

# The Journal

A publication for users of SquareSum's DREAM Corporate Accounting System ☀ Issue 13 ☀ December 2001

## DREAM Summer University



Delegates at the DREAM Summer University, June 2001

2001  
Ballot  
Results

Conception  
to  
Inception

Pre-2001  
Ballot  
Status

## Entrepreneurs

Peter Wilkinson, CEO of DREAM user Intechnology, is northern winner of Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2001 award. Intechnology offers remote back-up and restore services.

Ironically, SquareSum's Philip Taylor also reached the semi-final on his vision in creating DREAM and taking the product to market, only to be beaten to first place by one of his own customers.

The North of England, with 21 per cent of the country's entrepreneurs, is second only to London which contains 29 per cent.

## Autumn Meeting

DREAM user Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry hosted the autumn User Group meeting on November 1st. Over 100 users attended from all over the UK. Unfortunately, the Scottish meeting was cancelled due to lack of



registrations. This was disappointing not only for the User Group but also for SquareSum, which is always supportive of meetings wherever held.

However, this is not a permanent move away from Scotland. We are obviously not meeting the needs of our Scottish users; we would like to know what subjects are relevant and would encourage you to attend a meeting. Please take the time to let us know.

## New DREAM User Licences

The companies listed below have become DREAM users since the last issue of The Journal. We look forward to meeting members of their teams at a future meeting.

- Team Consulting, Dublin
- The Builder Group, London
- Myers Lister Price, Manchester
- Jones & Co, Nottingham
- Darling & Stephenson, Darlington
- Lopian Wagner, Manchester
- The Prickett Partnership, Stockport
- Crane & Staples, Welwyn Garden City
- Teacher Stern Selby, London
- Steel & Shamash, London
- Lorimer Longhurst & Leese, Cambridge
- Harold Benjamin Littlejohn, Harrow
- Huttons, Cardiff
- Tobar, Harleston
- Signs & Labels, Stockport
- Black Box (UK), Reading

- Dillons Mullins, Kinsale
- Formula 4x4, Stone
- Legal IT, Dublin
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Fire Authority, Huntingdon
- Cyberes Systems, Harrogate
- Energy Saving Trust, London
- Preston College, Preston
- ITDG, Bourton on Dunsmore
- Bedford College, Bedford
- Holmes O'Malley Sexton
- P J O'Driscoll & Sons
- Kennedy Frewen O'Sullivan, Tipperary
- Donegan's
- Barry M O'Meara's
- Alphameric Retails, Manchester
- Reid Minty
- St Christopher's Fellowship, London
- Sophos, Abingdon
- Select Education, Luton
- Select Appointments, Luton
- The Leadership Trust (Training), Ross-on-Wye
- Blacks Leisure
- BSFM, Dublin
- John Armit Wines, London
- Geest Bananas, Southampton
- Scottish & Newcastle, Edinburgh
- Articul8, Hemel Hempstead
- Mangan Bros Holdings
- Estates & General, Rickmansworth
- Ocarina Systems, Harrogate

## DREAM Users Diary

Dec 18	Basics of DREAM	SquareSum Uxbridge
Dec 19	Reporting from within DREAM	SquareSum Uxbridge
Dec 20	The features of DREAM 2.11	SquareSum Uxbridge

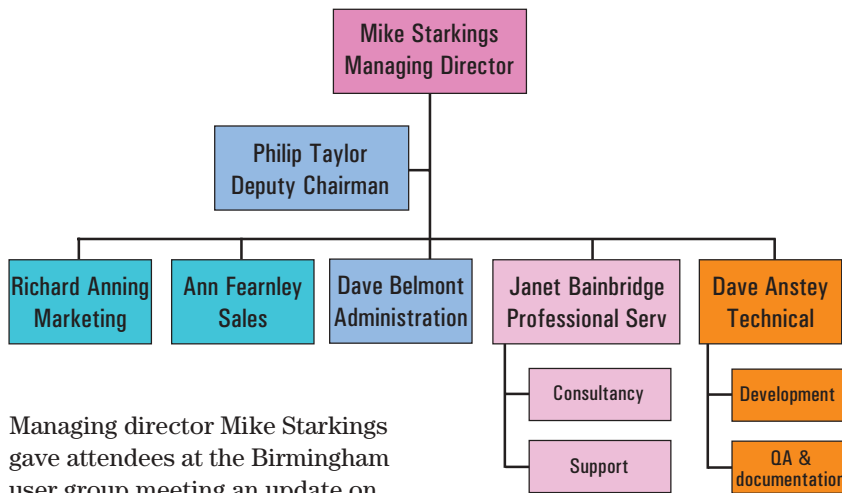
2002

Feb 21	DREAM User Group meeting	Microsoft, Reading
Feb 26	DREAM User Group meeting	SquareSum offices, Follifoot
Jun 26-28	DREAM Summer University	Bath University

User Group events, contact Irene Cullis on 01323 471700.

