

Peter Jones

What happened to me after UCSL was sold off,

Well, when Unilever decided to concentrate on its core businesses, it put in place the disposal of UCSL, (sold as you all know to EDS), and coincidentally but quite separately, Tymshare, (with whom we had a joint venture arrangement in the UK), was sold off to McDonnell Douglas.

Unilever's disposal programme included UCSL, SPD, Organisation division, and many others, but the Board still felt that they needed a source of expert advice on computing and communications matters. The result was that in 1984 they set up a head office department of that name, run by John Hupert, with me as his deputy.

If Computing and Communications Group, (CCG) had a mission statement, I can't remember it, (but 1984 was a bit early for that sort of thing), but we did have some objectives.

1. To limit Unilever's choice of computers to three suppliers, IBM, DEC, and HP, - our so called Preferred Supplier Policy.
2. To get all three of them to develop a suite of applications which could be used by all Unilever companies, a sort of precursor to SAP and its Enterprise Computing project.
3. To provide IT consultancy to the various Product groups in Unilever.
4. To spread best practice.
5. To manage Head Offices' relationship with its supplier – EDS

I was with CCG for seven years, during which time, John Hupert left to join EDS, and was replaced by Iain Harrison, who had been Unilever's Financial Director in South Africa. He left after a year. I then ran the Group with John La Pla as my special adviser, until eventually, Mike Johnson was appointed the head of a re-named unit, (Information Technology and Communications or ITC) in 1990. I was offered and took early retirement in 1991, after spending a year as Visiting Fellow at the Management School at Imperial College.

I have often been asked how did I like working in Head Office? My stock reply was that it was like playing football without goal posts, but I think I did help to shift Unilever's perception of IT from an accountant's cost saving activity to a potential game changing technology. But that was before the world was changed forever by the internet and the PC!

So, I have been retired for twenty years. During that time I have been an active member of Lewes Golf Club, having at various times been Chairman, Treasurer, and Veterans Captain. I still play three or four times a week.

I also had a six year stint as a Conservative Councillor on Mid Sussex District Council, and was Cabinet Member for Finance and Administration for three of those.

I gave up being a Councillor when I felt that too many decisions which should have been locally based were being prescribed by central Government edict, (Mr Blair and friends).

I have kept in touch with Len Rawle through the occasional lunches, and with some of my Tymshare counterparts in Germany and America, through annual visits.

So I am now having my TV licence paid for by the rest of you, being heated through my winter fuel allowance, having various body parts being replaced by the NHS, and generally enjoying the role of Grumpy Old Sod.

Life ain't too bad.