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# billing insider

an AKJ newsletter

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## Roadmap Update

VAT Guidelines

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WLR3 News

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# Affinity CRM Development Roadmap

Following the AKJ Technology Roadshow in 2009, we commenced a detailed review of development requirements with our customers through a series of questionnaires and face to face account meetings. From this feedback we received a wide range of customer suggestions for both brand new functionality and improvements to the existing system.

The two day interactive event, involved each customer being asked to contribute ideas on future development as to how the market leading Affinity billing platform could improve their business operations.

The suggested improvements range from minor updates to significant projects however a number of common requirements were identified and from these we are pleased to be able to release the first Development Roadmap for 2010.

Development for 2010 will be split into 3 product releases and within each release we are pleased to be able to announce both generic system updates (which will be provided to customers free of charge as part of their monthly service fee) as well as new modules (which are optional and may be subject to additional one off or ongoing charge):

- **Release 1: March 2010**
- **Release 2: July 2010**
- **Release 3: November 2010**

In addition AKJ also plans to undertake evaluation projects for more significant projects during each development period. These are projects where we need to undertake research or additional development to establish how we can achieve a certain type of functionality within the system. As part of this process we will be offering interested customers the opportunity to input into this process to help define the specific requirements.

The items to be released by the first phase, will be listed in the full report available shortly. All of our customers will be sent a copy of the full Development Roadmap covering all of the three stages.

For any queries, please contact your Account Manager for further details.

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## BT Launches Superfast Infinity Broadband

BT Retail has confirmed costs for its new superfast broadband service, BT Infinity. The consumer version of this accelerated service uses fibre optic technology to offer download speeds of up to 40Mb/s from £19.99 per month. BT claims that upstream speeds of up to 10Mb/s will be the fastest in the UK.

The superfast broadband service available to businesses will be known as BT Business Total Broadband Fibre. From 25th January, new and existing BT Total Broadband and BT Business customers located in an enabled exchange area will automatically be eligible for the up to 40 Mb/s broadband service. Benefits will include:

- Households with multiple computers/internet devices will enjoy simultaneous use of services such as social networking and sharing of media.
- Entertainment services will be quicker, offering high-quality streaming of popular video content from iPlayer and YouTube and downloads up to seven times faster on iTunes.
- Online gaming will be up to 30 per cent faster, giving gamers a real advantage over the competition.

This is all part of BT's grand plan with making superfast broadband available to at least 40% of the UK, some 10 million homes and businesses, by the summer of 2012. The company has pledged to spend £1.5 billion themselves, the UK's biggest single commercial investment, in rolling out fibre to the cabinet (FTTC) and fibre to the premise (FTTP) services.



## Average Broadband Speeds Increase by 22% in 2009

2009 saw a considerable growth in broadband speeds which looks set to continue. Research analysts at Broadband.co.uk have reported a 22% increase in average broadband speeds over the space of the year.

The average speed test has increased to 4.478 mbps from 3.667mbps over the twelve months and has been calculated from hundreds of thousands of broadband speed tests taken on the website Broadband.co.uk where ordinary users can test their broadband speeds with the click of a button.

The service providers that displayed the most impressive results were those that had rolled out faster deals over the year such as BT (up 24%) and Plusnet (up 28%) with their 20mbps deals. Virgin Media this year rolled out their 50mbps fibre optics service which saw a 22% speed increase.

Not everyone was over achieving with their speeds – Be/O2 (down 13%) and Sky (down 4%) both saw reduced speeds. The average speed test results in December 2009 stand at:

1. Virgin Media – 7.426mbps
  2. Be/O2 – 5.143mbps
  3. TalkTalk – 3.418mbps
  4. Sky – 3.361mbps
  5. Orange – 3.146mbps
  6. BT – 2.814mbps
  7. Tiscali – 2.788mbps
  8. Plusnet – 2.705mbps
  9. Eclipse – 2.697mbps
  10. AOL – 2.021mbps
- All providers average – 4.478mbps

# WLR3 update



AKJ are now rolling out ISDN2 functionality to all our customers, so if you are a WLR3 customer and have finished your PSTN and ISDN30 Product Establishment then contact your Openreach Service and Repair manager to arrange Product Establishment for ISDN2. For those currently in Product Establishment, please speak to your Delivery Manager to include ISDN2 in your current Product Establishment.

All customers not on WLR3 need to be aware that openreach are now stepping up their campaign to migrate all their Communications Providers to WLR3. Although March 2011 seems a long way off, AKJ are advising that all WLR2 customers should be looking to move before the end of this year to avoid the 'end of term' rush that is expected in 2011.

