

## Jon Morby And Fido.Net

Keeping ahead of demand is the holy grail of both the business and technology markets. Jon Morby, of fido.net can claim, with some justification, that he's been able to do both over the years.

fido.net had humble enough beginnings. Started by Morby as a pet project of his to assist the burgeoning BBS network in the early 80s, over the next decade, fido.net imported echomail and netmail into the UK from the US and across Europe, all on a non-profit basis. Whilst other businessmen would have scratched their chins and questioned the sanity of such an operation, Morby simply saw it as a chance to learn his craft, investigate the 'new' internet more fully and prepare to step up to the big league.

That chance came in 1993, when Morby joined Demon Internet and ran their Birmingham Point of Presence, under the watchful eye of then-Demon Managing Director, Cliff Stanford. Stanford was aware of Morby's fido.net operation, and evidently saw potential in it. So much so, that he not only offered Morby a full time role with Demon Internet, he also agreed to sponsor the fido.net internet gateway.

Moving from Technical Support up to Operations within a short space of time meant that Morby was again dealing with mail. But this time, rather than fido.net mail, he was responsible for the entire Demon Mail system. Not exactly a small operation, given there were over 100,000 paying customers all using the system and reliant on Jon's abilities to juggle several balls at once behind the scenes. As well as his responsibilities to Demon Mail, Morby's expertise was continually called upon to deal with other Operations issues. This ability to project manage saw him swiftly rise through the Demon ranks and, by 1997, Morby had moved into the Senior Management team at Demon Internet, taking on the post of Advanced Technologies Manager, which gave Jon the chance to let his blue sky thinking guide several company policies and operations.

Following Demon Internet's sale to Scottish Telecom (now Thus Plc), Morby left the firm to pursue several disparate internet projects before joining Interactive Investor International (iii) a trading start-up that desperately needed someone with Morby's talent and vision. Responsible for the operation and smooth running of the I.I.I. website and internet trading systems across the UK, Hong Kong and South Africa, Jon's remit included ensuring the delivery of mission-critical services from real-time stock trading through to stock alerts. There was little room for error, given the sums of money involved.

A conversation with his old boss, Cliff Stanford, saw Jon move to Stanford's new company, Redbus Interhouse. With the lessons learned both at Demon Internet and I.I.I., Morby was a significant contributor to the company's growth, but knew something was missing.

Coming full circle and concentrating on fido.net was a logical step. With all the experience garnered in so many varied internet arenas, it made sense for Morby to go back to basics and give fido.net the attention it deserved. After 18 months with Redbus Interhouse, Morby decided to take the plunge and left the company to concentrate on fido.net.

Applying over a decade's hard learned lessons to his pet project not only meant Jon could take the company to the next level, it also meant he was back doing something he genuinely loved, and doing it for himself. At the time, fido.net was almost entirely dormant, serving fewer than 20 customers.

Today, just over 12 months later, fido.net is a thriving business, with over 1000 customers using its services. fido.net has grown from a humble mail provider for the BBS network into a fully-fledged internet operation. Its customers have access to a full range of services from fax and email through to web hosting, and fido.net's latest product is possibly Morby's favourite to date. Designed to rival Hotmail, fido.net are now offering email hosting with a customer's own domain, anti-virus and Spam filtering from just £19.95 a year, including VAT, for a .uk domain, rising to £24.95 per year for customers anxious to have a .com/net/org domain name. Combined with web hosting prices that start at just £39.95 a year, the package makes fido.net products some of the most competitive on the market.

"It's all about making the internet accessible to everyone," says Morby. "Enthusiasts who used to run their own Bulletin Boards on fido.net are now setting up their own BBS's on the net, and our products are ideal for them, just as they are ideal for businesses who want to have their own sites but lack the technology, or even web designers who want to resell our products and services to their customers under their own banner."

It may come as a surprise to some to learn that fido.net has been offering Spam and virus-scanned email to its customers for at least the last three years. When Morby introduced it, a number of people questioned the reasoning behind it and wondered at its potential benefits. But Morby, with years of experience of mail thanks to his time with Demon Internet, knew better. And, with the high volume of Spam in circulation, he can happily claim that his customers receive virtually no Spam whatsoever in their mail boxes, and have been happily virus free since the scanning introduction, too.

It just goes to show that money and flash programming can get you so far, but without a solid background in the business, you're just another wannabe.

For more information about Jon Morby and fido.net, please visit:  
<http://www.fido.net/about/>