SquareSum training courses, contact Hazel Haas on 01423 859500 for details and cost.

## New Management Team Structure



Managing director Mike Starkings gave attendees at the Birmingham user group meeting an update on SquareSum, its strengthened management team, new customers and future plans.

Introduced were new Uxbridge-based marketing director Richard Anning, sales director Ann Fearnley, and professional services director Janet Bainbridge—who spent her very first day with SquareSum at the meeting getting to know users.

The reporting structure has been modified to combine consultancy and support under professional services, a move which makes a lot of sense given the natural synergies between the teams.



*Dave Anstey*

Technical director Dave Anstey (who joined Mike Starkings at Birmingham for the afternoon question and answer session) has responsibility for development of the current DREAM system plus investigation into future technologies. His teams also includes quality assurance, documentation and internal IT support.

Company secretary Dave Belmont is responsible for office facilities, contracts, and administration.

Follifoot-based sales director Ann Fearnley also looks after channel partners.

## Recent Orders

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Fire Authority have just completed a rapid 30-day implementation of DREAM, in an order worth £100,000.

Recruitment agencies Select Appointments and Select Education have placed a combined order for DREAM valued around £95,000. Select Appointments has an annual turnover of £100m.

## Gold Partner

SquareSum has become only the second company in the UK to be awarded Windows 2000 certification, qualifying as a Microsoft Gold Partner.

DREAM has also been awarded Windows XP certification, making SquareSum the first independent UK software vendor to receive the 'Designed for Windows XP' logo.



## Alphameric Retail Channel Partner

SquareSum has signed Alphameric Retail as its first channel partner in the retail sector, and will be responsible for the sale, implementation and first line support of DREAM installations into the retail sector.

Alphameric is a fully listed organisation with a turnover in excess of GBP50 million. DREAM will be available to all existing

Alphameric customers and it will become the 'de facto' retail financial management application that is provided with any future product releases by Alphameric.

SquareSum already has a strong presence in the retail sector with customers including Clinton Cards, Edinburgh Woollen Mill, Speciality Retail Group, Hammicks Books, and Stylo Shoes.

For information on joining the DREAM User Group, meetings and the DREAM Summer University, call Irene Cullis on 01323 471700 or email [irene.cullis@infar.co.uk](mailto:irene.cullis@infar.co.uk)



# DREAM Summer University Nottingham June 2001

OVER 140 ATTENDEES—the largest number to date—came to the third DREAM Summer University, held June 20 – 22 at Nottingham University. At these events, there never seems to be quite enough time to fit everything in, so this year sessions began earlier on the first day to maximise productive time available.

SquareSum consultants were there in force, giving PC workshops, one-to-one how-to sessions, surgeries, and specialist presentations.

## **PC workshop and hands-on**

Two rooms were equipped with PCs, one with a dozen PCs was used mainly for hands-on PC workshops on topics such as building user-defined input screens. Whilst workshop sessions were being held, the other PC room with





spreading the revenue from management courses over the several months or years that they run. He gave two sessions, the first explained how custom UDIs and other features are used to store student details and course/fee details and to produce invoices and a DREAM posting file. The second covered how advanced UDIs are used at the College to register, amend and transfer purchase invoices to the DREAM books.

Dave Younger from Building Design Partnership (BDP) described how foreign payments using Swiftcodes are generated using the standard payments option

six PCs was used for one-to-one sessions with SquareSum support or consultants.

### Streams of sessions

Apart from during key periods, delegates could choose from four sessions at any time—three in the tiered lecture rooms, the other a hands-on session in the PC workshop.

Most of the sessions were given by SquareSum support or consultants. Again this year, however, several DREAM users spent time preparing materials to share with fellow users. Andy Eden from Henley Management College explained the necessity of



and are then exported in a format to import into Hexagon (HSBC electronic banking).

Mark Hancock from Marks and Clerk gave a presentation 'From Conception to Inception' on the firm's experiences deploying DREAM (see this issue).

In addition, Arthur Allen from Learning Skills Council diversified in a session that surely affects all of us, 'Future to post 16 Education', Derek Sully of Mikado Computing described his flexible cheque writing programme that integrates with DREAM (see this issue), and Software Solutions presented 'Crystal reports with DREAM.'



### MegaBowl evening

After dinner in Cripps Hall, the first evening was spent at MegaBowl (coincidentally a DREAM user) bowling alley, less than a mile away as the crow flies, but a coach journey by road.

After some initial confusion, delegates were organised into deliberately mixed teams to encourage interaction. There was supposed to be a winner at the end of two games, but nobody seemed to know who it was!



### Gala dinner and quiz

A general knowledge quiz was held during the gala dinner the following night, with questions such as 'Who said "I have a Dream", was it a) Martin Luther King, b) Philip Taylor...', or 'What's the English equivalent of the German word Traum?' (dream). You soon got the hang of it. The use of mobile phones to ask friends about difficult questions was treated as initiative rather than cheating!

