

6 Mai 2003

Durée 3 heures

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I - a) Listen and give an account of the document:

Press the flesh, not the keyboard – The Economist, August 24th 2002.

(20 points)

CF: Sir Martin Sorrell – WPP – Hambro's – Bishopsgate – Michael Bloomberg – Salomon Brothers – Tony Venables – Dame Judith Mayhew – Sukko Kim – Michael Storper.

Vocabulary: to thrive = to become and continue to be successful – to huddle = to gather – to eyeball to look at something or someone in a way that is very direct and not always polite and friendly.

II - a) Sum up the following article IN YOUR OWN WORDS – 150 - 180 words

I.T. grows up - The Economist, August 24th 2002.

Vocabulary: to fine-tune = to make changes to something that is as good as it can possibly be.

(20 points)

b) Translate into French : [.....]

- § 5 « And given..... to be believed »
- § 9 « But this change corporate customers»
- § 10 « I.T. buyers the various bits of their systems »

(15 points)

III – Choose ONE of the following writing tasks – 150 -180 words

1 – Do you agree that “IT managers are coming to like Linux”?

Explain why Linux is becoming so popular and why it was not so earlier.

2 – Describe the latest developments/breakthroughs in computer technology or technology at large. Say whether this is happening for the better or for the worse.

(15 points)

Press the flesh, not the keyboard

AS A young man in the City of London, recalls Sir Martin Sorrell, boss of WPP, a marketing group, he was struck by the magnificence of the partners' room at Hambro's. The bank's top ~~boss~~ ^{executives} sat in a vast hall above Bishopsgate, surrounded by their aides. "There was a lot of noise," he says, "but everybody knew what everyone else was doing."

The newish mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, began his working life as a trader for Salomon Brothers, and has recreated something similar in his office in City Hall. Officials work in cubicles within a giant, open ~~hall~~ ^{room}, rather than in private offices. Again, the aim is to free the flow of information. The inevitable conclusion: seeing other people in the flesh is a different, and sometimes better, way to make sure that news and views flow freely than anything that electronics can offer.

One of the mysteries of the wired (and wireless) world is that proximity still counts. In spite of September 11th, and the predictions that everyone would travel less and have fewer meetings, people still want to gather to do deals, to drum up new ideas and to court customers. Indeed, in some ways, physical presence counts even more than it used to. Tony Venables, an economist at the London School of Economics, believes that businesses that thrive on face-to-face communications—~~or what some call ~~face~~~~—now account for a growing share of economic activity.

Of course, the arrival of the Internet and of cheap long-distance telecommunications means that lots of activities that once required physical presence can now be conducted online. Customers can pay a bill, book a hotel room or place a bet without walking to the bank, travel agent or bookie. The fall in the costs of undertaking

such routine transactions has allowed companies to move them out of expensive city centres to cheaper locations.

But other kinds of business seem to need proximity more, not less, these days. Look at the way the venture capitalists who financed the Internet boom huddle together ~~along Sand Hill Road in Palo Alto~~, or the clustering of media folk along New York's Avenue of the Americas. "If you are doing a multi-million-pound deal, you need to eyeball them," says Dame Judith Mayhew, chairman of the policy committee of the Corporation of London. "You don't do that down the line."

Cities are still highly efficient ways to ensure that eyeballers can see each other. Some trades seem to thrive on density. In a paper recently published by the National Bureau of Economic Research, Sukkoo Kim points out that 40% of American employment is packed into 1.5% of its land area. Those cities that specialise in some services—notably finance, insurance, property dealing and wholesale trade—have tended to pack more and more workers on to the same land, he argues, unlike those that specialise in services such as public administration or retailing.

Why might that be true? Michael Storper of the University of California, Los Angeles, has written a paper with Mr Venables on "Buzz: The Economic Force of the City". They argue that cities are where information and ideas are developed and swapped. But not all information is equal. Some (a bank statement, say, or a booking) is easily codified and electronically swapped; while some ("I have a deal for you", "why don't we do it this way?") requires context and trust to be meaningful. It is the second kind of information that requires ~~face~~.

