, a GL account to send any net +/- value, then generate a list of suggested writeoffs for review. Once happy with the list, it can be processed, automatically crediting and writing off the transactions. Note that both the original transaction line and the write off journal will remain visible on the debtor account until the next monthly rollover, at which point they will both move to the debtors history file.

Q. HOW DO WE WRITE OFF A COUPLE OF BAD DEBTS?

A. While we'd all like to avoid this, it is a reality. From the debtor screen choose Journal. Choose AD- (since we are writing off in this case), enter a reference and browse to your Bad Debt GL code. Enter the amount with or without GST as appropriate and add an appropriate comment. Press OK. You will also need to manually credit match the resulting journal against the charge(s)

TSI Group News

CLOUD COMPUTING

As well as being the parent company, TSI is the technical IT and engineering department for Systime Automotive Solutions and SAM Computer Systems. In this capacity TSI engineering staff provide computer hardware, networking and communications services to all clients, as well as Systime and SAM staff.

Recently TSI has been seeing growth in Cloud Computing, especially with clients looking to remote connectivity to find more and more efficiency in their operations.

While for many years the TSI engineering division has been almost exclusively operating as a support business for Systime and SAM, it is now gearing up to offer its services outside the automotive market and this is expected to be a significant growth area in coming years. In 2011 a new Operations Manager position was created in TSI and Kayleen Currie joined the management team. Kayleen comes to the group with a great deal of experience, having most recently managed retail IT support for Pumpkin Patch's clothing stores world wide.

SELLING NZ KNOW HOW...

After 12 years as exclusive New Zealand distributor of ADP's Autoline dealer management system (DMS), Systime Computer Company has been appointed to add the Australian market from January 2012.

TSI Group general manager Darryn Crothall says the appointment is a very strong endorsement of years of consistent high quality delivery and excellence servicing and supporting clients in the New Zealand automotive industry. "ADP is a huge multinational organisation and in this case they had several options including establishing their own operation in Australia. Having them decide to back us to replicate what we do in New Zealand is a huge boost for our team as well as Kiwi know how."

TSI Systime inherits an existing established Australian client base and will look to build steadily from this after an initial settling in period. The company has also taken on an established core team of Australian based consultancy and support staff and technology ensures that the Sydney and Auckland support centres are seamlessly merged.

"Naturally there is considerable work underway by our technical staff to ensure all clients have the same experience regardless of which side of the Tasman their call is actually answered", says Systime operations manager Tracey Atkins, "But the absolute focus has been on making the transition process smooth for all clients including our New Zealand base."

Atkins says consolidation of some parts of the support operation will occur over time to maximise economy of scale advantages. "In particular we are consolidating the software development team for the entire region to our Auckland offices. This will provide benefits for all clients."

TSI Group is New Zealand's largest software house providing solutions and support to the automotive and related industries.

The three companies in the group provide software, hardware and business systems to the entire automotive market from manufacturers/distributors and the largest dealership groups to the smallest repair and service businesses.... and everything in between.

TSI is in its 32nd year of operation and in total around 9000 users in 3000 business locations across 15 countries use TSI, Systime or SAM services every working day.

SYNERGY BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

In what some see as a natural progression SAM has purchased Christchurch-based Synergy Business Solutions. Certainly, according to TSI group general manager Darryn Crothall, there are a number of (excuse the pun...) synergies in the operations working together.

"It's true that SAM and Synergy have historically competed against each other in the automotive workshop market", says Crothall, "However the larger part of Synergy's client base doesn't cross over into markets SAM operates in, so there is a strong complimentary relationship and Synergy certainly adds to the group."

In addition to automotive workshops, Synergy has a strong existing portfolio of retail point of sale, service station and other business clients. Crothall reports that discussions are ongoing around how Synergy's potential can be maximised. "Obviously we're still in the bedding down stages so we don't want to get too far ahead or ourselves with planning. Having said that I think it's reasonable at this point to make a couple of predictions. Firstly that Synergy's service station expertise will be a big part of the group's future, and also that an online version of Synergy's cash book and accounting functionality could appear within 18 months."

Certainly there was a strong belief on both sides of the sale negotiations that Synergy has a strong and vibrant future in TSI group. As negotiations concluded allowing the sale of Synergy to proceed, outgoing CEO Hayley Bryan said after several weeks of discussions including visiting TSI's offices in Auckland she was more than satisfied that SAM and TSI were the right people to deal with and she was sure the best interests of both staff and clients were being served with Synergy transitioning into larger operation.