### The band

The evening entertainment was billed as 'a band'. When the band turned up they announced they didn't have their lead guitarist and could anyone stand-in?

Philip Taylor volunteered but being left-handed, couldn't get the guitar the right way round. Fortunately it was revealed as a spoof when the real guitarist appeared—none other than SquareSum MD Mike Starkings.

### Feedback

*So what did you really think?*

Delegates' opinion and feedback is of paramount importance in the planning and organisation of future Summer Universities—so thank you to all of you who gave such detailed and informative feedback.

Most revealing (in all aspects) were the 'further comments', especially when opinions conflicted.

### The venue

Nottingham is a fairly central location and the facilities are good.

*'The venue should be used again!'*

*'Ideal setup—central coffee area with session and PC workshop rooms all close to hand'*

Some of the accommodation was in a different hall.

*'Please don't use that venue again'*

*'Better accommodation—I must be getting too old for student halls'*

*'bed of nails'*





*The nightmare band (above) and the dream band (above right)*

### **The sessions**

Sessions rated highly in both content and delivery.

*'Some lectures were a bit too technical'*

*'Some courses too basic—covered topics which people should be using already'*

*'More basic please, or split sessions into basics and advanced'*

*'Highlight whether a session is IT or user-biased'*

*'Practical sessions of producing actual reports would be useful'*

*'One-to-one sessions were helpful and informative'*

*'Too many good sessions clashed, but still very good.'*

### **Ideas for future events**

*'A who's who on day one'*

*'Possibly longer to allow repeat of other sessions'*

*'More information on what to expect at the conference'*

### **And overall**

*'SquareSum commitment and support for the event was excellent'*

*'Thoroughly worthwhile. Strongly want to attend next year. Overall cost was about £750 and this represents value for money'*

*'Excellent three days, well organised and very informative, and the band was great as well.'*

*'Thoroughly enjoyable and very useful, will come next year.'*

*'A big well done to all who took part— I hope my company will let me come again next year'*

*'The university has been excellent, I've learnt a lot'*

*'Enjoyed very much, lots of food for thought'*

*'Band excellent—have them back again!'*

*'Good to meet other DREAM users and support'*

*'Keep the band!'*

*'Excellent process of acquiring skills and information—definitely recommended to other users'*

*'Please send me next year's itinerary as soon as it's finalised!'*

### **Planning and compromise**

The problem with accommodation this year has us caught between a rock and a hard place. The aim of the Summer University is to provide a low-cost value-for-money event that is affordable for all users. If we move upmarket to a hotel with all the facilities, the delegate cost would be almost doubled.

Most of the accommodation comments were from delegates who stayed in Hugh Stewart Hall. Nottingham University has since told us Hugh Stewart is scheduled for refurbishment and we will confirm this has taken place before considering returning there.

### **Thanks**

The detailed feedback has given the User Group a solid basis for planning next year's event which will be held at the University of Bath, 26-28 June 2001.

A big thank you to everyone—SquareSum, the organising committee and volunteers—who spent so much time planning this event, and to you the delegate, for your participation. Hope to see you there next year!

*Irene Cullis*



# From Conception to Inception

Mark Hancock explains how “a beautiful and complex system such as DREAM” progressed from its initial use of batching sales and purchase invoices into an outdated WANG mainframe!

by Mark Hancock, Marks & Clerk

I LEFT THE 1999 Nottingham Summer University with the overwhelming therapy of finding out how others use DREAM. There is no sales pitch, no perfect solution but a commonality of product. SquareSum provides you with a lump of clay and we create our own shape. Perhaps my mentality is more school-bike-shed like “*I’ll show mine if you...*” Well, you get the picture. So this year I wanted to share some of the experiences and practices we have.

‘Conception to Inception’ is supposed to chart the progress we have made and are making in deploying DREAM in our organization. I hope it provides some insight for you, and gives you the chance to reflect on your implementation and the overriding thought of “*Thank God we did ours differently!*”

I work for Marks and Clerk as Group Financial Controller, and my colleague Simon Lucas is our Systems Accountant. Simon has been with us for nearly a year and is in charge of taking this product forward and trying to work out what had been set up before him. Let me tell you a bit about the company.

## The company

Marks & Clerk was founded in 1887 by George Croydon Marks, who was joined in partnership the following year by Dugald Clerk.

Marks was a renowned engineer, a colleague of Thomas Edison, company director of Columbia and EMI, a politician and a Lord. Clerk was the inventor of the two-stroke gas engine and a contemporary to a man called Diesel who acknowledged Clerk in the

development of his own engine, you may have heard of that one! He was made a Knight of the Realm in recognition of his services to science and technology.

As professional demands increased the partners focused more and more on intellectual property to the exclusion of more general technical and engineering consultancies. Marks and Clerk is now the leading practice of patent agents and leading practice of trade mark attorneys, as voted by the readers of Managing Intellectual Property Magazine in 1997, 1998, 1999 and again in 2000. It is a professional partnership akin to the setup of a firm of solicitors with over 50 partners and more than 200 staff in the UK.

