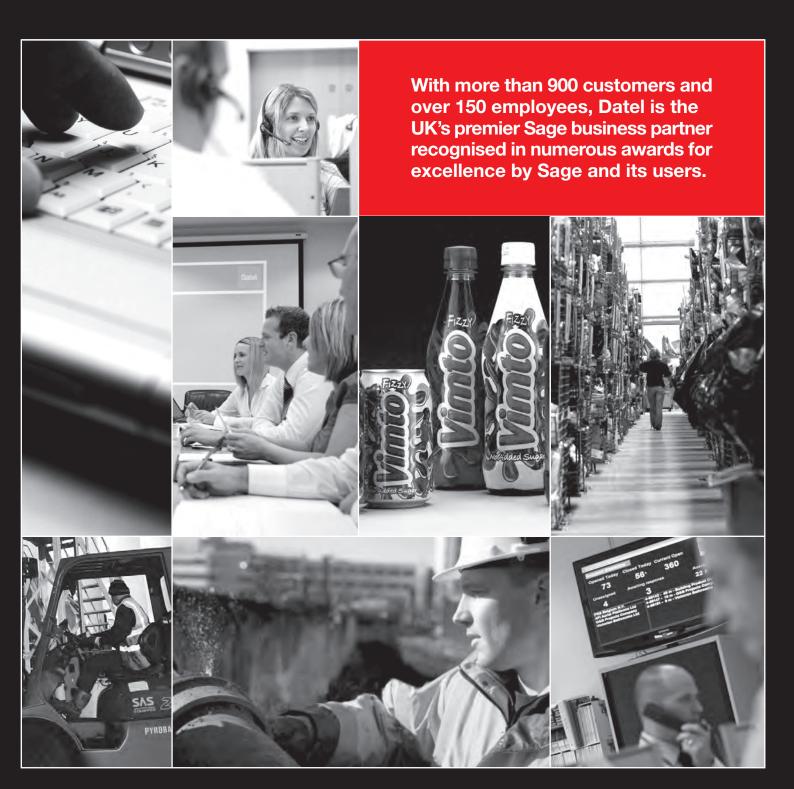**Datel**

"Customers like and trust Datel and they find that they get great value from the investments they make with us. They know that they can rely upon us to deliver, and that we will provide excellent customer service during and after their implementation."

Alan Simpson
Executive Chairman, Datel

"Datel has a depth of experience in the use of Sage as well as a team of highly experienced and very helpful consultants. We've been a Datel customer for quite some time now and they know our business - not just our computer system. We all work together to provide the solution the business requires; the account managers, the consultants, myself and my IT team."

Allan Doyle
IT Director, Nichols Plc (Vimto)

With more than 900 customers and over 150 employees, Datel is the UK's premier Sage business partner recognised in numerous awards for excellence by Sage and its users.

Datel was established in 1981 by Alan Simpson and Graham Pugh to develop software for businesses in the North West. Now with over 150 employees, offices in Warrington, Leeds and the Netherlands, Datel turns over in excess of £17 million per annum and has over 900 customers.

Alan Simpson, Executive Chairman of Datel, talks about Datel's achievements in recent years and its plans for future development.

Q. Datel has been in business for over 30 years. How did it start?

Graham and I met at British Aerospace in the late 70's. Graham had been there longer than I had but we both decided that it would be good to do something else and that we could work well together as a team. At the time, it was the early days of the affordable business PC and software was just starting to take off. Initially, we worked part-time on the business, developing software for businesses in the North West.

We did not pay particular attention to looking after the books back in those early days and it was when the accountants came in and told us just how much profit we had made that year that we decided to leave British Aerospace and work full-time on Datel.

We quickly realised that we had to develop our own style for 'selling'. Obviously we needed to sell products but our approach is not so much about 'getting a sale', but more about finding a solution to a customer's problem. I suppose that that comes from being from a technical background and having that kind of curious mind. Ultimately, I think it has served us well as, I believe, our customers value our help and advice more because they respect our honest approach.

Q. Datel's solutions are based on Sage software and Datel is now one of Sage's largest business partners. What does that relationship mean to Datel and your customers?