Face-to-face
Communications

IT grows up

Maîtrise INFO -
6 mai 2003

1 **W**AITING for spending on information technology (IT) to pick up has become rather like waiting for Godot. Having grown by 16% in 2000, IT spending in the United States fell by 6% in 2001 and is expected to be stagnant this year

Analysts are fine-combing quarterly results for signs of a recovery. Last week brought some good news: Dell, a computer maker, announced a year-on-year increase in revenues of 11%. But the third-quarter results that HP, another computer giant, is to announce on August 27th will probably be less encouraging.

2 Hopes for a general bounceback in the second half of the year have long faded. Even optimists now say that recovery will not come before next spring. When it does, annual revenue-growth rates of 10-13% will be the best-case scenario, predicts Laura Conigliaro, an analyst with Goldman Sachs—half as much as during the bubble years.

3 In any case, focusing on an uncertain return of good old “new economy” times distracts from the fact that the IT business is undergoing profound changes. And most of these are likely to prove lasting.

4 Companies are not only spending much less on IT now, but they are also spending differently. Software vendors, in particular, can no longer depend on quick multi-million-dollar deals, but must work harder to win contracts that tend to be much smaller. More importantly, customer priorities have changed. Rather than buying e-business software or new computers, companies want gear that helps to cut costs, improve security and integrate existing software applications.

5 No surprise there, perhaps. In times of economic uncertainty, companies prefer small, short-term projects that fine-tune what they already have. The events of September 11th taught IT managers that they must make their systems more secure. And given big companies' current accounting woes, chief executives have gone back to spending more time with their chief financial officers than with their chief information officers—although they have not lost interest in technology, if a recent survey by Forrester Research is to be believed.

6 This new-found pragmatism is likely to prove lasting. In the 1990s, firms embraced technology religiously—first because they feared that the millennium bug might trigger an apocalypse, then because they were afraid of losing out in e-business. Now that such worries have faded, IT is just one of many tools that companies can use to stay competitive.

7 That realisation explains why technology investments now face the same kind of scrutiny as other forms of spending. Above all, they have to provide a clearly discernible return on investment. This also suggests that the IT industry—at least its more mature parts, such as hardware—is

becoming less of a “growth story” and more like a standard cyclical business.

8 Perhaps more worryingly for IT vendors, the industry is undergoing a shift in the balance of power between buyers and sellers. Again, it is hardly surprising that buyers currently have the upper hand in the market for computers and software. Nearly two-thirds of IT managers in America think that their ability to command better pricing terms is increasing, according to a survey published last month by Goldman Sachs.

9 [But this change is merely the most visible part of a more profound trend. Traditionally, vendors have driven most big IT markets. They have been, for example, quite successful at locking in corporate customers.] Once a company has deployed a piece of proprietary technology—say, an expensive package of enterprise software—it is very costly to switch to another provider. Software vendors can thus milk their “installed base” by selling them one upgrade after another.

10 [IT buyers, however, are increasingly reluctant to play this one-sided game. They are putting pressure on vendors to make it easier for them to link the various bits of their systems.] Indeed, the concept of collaborative e-commerce makes sense only if applications have a common language. What is more, vendors themselves increasingly favour open standards as a defensive strategy to neutralise the power of proprietary-minded competitors.

11 Being forced to do more with less, IT managers are coming to like Linux, the free operating system. Linux and the universe of “open-source” businesses that surround it are one of the few areas of the technology business that is actually growing. Almost a fifth of server computers sold by Dell now have Linux installed rather than Windows. Sun Microsystems has begun offering Linux servers, and might soon add a Linux PC to its product line.

Shocked by the severity of the technology recession, IT companies are maturing quickly. But technology has a way of surprising the world. It may not be long before some proverbial teenager in a garage invents the next killer application, and gives the industry back at least some of its legendary buzz. ■

The Economist, August 24th 2002.