Intellectual property, that intangible asset not often filled in on most entities’ balance sheet, (*but we can correct that*) comprises patents, trademarks, designs, copy write and licenses. It is our role to assist our clients in their specification drafting and filing programs, liaise on litigious factors defending those previously protected and now infringed rights.

As the partnership has grown the partners have taken on roles in the intellectual property environment as officers and presidents of The Chartered Institute of Patent Agents, the UK Institute of Trade Mark Agents and the European Patent Institute.

Marks and Clerk has offices over the UK and indeed overseas. The need for electronic communication and its development becomes increasingly important. Our web site will tell you that

*“State-of-art technology provides the backbone to our services”*

and that

*“We fully exploit the powerful advantages of computerised records and database management facilities and continue to invest heavily in the latest computer network infrastructure”.*

Well anyone behind the scenes knows exactly what this means. The server, the firewall (if you’re lucky) and the modem!

We do, however, have a comprehensive wide area network over the UK and indeed use this for our DREAM data transfer.



Mark Hancock (in cream t-shirt) at Nottingham

There are several other partnerships incorporated into our Head Quarters function and these make our service role more interesting by variety and more problematic by that variety. We will, however, only focus on the Marks & Clerk firm. Our principle employer and most interesting firm.

## Conception

Our organization was faced by an overwhelming need to update their systems to the latest technologies. The accounts information was poor, the case tracking and diary systems needed replacement and commonality among the offices needed to be introduced. It was high time to move on from the old WANG mainframe.

Name and address files were becoming unwieldy and there were doubts about the longevity of the systems three or so years before the Year 2000 issue was due to hit.

The grand plan was to implement the records systems first. These diary the dates and deadlines which govern the protective rights of the inventors and applicants. From that information we would piggyback a time recording and billing system. Billing for the hours you worked on a job was an ad hoc process then as fees were still fixed by international institute and charter. From there the data was to be deposited in to the most suitable financial receptacle.

Our records systems were preordained, Intellectual Property is a small pond with big fish and the choice was limited. Billing systems were the next important aspect, time recording was to be a luxury. But what would sit on our chosen platforms? Our London office had invested heavily in Sybase 10, the provincial offices had plumped for a SQLBase path.

Where did we begin to look? Well like all good accountants the soft option is Softworld, so there we went. The quest was for a system giving multi company, multi currency, and versatility. All the buzzwords of those days! There we found the best fit to our already differing platform solution. A product called Tempo written and sold by Foundation Systems, who incidentally, were resellers of Sun Accounts.

We visited the SquareSum stand, saw a versatile product, then heard Sybase was going to be dropped as a platform. So we went with Foundation's solution, and were well on the road to a Sun implementation, then Systems Union dropped their bombshell—they, too, were to drop Sybase.

"OK, go with SQL Server" was the suggestion from Foundation Systems who had undertaken a review of our billing needs. We ran with it.

"But if we were on SQL Server", I said, "we needn't be confined to Sun Accounts".

It was a close call but the project partner let me have the final say on the accounts product. I had seen a lot of both systems by then, and the decision was

easy from my point of view, but the history behind Systems Union was impressive to the partners and SquareSum were the new kids on the block.

We chose DREAM.

The seed was sown.

## Gestation

Working with two parties was fun! Foundation's Tempo and SquareSum's DREAM were both, we were told, said to be able to integrate with each other. Like most software it was nothing that couldn't be fixed short of an oxyacetylene torch and a welder.

Then began first phase consultancy. You need a chart of accounts they both said. Well, that was a vicious loop that took months.

*What do you need?*

Not sure.

What do you do? What do you want it to do?

*What do you think we need?*

Well, what do you want to report?

*What can we get out of it?*

Depends on your chart of accounts...



Neil Savin then showed us the beauty of DREAM imports. Set it up in a spreadsheet and import it in. Fantastic! Well it beat the hierarchy structure of nominal input. Bouncing from one system to the other to interpret what we needed gave a lot of fine-tuning to the nominal. Through the spreadsheet functionality we could easily replicate the nominal for each office.

Deliberating over the choice of database structure also protracted our planning. Should we have:

- one database with one company and multi-branch identifiers?
- one database per firm? or
- one database with multiple companies?

What were the consequences? We plumped for two databases initially

- one single-company database with branch identifiers for Marks & Clerk and
- one multi-company database with branch identifiers in some for the associated firms.

Multiple database administration by a single SQSDBA user in an accounts department can be onerous, periods, currency year ends, SQL interrogation, crystal reports, and so on.

### Premature Birth

The Record systems were not nearing completion, billing was miles off and the question was do we hold back DREAM?

*No.*

So in October/November 1998 we decide to go live-ISH! Hopefully the other systems will be ready early 1999.