First of all, we are incredibly proud to have achieved that status. It enables us to have direct contact with senior management at Sage which means that we and our customers can feed into product roadmaps. If ever we need help on a particular issue we can speak immediately to top management and, what's more, Sage often comes to us for technical help so that shows that they hold our skills set in high regard too. We were a founder member of Sage's Business Partner Advisory Council.

Q. Datel has also won a number of awards and accreditations of which you are particularly proud.

That's right. Datel has been awarded Sage Business Partner of the Year consistently since 2010 and has been invited into the Sage Circle of Excellence as overall winner on four occasions. This is particularly important to us as it was voted for by our own customers and was based on how likely they would be to recommend Datel to a friend or colleague. Sage has over 1,000 business partners in the UK and Ireland so to achieve this accolade is quite exceptional.

In addition, in recent years we have been awarded Sage 200 Business Partner of the Year, Sage ERP X3 Business Partner of the Year, Sage ERP 1000 Business Partner of the Year and Sage SalesLogix Business Partner of the Year. It is extremely rewarding for the whole team to receive these honours.

Q. What is it that sets Datel apart from its competitors?

I think it's a whole range of things: our people, our technical expertise, our investment in training and people development. Certainly, we go to great lengths to ensure that we fully understand the issues facing a business before we recommend a solution.

On the whole, customers like and trust Datel and they find that they get great value from the investments they make with us. They know that they can rely upon us to deliver, and that we will provide excellent customer service during and after their implementation. Not just that, but we can also offer more than just Sage. We believe we have extended Sage in several areas with our development of the FUSION range of software.

As a business, we have invested an awful lot of money into training; technical as well as personal development, internally resourced and also bought in from external agencies.

We have had ISO 9000 - Tick IT accreditation for some years now and we have also invested in Sage HR software that helps us streamline internal processes by providing a 'self service' employee management tool to monitor sickness and holidays for instance.

Training and development are areas where no one can afford to stand still. There are always improvements which can be made.

Q. Datel is famed for its support service. Can you explain the secret of your success?

Now that is easy to answer - it's down to the people! Datel has a team of the very best people, many of whom have been with us for 15 years or more, so they know the software inside out. Often, they may have originally worked for us in the field, implementing systems, so they have real, live systems experience. This makes them extremely proactive in sorting customer issues. We have a team of around 30 so if, by chance, one person doesn't know the answer, there are another 29 who certainly will. If one person is away from their desk, there is always someone who can help.

Q. You mention that most of your employees have been with you for many years and are happy to stay longer. How do you think you have achieved such a loyal team and developed such a special culture?

I think I'm a very fair and trusting person and we are always very open to trying out new ideas and pushing the boundaries. We never apportion blame but we positively encourage people to take things and themselves to the next level of expertise. We invest an awful lot in training and winning awards and that helps perpetuate the feel good factor. People are happy in their work and this all contributes to the culture. There's usually no need for people to leave us as they can get the new challenges and opportunities they want by staying here. Maybe we are just good at recognising people's talent.

Q. Datel is a large Business Partner now, so how do you manage to maintain the same, high standards of service to customers as you could in the early days as a small business?

Over the years we have built up fantastic teams who understand Sage's software inside out. We have a strong project management team who follow our proven implementation methodology to ensure projects are delivered on time and to budget.

Although these are separate and specialist teams, we still manage to work across divisions with cross-functional teams when this is required. A certain problem may need the particular skills of a specific area or indeed an individual within the organisation.

This flexibility means that, as a client's business grows and changes, and new and different challenges emerge, Datel has teams of people available with the right level of expertise to be able to help.

Someone might have a need to improve reporting within their organisation so we would put them in touch with our consultants that have expertise in this area to develop their ideas and advise a solution.

In my opinion, Datel's Technical Development team is the best team in the entire Sage community. Sage even asks us to do work for them from time to time, for instance when we helped develop the integration server for SalesLogix.

