

BCS Kingston & Croydon Branch Business Award-Best Project 2004

As part of their studies on the BSc (Hons) Business Information Technology (BIT) course, students at Kingston University's Business School take part in a live consultancy project for external clients. This activity has been run successfully over many years and previously gained a national award for promoting *Management Skills in Undergraduate Studies*.

It forms part of the final year core module: *Strategic Information Management and Consultancy* which is run by Dr Walter Skok and Graham Walker. The activity facilitates the integration of material taught throughout the course, and is supported by a set of lectures from external speakers on contemporary issues in Business IT. Each group works on a different project and this provides a strong competitive element, particularly as there is a British Computer Society sponsored award for the best work.

Students relish the opportunity to apply theory to a practical situation and are able to develop and practice the necessary skills of negotiation, problem solving, teamwork, presenting to clients, report writing and project management.

This year's prize was presented on behalf of the BCS in January of this year by Mr Rajan Anketell (BCS Trustee and Kingston & Croydon Branch Member) to a group who worked on a project for Toyota. The project provided a 'tool' to aid the communication of parts and pricing information between Toyota Centres and the Independent Motor Repairers (IMRs). The final solution was the production of a Trade Book that could be customised by each Toyota Centre to include contact details, special offers and tailored parts discounts. The Trade Book is supported by an Access Database that manages the parts and pricing information.

The project is currently in pilot stage with approximately 10 Toyota Centres, with full release scheduled shortly to 100 Centres. Early results have shown an increase in purchase of genuine Toyota spare parts by IMRs, as they have parts and pricing information at their fingertips.

Dr Walter Skok commented, 'Students benefit from working on real-life projects and are encouraged to take a multi-disciplinary approach by blending business, people and technology issues. The projects also provide an opportunity for students to develop their consultancy skills which will be very important in their future careers'.