All sales and purchase invoices are posted. This will catch data from local office systems that was not there before, such as analysis by case for the major offices and better work-in-progress control. These could easily be imported. This was undertaken as a parallel run.

Birmingham & Manchester had computer files that were input into both systems, and London's data was manually input in to DREAM and automatic in the old system. Importing opening balances was again easy with the spreadsheet to csv to DREAM operation.

Get it wrong and have to clear hold database! *Alt D D enter enter arrow down arrow down* is forever etched on my computing sub-conscience.

Cash receipts and payments were then entered and full sales and purchase ledgers were maintained.

Unfortunately this position did not change for some time. Thus a beautiful and complex system such as DREAM was being used as a sales and purchase module for an outdated WANG system. We were using DREAM to batch invoices into our mainframe! I did manage to hide this embarrassment at the Nottingham DREAM Summer University!

Our year ended July 1999, we survived an audit and from August 1999 we deployed full management account analysis. We needed to, 31 December 1999 was fast approaching and WANG would be a dead un' in 2000.

In the production of the accounts over the next year we used budgets to represent the comparative figures before we got to the state of having real comparatives, again an easy import. We currently have in our single company database:

Doc types	108
Ledger types	64
UDIs	157
Nominals	3717

So UDIs needed to be written for all sales invoice postings together with all the other journals. All this is intended to provide less variance in posting. Idiot proofing—but this is still a weakness, we still have human input (yeah I know training)!

This was the position through to July 2000. Over this time we expanded the roll out of DREAM to other offices so that they gained familiarity and alleviated us as an HQ function from the input!

Keeping the analogy, the early arrival of baby DREAM did cause a jaundiced view of it. It wasn't complete, not all offices had access to the information, several reports had then yet to be written. But with something as versatile as DREAM it is easy to woo them now.

### Infancy

Now it was time for DREAM to play with the other children. We needed to find it some friends. Our Billing development then took off in earnest.

TEMPO  
ODBC read  
DLL input,  
My DLL course at Nottingham!

### Adolescence

Being still on version 2.7.14 is a hindrance. We need to move up and on. We are always conscious that we need to keep several systems in check. This can cause uncertainty, testing issues and subsequently delay.

Like most teenagers, DREAM, for us, is having growing pains and certainly some hairy moments. Document changing is an issue; journals are not always the solution. Our SQL server platform is dated and needs the earliest upgrade. The WAN we have in place is not that reliable or for some offices particularly fast.

When these are rectified then we can start to see better performance of this fine tool.

*Mark Hancock*

# More time with the family...

**I**N LATE 1997, then Managing Director of Peppers Cable Glands in Camberley, John Walton chose DREAM to replace an ageing IBM S/36-based accounting system. DREAM was selected because of its client-server architecture, its multi-currency capabilities and its unified ledger, and also because it is so easy to extract data from databases on the NT/SQLserver platform.

At the same time, Peppers selected DreamSuite by Get Real Systems to handle all the company's commercial and stock transactions. Get Real agreed to write a bespoke SOP system to automate bills of materials/ component picking and a simple works orders system. John spent a fair time first implementing DREAM, then integrating DreamSuite with it, to minimise Peppers' data-processing burden.

Peppers' philosophy was to give unbeatable service on a shoestring budget, so getting accurate information at the right time was crucial to the operation's success. John designed a suite of reports which were used to ensure that vital stocks were always available, that all orders were properly dealt with (and invoiced!) and that all financial transactions had been posted according to the company's rules. John also designed a budget suite which included a real-time system for posting automatically calculated accruals and prepayments. With neither spare time nor spare staff, everything had to be geared towards working smarter.

The NT, SQLserver and reporting skills John acquired were enough to persuade him to 'jump ship' after 20 years in

manufacturing. He started his own company Suddensource and, amongst other things, worked as an implementation consultant for Get Real, implementing both the ProActis (formerly DreamSuite) client-server application and the ProActis web-based e-Procurement solution.

The work with Get Real led to John helping Get Real develop reporting and other applications which add on to ProActis. John's 20 years' business experience mean that he can understand the user's requirements and see the newly-developing application from the user's perspective.

Suddensource is now negotiating full partner status with Get Real Systems, to cover sales of some products, joint development of others and implementation and integration work. Suddensource will continue to act in a subcontract capacity to Get Real offering troubleshooting and support cover in the southern counties.

John is also using what he has learnt to develop reporting tools for DREAM users.

He might now be able to 'spend more time with the family', but probably not...

**Aged Debt Reporting Worries?**

Time to ask about... **Dream Debtors**

Available November 2001 from:



A new reporting and analysis tool for Dream users.  
Using Dream Debtors you can:

- 1 Print an aged debt report with analysis into 4 or 12 aged periods, reporting a snapshot or an "as at" summary.
- 2 Analyse debtors by exporting to Excel in the form of a pivot-table, with the same options as the printed report.
- 3 Merge aged debts to Word and produce customer statements with an integral aged analysis.

