

Correction to

Page 5 of “Fujitsu New Zealand History Book (PDF)”

Page 43 of “Fujitsu Australia and New Zealand History Book (PDF)”

Fujitsu’s early history in New Zealand is not too different to its parent in Australia. Prior to the merger in 1992 the link between Fujitsu and ICL was tenuous and in many areas until the merger in 1992, as in Australia, fierce competition was practiced.

Fujitsu’s Origins in New Zealand date back to 1961, when Fujitsu Telecommunications began operations as an agency of Plessey. Its biggest deal was selling a microwave radio link to the Civil Aviation Company for use in the building of the new international airport in the outer Auckland suburb of Mangere, which opened in 1966. After arriving from Plessey in the mid-1960s, telecommunications manager David Charlesworth made sales on behalf of Fujitsu on an agency basis, doing around \$500 million worth of business between then and 1984.

Meanwhile British computer company ICL established a strong presence in New Zealand, which in those days still had very strong connections with the United Kingdom. In 1975, ICL national support and project manager Steve Brunt and his wife emigrated from the UK to take a job with the New Zealand government, which had ordered a large ICL mainframe. “The State Services Commission had bought an ICL 2980 mainframe.

It was a huge project for the time,” Brunt recalls. “We started off that project in 1975, a year before the hardware arrived. This was in the days when government departments like Statistics, Forest Research Institute and the Met Office didn’t have their own systems, because they were far too expensive and far too large. We spent the next year bringing in people to work at the Trentham Computer Centre, a custom-built facility in the building where the New Zealand Defence Force is now in Upper Hutt.

Facom opened an office in Auckland in 1980 to support M-Series mainframes that had been sold to Air New Zealand and Kawerau Pulp and Paper. Primary access to Kawerau was by small plane, landing in a field close to the Works. This made for some interesting times for the Facom staff assigned to the site.

In 1981 the Wellington Office opened in Willis Street and the New Zealand Post Office purchased dual M180 mainframes, installed at a custom built centre in Palmerston North. This system ran the NZPO Billing System, converted from an ICL System 4. In 1982 FACOM successfully installed M-180 mainframes at Challenge to run applications converted from Burroughs systems. The same mainframe supported and then operated one of the first non- bank ATM networks in New Zealand.

By the end of 1982 Facom was fully established in New Zealand with teams of Hardware and Software engineers together with Sales and Support staff in both locations. It can be said that the early work by Facom in New Zealand presaged the start of the services era, in as much that all early hardware sales were sold with conversions from other vendor’s equipment.

The M-Series mainframes were IBM compatible, a significant factor in the support of the Air New Zealand mainframes. The requirement to maintain the compatibility with IBM 360 and 370 operating systems was met by New Zealand staff including Dennis Carroll, Dr Bo Casimir, KS Tan and others, all considered leaders in this technical field at that time. The first non- IBM compatibility multiple mainframe only sale was to ACC in 1984.

Facom New Zealand was renamed Fujitsu New Zealand in 1985, the same time as the name change occurred in Australia. When telecommunications manager Stan Baker joined Fujitsu in 1984, its office was situated on Wellington's Willis Street. "It was upstairs in a building where we shared office space with another company," says Baker, who was only the company's 11th employee in Wellington and its first ever telecommunications employee.

Following a three-month handover period at the end of 1984, Fujitsu New Zealand took over all the existing Plessey contracts and became solely responsible for new business. David Charlesworth left Plessey the same year and set up what would become the Comworth Group of companies. In 1990, Fujitsu acquired 80 percent of ICL globally as a means of breaking into the European market. This had major ramifications in New Zealand, where ICL was bigger than Fujitsu. ICL New Zealand's Managing Director was now John Peters, who became head of the newly merged company and undertook a major restructuring which was completed when Fujitsu acquired the remainder of ICL globally in 2002.

In 1993 Peters left to become CEO of Wairarapa Health Board. He was replaced by John Bell, who had led Fujitsu New Zealand before the merger and was Sales and Marketing Manager of the merged entity. Bell headed Fujitsu New Zealand until April 1996, when he moved to Telecom New Zealand as its business development General Manager. Australian business development manager Terence Robertson stepped in until a decision was made about how Bell's role would be filled. While the number of employees remained fairly static at between 200 and 250 people, with the advent of the PC the company began to acquire other brands. In New Zealand Southmark Computers was acquired in 1993. It was run as a separate subsidiary until 1996, managed by previous owners Peter Uffindell and Stuart Finlayson. The mostly young staff at Southmark referred to what they perceived to be the traditional and straight-laced Fujitsu-ICL team as the 'cardigans'. In turn the Fujitsu people called the Southmark staff 'party animals'. But the cultural differences were soon ironed out, and Fujitsu became the largest IBM and HP PC reseller in the country.

New Zealand's merged Fujitsu-ICL operation developed a speciality in supplying and servicing the ICT needs of the retail industry. By the mid-1990s it had won many large customers in both the public and private sectors, including Health Waikato, the Accident Compensation Corporation, Department of Conservation, the Ministry of Justice and Transpower. State Insurance came on board in 1999, around the time Fujitsu NZ sold a major asset management system called Confirm to Wellington City Council. By this time Fujitsu New Zealand had very much forged its own identity, though many former ICL employees remained with the company. The next decade was to be even more successful.