We have invested heavily in developing products that sit alongside and integrate with the Sage product set. Our FUSION Warehouse Management System for instance, is a large and ever growing product for us as more and more customers are asking for it. FUSION Enhancer is another product in the range we have developed, allowing customers to extend fields and functionality to existing Sage forms, meaning that you can add functionality such as postcodes,

add new screens, and insert .net applications for calendaring, providing the facility to query and report. The application won an innovation award in its first year of deployment.

Datel's Managed Services team offers customers the chance to 'share' a Systems Manager, effectively enabling them to share the cost. The client chooses how they wish to use the service so that they can tailor it to suit their own requirements; this might mean a total outsourcing of the IT function, or some temporary help until they recruit to fill vacancies, or perhaps just a little extra resource to help them manage through spikes of unusual demand.

In 2006, Datel acted upon its own advice and 'internally outsourced' responsibility for Systems Management and End User Support, in effect becoming an internal customer of our own Managed Services Department. Without doubt, this change provided immediate and significant payback to the business and Datel gets even greater benefit from its software systems. This is a fast-growing area of Datel's business as an increasing number of customers want to have this area of their business managed proactively, guaranteeing them a certain level of support that they would prefer not to maintain themselves inhouse. As an example, when Datel decided to 'outsource' some of its inhouse administration to Managed Services, it cost us over £250,000 in loss of time which could have been charged out to clients, but it has paid for itself already by reducing our debtor days by a significant £530,000. The team pointed out how we could change our own use of systems and it has dramatically improved our performance. It's a simple idea but it really works.

Q. So what, in your view, represents a successful implementation for Datel?

We work with very ambitious customers and we spend a great deal of time getting to understand their business, their processes and the issues they are facing. Once we've done that, we can then start thinking about the best way to give them the solution they need for their business. If we can achieve that, on time, on budget and give customers a return on investment that makes sense for them, then I think we are all happy.

Q. So, what next for Datel?

I am incredibly proud of what has been achieved both in the North West and now on a much broader geographic scale right cross the UK and, more recently, into Continental Europe. Datel is a company that has a prestigious set of customers, fantastic people who work brilliantly together, and an amazing set of products that people keep buying. If we can continue to achieve the same commitment to excellence in customer service that we have achieved in the past, then I have every confidence that Datel will continue to grow and prosper as, quite simply, it stands out from the competition.

"Datel's knowledge and enthusiasm is really what impressed us, and their commitment to finding us a solution that fitted our business needs and came in our budget. The implementation team is very knowledgeable and can always find solutions to what we need to do."

Andrew Russell
Finance Director
Ruskim Seafoods
Sage ERP X3 customer

"In a competitive climate, we need to ensure the IT systems on which we rely give us every support to run our processes more efficiently. Datel helps us to keep up with the technology as the business develops and grows."

Jason Rainbird
Customer Relationship Manager
Fileder Filter Systems
Sage 200 Customer

About Datel

Datel is Sage's largest Business Partner in the UK and is acclaimed as its leading systems integration specialist. Headquartered in Warrington, Datel also has offices in Leeds and the Netherlands employing a loyal team of over 150 highly-skilled people who look after its growing base of over 900 customers worldwide.

Our product range includes Sage 200, Sage ERP 1000, Sage ERP X3 and Sage Line 500 as well as our own in-house products which we have developed to integrate with, and sit alongside, Sage solutions. Known as Datel FUSION, the suite of products enhances and extends the functionality provided by the core Sage applications. We also specialise in Sage CRM and Sage SalesLogix.

Datel looks after a broad ranging base of customers including those in distribution, manufacturing, construction and the food and drinks sectors. Typically they are mid sized companies who rely upon Datel to make the most of their investment with Sage.

We pride ourselves in our approach to doing business. We seek to know and thoroughly understand our customers and their businesses so, in turn, we can appreciate fully all of the issues and challenges they face. Only then can we presume to offer a solution that will make a real difference to the way they do business.

Everything Datel does is guided by our belief in providing only the very best in customer service.

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Sage Overall
Partner of the Year
2012

Sage 200
Partner of the Year
2012

Sage ERP 1000
Partner of the Year
2012

Sage ERP X3
Partner of the Year
2011

sage

Datel