Various selection and filter options are available, e.g. company, ledger, indices, currencies and account code/title.

Contact us now for a data sheet with full details of Dream Debtors.

**SUDDENSOURCE LTD**

1 Ambarrow Crescent  
SANDHURST  
GU47 8JA.

T: 01252 878841  
F: 01252 878883  
E: sales@suddensource.com

# Status of pre-2001 DREAM Enhancement Requests

47 enhancements made it to the 'top ten' in the last four years. Of these, 38 have been implemented and two are in progress.

by Tim Cullis, INFAR

ONE OF THE sessions at the recent User Group meeting in Birmingham was the status of the top enhancements for each year since the Enhancement Ballot began. Since 1997, User Group members have submitted proposals in the annual 'Call for Enhancements'. These are then grouped into topics and passed to SquareSum for initial comment.

The complete list of enhancement suggestions for that year, along with SquareSum's comments, is then circulated to members together with a voting form. Each organisation can 'spend' a total of 100 votes, distributed as they wish. The User Group produces a spreadsheet showing the voting patterns—the total votes cast for an enhancement and also how many organisations thought it was a good enough idea to spend votes on it. SquareSum is given the results, and then responds at the next User Group meeting.

Looking at the years 1997—2000, the most impressive statistic is that out of the 47 enhancements reaching the top ten (OK, so we can't count), 40 have been actioned, four have action planned, and only three are outstanding.

## Submission of enhancements

Often prior to the 'Call for Enhancements' a user will suggest an enhancement to the User Group. This will be forwarded to SquareSum for immediate consideration. It may well be a very simple enhancement that can be implemented in the version of DREAM that is currently being worked on. The User Group will also add it to the file for inclusion in the next Enhancement Ballot.

## Dates of DREAM major releases

v2.6	March 1999	v2.11	July 2001
v2.7	October 1999	v2.12	November 2001
v2.8	March 2000		
v2.9	July 2000	v2.13	2002
v2.10	November 2000	v2.14	2002

An important point to stress is that unless you are running the latest version of DREAM, you may be unaware that the enhancement you are about to request may already be in a later release. It may appear to be stating the obvious, but if you don't implement the latest release, you don't get any of the new features!

## 1997 enhancement ballot (#1-12)

The first survey in 1997 produced 12 enhancement suggestions. One was subsequently withdrawn by the proposer, seven were implemented in DREAM v2.4, one in v2.5 and one in v2.8. The two remaining requests (#8 and #9) called for the archiving of older transactions. An interim solution (removing rather than archiving transactions) was implemented in v2.8 and a full solution is planned for v3.

#8/9 Archive transactions **planned v3**

## 1998 enhancement ballot (#13-34)

The following year's survey collected a total of 28 proposals. Six of these were reclassified by SquareSum either as 'bugs' to be immediately fixed, or 'already actioned' in v2.5. The remaining 22 went on the ballot form and were voted on by 31 organisations. The top ten from the ballot and the action taken to date is shown below:

1	#20	Aged Debtors/Creditors report	<b>planned</b> v2.13
2	#18	Import indices	added v2.7
3	#31	Merging nominals	added v2.11
4	#17	Keylists	added v2.7
=5	#34	Manuals and online help	<b>in progress</b>
=5	#15	Report recent documents	added v2.6
=5	#21	Additional sort options	added v2.5 & 2.11
8	#24	Separate Dr/Cr columns	added v2.8
9	#30	Archive transactions (see #8/9)	<b>planned</b> v3
10	#33	Audit Log and reporting	added v2.8 & 2.10

The outstanding #8/9 enhancements from the 1997 ballot were represented as #30 in the 1998 ballot and remained in the top ten requests.

## 1999 enhancement ballot (#35-85)

After removing bugs and any suggestions already being actioned, then grouping similar requests together, members were balloted on a total of 51 enhancement requests. 35 organisations voted and the overall results were quite consistent—the top seven enhancements shared 50 per cent of all of the votes, and if the next six were included this represented 66 per cent of all votes. Philip Taylor announced both the ballot results and SquareSum's initial response at the User Group meeting in Worcester in October 1999.

The current situation is:

- |         |                                 |                           |
|---------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. #45  | Copy/paste into Excel           | added v2.9                |
| 2. #35  | Audit log of all changes        | added v2.10 DREAM+        |
| 3. #58  | Prevent payment > a/c bal       | added v2.9                |
| 4. #59  | Part-pay routine                | added v2.11               |
| 5. #49  | Ledger list by X-account        | <b>outstanding</b>        |
| 6. #66  | Nominal title on a/c report     | added v2.8 (see #135)     |
| 7. #68  | Saved report name as title      | added v2.9                |
| 8. #54  | Email on account record         | added v2.8                |
| 9. #64  | Std reports static detail       | added v2.9 & 2.10         |
| 10. #65 | Separate DR/CR columns          | added v2.9                |
| 11. #79 | Asset depreciation fields       | <b>planned v2.13</b>      |
| 12. #38 | Large-scale bank reconciliation | <b>planned for future</b> |

A measure of the value SquareSum places on the ideas raised is that an additional six enhancements requests were actioned in v2.8 and v2.9 (#36, 67, 69, 73, 82, 83).