## Service Harmonisation

All customers need to be aware of the impending changes to Service Levels on all 3 WLR products which is expected to be delivered in April 2010. The new care levels will change as follows:

| Current Care Level | Line Type             | New Care Level | New Care Level Details                                     |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------|--|
| 1                  | PSTN Basic            | 1              | Will be fixed end of next working day + 1, Monday - Friday |
| 1                  | PSTN Premium & ISDNe  | 2              | Will be fixed end of next working day, Monday - Saturday   |
| 2                  | PSTN, ISDN2e & ISDN30 | 2              | Will be fixed end of next working day, Monday - Saturday   |
| 3                  | PSTN, ISDN2e & ISDN30 | 3              | Report AM fix PM, report PM fix next AM, Monday to Sunday  |

This means that any PSTN Premium (Business) or ISDN2 lines currently on Care Level 1 will be moved to Care Level 2 when openreach implement these changes .

## R1300 Release

AKJ have also started working on the extra functionality being brought in as part of the R1300 release which is as follows:

- To provide CPs with additional information regarding a copper line status in addition to the existing line test.
- Multiline Aux changes to support Partial Re-number scenarios
- Merge to / Split from WLR3 ISDN2
- Inclusion of Business Directory Entry into WLR basic

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# Conserving Geographic Numbers

Ofcom have published a consultation on conserving geographic telephone numbers by proposing to reduce the size of number blocks allocated from 10,000 to 1,000 in an additional 336 areas of the UK. Due to the sustained increase in demand for geographic numbers in certain areas, the blocks of numbers available to allocate to communications providers have become scarce.

This proposal relates solely to the way number blocks are allocated and used by communications providers. This consultation proposes the introduction of number conservation measures in 336 geographic areas in addition to the existing 265 geographic conservation areas.

Ofcom are proposing the above measures to ensure that sufficient and appropriate telephone numbers are available to allocate to communications providers so that they can provide professional communications services to consumers.

## Google Moving Forward with Smartphones

Google have released a new piece of searching wizardry available on phones operated on an Android OS, which are based on a Linux platform leaving iPhone and BlackBerry fans empty handed.

These smartphones have the capability to find information through images and not text reducing the need to type your search, instead you just simply take a photo. With this new technology, based on searching the comprehensive Google databases, you are able to:

Scan the street and find out what businesses are available, for example read a review of a restaurant before you step through the door.

Take a picture of a book and find out where you can buy it, any reviews available and find out more about the author.

Take an image of a business card and with text recognition technology, save the contacts details to your address book.

The image search works well for some things such as places, artwork and logos, but not so great on things like cars, faces and animals. But these are early days and Google are not ones to sit back and relax after the first release.

It has been confirmed that this new time saving search functionality will eventually be rolled out to other platforms, however Android exclusivity is likely to last a while yet.



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## UK Consumers Topping the Comms Polls

New Ofcom research reveals that the UK market continues to embrace the ever growing list of communications services. According to the new research which compared 11 countries:

**UK consumers text more than any other country send only to the USA.**

**UK consumers make the third highest volume of fixed line calls in the world.**

**UK enjoys favourably lower mobile and broadband prices.**

### new landline tax

A new 50p per month landline tax is to be imposed on every home and business in the UK with a phone line under new government plans to raise £1.5 billion to help fund the roll-out of Next Generation Access broadband to 90% of Britain by 2017. Communications minister Lord Carter proposed the new tax initiative in his recent report titled Digital Britain. The Government have stated that this tax will not apply to mobile, satellite or other wireless communications.

The tax, amounting to £6 will be chargeable on each local loop made available for use (whether or not actually used) and regardless of whether it consists of a copper pair, a co-axial cable or a fibre connection and will apply to voice, data, and broadband services. The duty, which is expected to raise about £175 million a year, will be imposed on network owners who pass it on to retailers and subsequently recovered from end users.

## Application of 17.5% VAT Rate for Telecoms Billing



The standard rate of VAT was temporarily reduced to 15% on 1 December 2008 and it will return to 17.5% on 1st January 2010.

AKJ has completed a review of the recent changes to the VAT rate and we are encouraging our customers to amend any reduced VAT rates to coincide with the change.

Under the guidelines the standard treatment is as follows:

### **2.1 You have to charge the 17.5% rate on sales of standard rated goods and services you make on or after 1 January 2010.**

This effectively means invoices dated after the 1st January 2010 will be charged out with a VAT rate of 17.5%. If you still wish to generate any invoices dated prior to the 1st January 2010, please let us know as soon as possible before we change the VAT rate on your system.

For more information please contact your Account Manager.

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