

# Breaking down the tower of babble

For many modest sized business one of the biggest commercial headaches is information technology.

It is an area most people know very little about but rely on immeasurably.

And when it goes wrong, you can be faced with a minefield of techno babble to negotiate to get to the root of the problem.

New to the Highland capital, Avendris Consulting Solutions specialises in strategic IT advice for small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) – without the techno babble.

Explained director, Mike Robb: “Our classic client is an SME that is growing very fast. It may have entered a new market or developed a new product but their internal IT system creates more of a problem than an opportunity.

“The in-house IT team may lack experience and you can’t always rely on IT suppliers for impartial advice.

“We work out the next stage of IT development for the business – what kind of system it needs, what it should be buying, how it should be planned and how a business should budget for it.

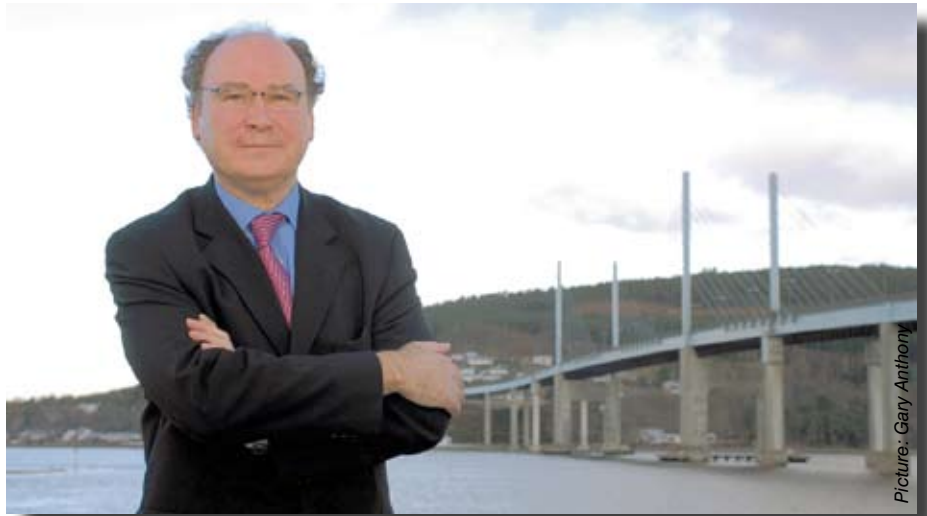
“We provide the skills and expertise of a top class IT director but on a part-time basis.”

As well as consultancy, Avendris also specialises in trouble-shooting problems with systems or suppliers.

“Because we are independent, clients can trust us to get to the heart of the problem. Independent advice is at the heart of our business model.”

Mike set up the business seven years ago in Edinburgh but decided to expand into the Highlands as the region gears up for the new energy and renewables revolution.

**‘We provide the skills and expertise of a top class IT director but on a part-time basis’**



**Mike Robb of Avendris Consulting Solutions**

“We started to research the area and found there was a cluster of organisations that fitted our profile – companies that were relatively small now, but could grow in the next few years and needed to get their IT up to speed.”

Avendris is also working with the third sector, primarily social enterprises, another fast growing sector.

One of the firm’s first clients in the north is Albyn Housing Society. Avendris developed an IT plan for the housing association so that it could be presented to its management committee in straightforward language without the technical jargon.

“We were really impressed with the speed at which Avendris found the right solution for Albyn,” Robin Nairn, finance director of Albyn Housing Society told *Executive*. “We are a fast-moving organisation dealing with around a fifth of the Highlands’ social housing needs and so we needed a seamless relationship.

“The independence and experience of the Avendris team got to the heart of some key issues for us and made a big difference to our ICT thinking.

“Even more importantly they helped the management team here to understand the real issues so they could sign up to the new plans with confidence.”

To help clients keep abreast of IT developments and how they could affect

their company, Avendris also issues a monthly newsletter which focuses on a “hot topic” but explains in layman’s terms what the topic is about and how it is relevant to business.

Although Avendris has a presence in Edinburgh and now in the Highlands, the company operates largely office-free.

Having worked in the IT industry for most of his life for companies in the United States and in the UK in a consulting and advisory capacity, Mike has built up a network of expert associates throughout the country to work with clients wherever their business is located.

The idea for the business model came about during a research trip in California. At that time, a number of US companies were adopting a new business model which used a team of self-employed specialists rather than hiring full-time staff based in an office.

It was nicknamed the “studio” model because of its similarity to the film industry which sub-contracts its expertise rather than employing full-time staff.

“We thought it was a great idea,” Mike continued. “It meant that you could access lots of expertise but without spending money on an office and salaries. That keeps our overheads low, as well as our fees.

“We set the business up that way and it has been working very well ever since.”

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