## 2000 enhancement ballot (#86-131)

46 enhancement suggestions were on the ballot. The results and SquareSum's initial response were discussed at the October 2000 User Group meetings.

The top enhancement received 331 votes, the next five each received more than 200, and the following four between 149 and 170 votes. These top ten accounted for more than 60 per cent of all votes cast.

There was then a large gap to the next five which garnered between 77 and 85 votes. The current situation is:

- |         |                                  |                         |
|---------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 #91   | Audit trail deleted docs         | added v2.10             |
| 2 #100  | Doc input toolbar button         | added v2.11             |
| 3 #101  | Doc report last used #           | added v2.11             |
| 4 #107  | Disable ledger secure flag       | added v2.10             |
| 5 #102  | Filter documents on drill-down   | added v2.11             |
| 6 #88   | Increase account/doc description | <b>partial v2.10-11</b> |
| 7 #97   | Improved manuals (see #34)       | <b>in progress</b>      |
| 8 #98   | Improved release notes           | <b>from v2.10</b>       |
| 9 #122  | Second ledger from account       | <b>research v3.0</b>    |
| 10 #119 | Print preview for reports        | <b>not planned</b>      |
| 11 #131 | Automatic and part allocation    | added v2.11             |
| 12 #111 | 'As-at' report                   | already possible        |
| 13 #123 | Copy security between groups     | added v2.11             |
| 14 #120 | Archive without deletion         | already possible        |
| 15 #94  | Large scale bank reconciliation  | <b>duplicate of #38</b> |

## Current position

SquareSum's receptive attitude and prompt response to the enhancement process is demonstrated by the results, which show very few outstanding suggestions:

- |      |                                  |                           |
|------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| #8/9 | Archive transactions             | <b>planned v3</b>         |
| #20  | Aged Debtors/Creditors report    | <b>planned v2.13</b>      |
| #34  | Manuals and online help          | <b>in progress</b>        |
| #49  | Ledger list by X-account         | <b>outstanding</b>        |
| #79  | Asset depreciation fields        | <b>planned v2.13</b>      |
| #38  | Large-scale bank reconciliation  | <b>planned for future</b> |
| #88  | Increase account/doc description | <b>partial v2.10-11</b>   |
| #122 | Second ledger from account       | <b>research v3.0</b>      |
| #119 | Print preview for reports        | <b>no action planned</b>  |

*Tim Cullis*

## Mikado's One-off solution for one-off payments

Derek Sully of Mikado Computing presented a session at the DREAM Summer University describing Mikado's One-off payments system. One-off is designed to operate in conjunction with DREAM and other accounting systems and will raise payments by cheques, BACS or cash. Often these are payments for occasional suppliers which are not set up as regular suppliers on the Purchase Ledger. Some users install One-off to produce high volumes of cheques from standalone systems—for example many higher education establishments produce thousands of cheques for refunds and other student payments, from student record systems.

Any layout of cheque/remittance advice is catered for, and laser cheques can be used where there are

many bank accounts. The stationery is blank apart from logos which are common to all accounts, plus normal cheque background printing for security purposes. One-off will print all details on the cheque such as bank name, company or trust name, MICR encoded line and of course the payee, amount and the amount in words. One-off cheques are printed to the standards of APACS, the organisation which governs cheque writing standards. APACS approves a limited number of laser printers.

One-off can also write a letter with every cheque if needed. DREAM supplier and nominal codes are validated on-line and all cheques raised will be posted automatically to DREAM.

*dereksully@mikadocomputing.com*

# 2001 Enhancement Ballot

Seven of the ten top 2001 enhancements, plus another 13 from further down the list, have been passed to development.

by Tim Cullis, INFAR

**MORE THAN** 40 enhancement suggestions were received for the 2001 summer enhancement ballot. The incoming ballot forms were tabulated revealing a 'top ten' of clear winners which together attracted a total of over 56 per cent of all votes cast.

The results were passed to Philip Taylor at SquareSum, who made the following comments at the User Group meeting in Birmingham at the beginning of November.

## 1. Age Analysis (#160 and #161)

Suggested by a number of people over a period of time. Supported by 17 organisations with a total of 492 votes (the simple age analysis would have been a winner by itself as it attracted 297 votes from 9 organisations; the full age analysis received 195 votes, 8 organisations).

Intention: produce simple age analysis for mid 2002

## 2. Trial balance with budget (#162)

Proposed by Greg Butterworth, Office Holdings. Supported by 16 organisations with 253 votes.

Request passed to Development

## 3. Multi-period postings (#170)

Proposed by Robert Egleton, Control Risks Group. Received 240 votes from 14 supporters.

