

TRADE TRIP SEALS DEALS FOR IT FIRM

By Jenny Waddington
BUSINESS REPORTER

A WARWICKSHIRE IT company is celebrating a string of new contract wins after a successful visit to a major Microsoft conference and exhibition in Canada.

Technology Associates Ltd, of Shotton Brook Office Park in Stratford, won £176,000 worth of business following the UK Trade and Investment funded trip to the Microsoft Worldwide Partner Conference in Toronto.

The new deals were with several international companies based in the US and Canada to provide innovative cloud-based software solutions and support.

Established 22 years ago by Kelvin Kirby to provide traditional project management solutions, the business has become a Microsoft Gold Partner focused on providing IT services, support and training as well as independent software solutions to a growing worldwide client base.

While the company has an impressive list of corporate clients including BP, Lloyds Banking Group and Vodafone, it has also built an enviable reputation amongst SMEs, for high-quality, affordable solutions.

Mr Kirby said: "This is the tenth time we have attended the Worldwide Microsoft Conference and each time I've secured new contract wins on the back of the contacts I've made with companies."

"But this is the third time we have done it with support from UKTI and the difference that makes is significant."

"The event itself offers individuals and companies the opportunity to network and communicate their service offer to over 16,000 partners, in order to sell products and services to a wider market."

In December last year, Kelvin was appointed as worldwide president for the International Association of Microsoft Channel partners – the official voice of Microsoft.



CONFERENCE SUCCESS: Bineet Desai of Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber, Kelvin Kirby, managing director of Technology Associates, Jon Roskill, corporate vice president of Microsoft Inc and Graham Ashmore from UKTI

£176k of business from Microsoft conference

He was selected by Microsoft from 640,000 partners worldwide.

Technology Associates has also entered into discussions with Microsoft about being an exclusive UK partner/reseller for the new Perceptive Pixel large format touch screen devices.

The announcement of Microsoft's acquisition of Perceptive Pixel was made only during the Microsoft Partner Conference.

Mr Kirby added: "It was a real privilege to be part of the conference and I'd like to thank the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber and in particular Bineet Desai for the support given to me to enable the trip to become a reality."

Mr Desai, international trade adviser for UK Trade & Investment based at Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber said: "It's hugely impor-

tant that businesses make the most of the opportunities available to them for trading overseas, particularly in areas such as IT solutions and software where location is largely irrelevant."

"We'll be looking to build on the success of the Toronto market visit, organising further opportunities for companies to get involved in overseas trade in the near future."

Firm helps students get on road to success

YOUNGSTERS are on the road to their future careers after an automotive software company helped to steer them in the right direction.

Cooper Solutions, based in Barford, dropped into Myton School, in Warwick, to support the school's Careers Fair for Year 10 students.

The firm, which produces web-based automotive software for car dealerships, spoke with pupils about careers in the industry during the event at the school on Myton Road.

Barry Cooper, managing director of Cooper Solutions, said: "We were delighted to have been invited by Myton School to share

the work of our company and to discuss career opportunities available in the industry. Events like this are crucial in helping the next generation decide what career path they would like to follow and to raise awareness of the wide range of careers available."

"We have always worked to support schools in the

area and we have a track record of employing local people, so we look forward to working with Myton School again in the future."

Other firms which exhibited at the fair included those in the legal, retail, health, design and defence sectors. Sally Kirk, assistant head at Myton School,

said: "Careers events like this are essential in supporting students to develop their ideas about future careers choices."

"They depend entirely on the support of local and national businesses and we were delighted to welcome Cooper Solutions to Myton School, along with nearly 50 other businesses."

Reforms are not working – directors

BUSINESS leaders believe the government's reforms on issues including reducing tax and red tape, and simplifying employment law, have been "ineffective", according to a new study. Research among more than 1,200 members of the Institute of Directors (IoD) also found "serious concerns" that the recession will continue for the rest of the year.

The directors said the coalition had struggled most at reducing tax complexity and business regulation.

Just over half of those polled predicted economic growth to be lower this year, while two out of three said there was a zero or low probability of the UK emerging from recession in 2012.

Mobile giant gets early 4G go-ahead

THE owner of T-Mobile and Orange is set to steal a march on its rivals after being given the go-ahead to launch superfast mobile internet.

Everything Everywhere has been told by regulator Ofcom that it can use some of its existing spectrum for 4G services from later this year – before the industry's auction of airwaves due to take place in 2013.

Rival Vodafone said it was shocked by Ofcom's decision but the regulator argued that allowing Everything's application to vary its existing licence was in the best interests of consumers.

Ofcom's auction, which is due to start later this year, will give access to the fourth generation, or 4G, network, to at least 98 per cent of people across the UK, enabling users to download data – such as music and high-definition films – at much faster speeds.

Persimmon reveals big jump in profits

PERSIMMON hailed an "excellent" 65 per cent hike in profits as it overcame a sluggish market by focusing on building family homes in affluent areas.

The York-based builder, whose brands include Charles Church and Westbury, saw revenues rise 13 per cent to £806.7million in the six months to June 30. The strategy helped underlying pre-tax profits hit £98.7million, meaning the group is on course to ramp up dividend payments as part of plans to return £1.9billion of surplus cash to shareholders over the next nine years.

The group said private reservations have slowed from the 18 per cent growth in the first half but are still 5 per cent ahead of last year since the start of July, while it has already sold 220 homes through the government's NewBuy scheme, which encourages the return of 95 per cent mortgages.

Pawnbroker hit by end of gold rush

THE UK's biggest pawnbroker said half-year profits slumped by more than a quarter after its gold arm suffered as the price of the precious metal plunged.

But H&T Group put faith in its core pawnbroking business to offset the impact of the gold bubble bursting, with double digit growth in both its pledge book and pawn service charge.

Pre-tax profits fell by 27.2 per cent to £7.5million in the six months to June 30 following a £2million drop in profits at its gold business.