"Also of paramount for us was the people that come with Synergy," says Crothall. "We've welcomed the Synergy staff into SAM and the wider TSI group. Already they are making a contribution and we only see this growing with time and more experience with the rest of our operations."

With the addition of Synergy's Christchurch operation and the recent opening of a Sydney office supporting the expansion of Systime into Australia, TSI Group has suddenly grown to around 60 staff with 3 offices.

"This is one time when the fact that we have our own networking and infrastructure company within the group is a huge advantage," adds Crothall, "Using modern communications and technology we have been able to link the Australian staff up to operate as if they are in Auckland and *vice versa*. Linking the Christchurch office is underway now.

1,000,000 Invoices in SAM *Matamata Challenge*

We are delighted to report that Dave Harris, owner/operator of Challenge Matamata and AA Auto Service and Repair processed his millionth invoice through SAM late in 2011.

SAM operations manager Raju Bhana says Challenge Matamata is the first client to reach this milestone. "We have plenty of clients who have been with us for a long time - 20 years in some cases - but as far as we are aware this is the first time any of our systems has processed a million invoices. Obviously a large part of this is due to Challenge Matamata being a service station, but it's still notable and the sheer volume confirms SAM's resilience in an extremely busy environment."

Dave has made a significant contribution to SAM software development over the years. With assistance from Cambridge-based specialist automotive accounting practice Herbert Morton, he has been prepared to travel to SAM's Auckland office to meet key staff and work through his enhancement ideas.

Many of these, of course, have been service station Specialised requirements, but some have also benefitted the wider SAM user base.

The help provided by the SAM support team has been an important part of the relationship and Dave is very happy with the level of support he has received. He also says he appreciates the benefits provided by SAM in terms of the total integration of the various parts of his business.

Dave has implemented the customisation that SAM provides for AA Auto Service and Repair franchised sites. These custom changes provide special AA functionality as well as custom reporting.

Dave also contributes his time and knowledge to the automotive industry as a whole. He has put in many years of service in the MTA and is currently an elected Director on the MTA Board.

Challenge Matamata and AA Service and Repair

Dave (centre) with forecourt staff

AUTOMOTIVE APPRENTICES *Learning With SAM*

SAM is being provided free of charge to Polytechnics and Institutes around the country to assist with automotive trade studies, specifically in the area of computer skills as well as an introduction to some aspects of business awareness.

TSI Group sales director Paul Wilkinson says that SAM is delighted to be involved in the education of young people coming into the trade. "It has to be good for everyone involved. We get to give something back to the trade, while the students gain exposure to a specialist automotive computer system and start to develop an awareness of some of the business requirements they will encounter later in their careers. Things like accurate recording of stock, invoice presentation - all those little things that the good operators really do well.."

"We've been pleasantly surprised by the level of interest from the course tutors in all the organisations we have dealt with. Clearly they are aware of the benefits of this type of training and knowledge for the students."

Wilkinson says that SAM is providing the software, ongoing updates and support for free as part of its ongoing efforts to help improve the trade. "We are also providing training and have committed to some presentations by our senior staff as well," he says. "Most of these have trade experience themselves so they know exactly what it's like to start your trade qualification for the first time."

The first course to start using SAM live is at Unitec's Mt Albert campus. Students starting National Certificates in Automotive industry disciplines will have an initial introduction to SAM in the first semester of 2012, with more advanced courses later in the year. As this is the first course to use SAM, a little ongoing assessment and adjustment is expected as the presentation and training is fine tuned.

"SAM is actively working towards a future where this becomes part of the national automotive trade curriculum , and we are committed to providing all the help we can" says Wilkinson. "Discussions with MITO are about to commence towards this goal and SAM is gradually gearing up internal resources to be able to meet future demand when more training institutions come on board.".

Unitec curriculum leader and lecturer for the Bachelor of Applied Technology Jone Tawaketini is delighted to have SAM's software and senior staff available to help accelerate student's understanding of business.

Around 60 students will participate in the initial business elements of the Untiec course in the first semester, which will cover an introduction to business software. Some students will then progress to more advanced business analysis sections later, including an introduction to concepts like sales margins and profit and loss.