Very major change, will be in a future system.

## 4. Bulk selection in allocation (#155)

Suggested by Gill Gimes, Saville Gordon. Attracted 223 votes from 11 organisations.

Request passed to Development

## 5. One-off suppliers (#141)

Proposed by Andy Plumbly, Ashridge Management College. Received 220 votes from 10 organisations.

SquareSum design team to talk to the supporters of this request and propose a solution.

## 6. Allocate from account report (#140)

Proposed by Jonathan Sebright, Bath Spa University. Supported by 12 organisations with 205 votes.

Request passed to Development

## 7. 'As at' from account report (#158)

Another proposal from Jonathan Sebright which attracted 203 votes from 14 supporters.

Difficult to add, will be in a future system

## 8. Un-receive goods (#166)

A third suggestion from Jonathan Sebright. Supported by 10 organisations with 190 votes.

Request passed to Development

## 9. Better journal format UDI maintenance (#147)

Proposed by David Gadd, OMF International. Attracted 153 votes from 11 organisations.

Request passed to Development (a report is easier to do than Input so will be added first)

## 10. Support reversing on copy document (#148)

Suggested by Andy Eden, Henley Management College. Received 147 votes from 13 organisations.

Request passed to Development

## Other enhancements also passed to Development

Philip Taylor related that in addition to the reactions described above, the following enhancement suggestions have also been passed to Development.

134 Colour background by company

135 Nominal titles

136 Access attachments from nominal detail report

138 Set default for account secured flag

142 Currency ID on payroll

146 Comments function on UDI

149 Input allowed flag in import

150 Full or errors-only report in import

153 Comments on rows in UDI

164 Contact details for X.Acc

167 Order with part nominal

168 Order, print 'duplicate'

169 Ledger list, combine

In addition, #156 referring to the slow allocation performance resulting from the v2.11 part payments feature, had already been dealt with by a coding change in v2.11 build 65.

### SquareSum enhancement awards

Any complex piece of software with the flexibility to allow deployment in widely varying scenarios and environments is bound to have features that sometimes don't work quite as intended. Some software authors might not be terribly keen to receive bug reports or enhancement suggestions. Not so SquareSum!

Philip Taylor normally uses the spring meetings and the summer university to present awards (a bottle of bubbly) to those users reporting bugs. He explained that in future, similar awards would be given to users submitting enhancement requests.



*'Bubbly for bugs' at the Summer University*

Of course, the person can only receive the award if they are in the audience. The following awards were made at Birmingham:

**Jonathan Sebright, Bath Spa University**

For having three enhancements in the top ten

**Andy Plumbly, Ashridge Management College**

For proposing more than one enhancement and getting over 100 votes for every one of them

**Gill Gimes, Saville Gordon**

For getting the highest votes (223) of all users who proposed one enhancement

**David Gadd, OMF**

For proposing Philip's favourite enhancement, improvements to the Journal Format dialog in UDI.

**Mark Humble Bourne Leisure**

For proposing that each Company in a database should be able to have it's own colour desktop—a 'why didn't I think of that' award.

**Pam King AEEU**

For proposing a simple, elegant solution to finding errors in an import listing (an errors only report)

Philip closed by asking everyone to keep sending in enhancement requests.

## New fixed assets functionality

The facility to record fixed assets in a ledger was included in the very first design concepts of DREAM. Assets are registered within the ledger, while the necessary depreciation entries are generated either using manually-created journals, through a spreadsheet and .CSV import, or through an external package such as CatSoft (now known as AssetWare's AssetPro).

The problem has been what to do if your needs are not great enough to justify purchasing a professional asset management package, but you find an external spreadsheet to be a less-than-ideal solution.

In the past SquareSum has created bespoke routines for a couple of organisations and earlier this year was contemplating releasing a 'packaged' version of the routines, which customers would have to pay a reasonable sum of money to buy and then onwardly maintain.

This introduces a level of undesirable complexity both for support and in ongoing development. So instead, SquareSum has decided to include a basic level of asset depreciation within the core DREAM product. The DREAM features will include handling

of straight-line and reducing-balance depreciation journals, but won't include the more advanced functionality such as asset tracking or revaluation normally found in specialist asset packages.

In a letter that went to users who had expressed interest in the packaged routines, SquareSum technical director Dave Anstey writes, "Our current intention—we are in the requirements stage at the moment—is to build some form of generic solution that will allow for the processing of prepayments and possible accruals in a similar manner. We will carry forward the functionality into version 3 of DREAM when built."

The intention is to have a demonstrable version available for the next User Group meeting in spring 2002, and to make it a main topic at the 2002 university with the opportunity for workshops on the topic. At the time of the letter it was thought the new functionality would be in release 2.13.

It now seems likely there will be an interim 2.13 DREAM release, with the asset functionality appearing in v2.14 but still within the outline timescales mentioned above.

# SQUARESUM AD