



## **2010 FEDESSA Innovation of the Year Award**

**Product** – SiteLink Web Edition – European version

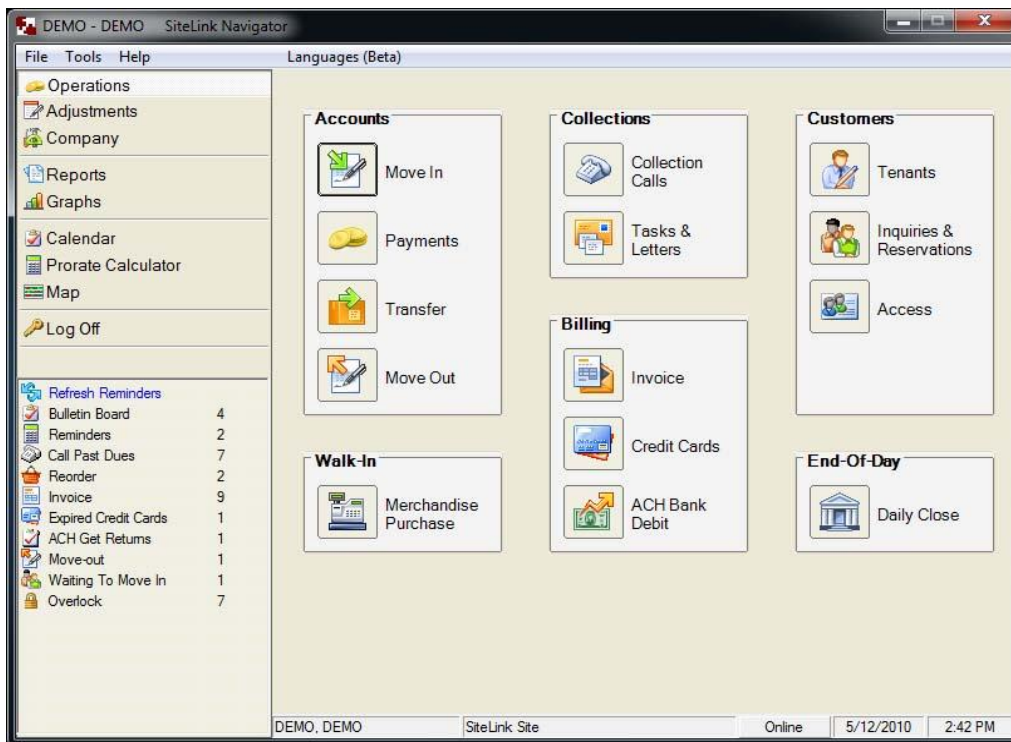
**Supplier** – SMD Software Inc.

June-17-2010

 **SiteLink**

# Index

1. **Provide a brief overview of your innovation, including the circumstances that prompted its development?.....** page 3
2. **Outline the unique qualities of the innovation .....** page 4
3. **What benefits does the innovation provide?.....** page 5
4. **Show how your innovation meets an industry.....** page 6
5. **Outline the potential application of the innovation across the broader industry .....** page 7
6. **Case Study – Store With Us Self-Storage, Bridgend, UK .....** page 8
7. **Outline any challenges to the innovation presented during development or implementation and show how you overcame these challenges.....** page 9
8. **Describe the effect of the innovation has had or will have on your community and/or the environment .....** page 10



**1. Provide a brief overview of your innovation including the circumstances that prompted its development?**

With over 9000 installations of SiteLink, SMD Software, Inc. is the leader in management software for self-storage operators today. SMD Software released its first Windows-based program in 1999. Service and continuous improvement have made SiteLink the most successful program in the storage industry – around the globe.

SMD Software wrote a web application, SiteLink Web Edition, from the ground up, because clients requested features outstripping the capabilities of Windows programs. Web Edition was an instant hit with operators around the world following its inaugural April 2006 release.

After integrating regional features such as translations and tie-ins with banking systems, SMD Software stands committed to the European market. Many software vendors in the US do not have the resources to implement changes and adapt to this market, therefore competition is limited. Yet storage operators in Europe demand the same features as those on other continents: real-time access to reports and data for better decision-making in growing operations with off-site users. Advanced data collection and reporting for more effective marketing. Smart software design to lower the cost of ownership. Management software tied to the company web site to bring rentals, reservations and online payments. In the internet age, stores gain customers via web sites tied to software to provide real-time pricing, availability, and online management.

Few software companies have the money to write and market a complete web application. Only a large, world-wide subscriber base could pay for development costs of a web system eclipsing millions of Euros. Only web systems can service the many diverse parts of growing operations. Using a well-written web program, operators gain an edge and save on expensive hardware like servers and log gains in revenue from online reservations and smarter, more timely decision-making.

## 2. Outline the unique qualities of the innovation

Today, powerful web applications have replaced slower Windows or on-premise programs. While many ways exist to create web systems, consider lower cost of ownership and flexibility for growing stores handling large amounts of data with Web Edition's special design:

- A. SMD Software's architecture puts data not just on web servers, but also on each local computer for faster operation and functionality, even when internet service temporarily stops.
- B. Web Edition keeps all data on servers in a secure datacenter ensuring faster speed and computing power than those found in offices. With 5 levels of redundancy, Web Edition offers better data safety to owners who no longer pay for on-site backups, eliminates the risk of losing data, and instantly restores data after a crash.
- C. With Web Edition, any number of users can connect without costly, time-consuming networking. SiteLink scales: it accommodates any number of users without networking or special setup. Compare savings from seamless scaling of Web Edition to Windows systems relying on a slow, costly and unreliable Terminal Services or Remote Desktop configuration.
- D. Web Edition offers APIs (application programming interface) at no cost to users. APIs, standard tools allowing platforms like web sites and software to communicate, give owners full control to display and interpret SiteLink data on reports and web sites. APIs save owners thousands in web development.
- E. SMD Software focuses upon continuously improving all aspects of the software and service; with online training sessions, webinars, monthly automatic live-updates, and newer programming tools that bring more features. Web Edition offers:
  - a) call centre technology for central payments, reservations, move-ins,
  - b) vast collection of customer data and more powerful reporting. Better targeted marketing campaigns result to eliminate spending on too broad or poorly focused efforts,
  - c) revenue management for smarter rent adjustments for both existing tenants and vacant units.

### **3. What benefits does the innovation provide?**

#### **A. To the self-storage business:**

Web Edition installs on as many machines as needed. There is no extra cost for added computers or seats. Most, including single-store operators, run Web Edition on multiple systems and from different locations, often simultaneously – Web Edition requires only a computer and internet connection. Cost of seats and hardware used to limit use of software. Web Edition saves owners the money they can now invest in their core business - storage. Some run it from home, while others control one store from another. Online management for tenants and powerful email features automate deliveries of notices. Managers save time and focus on new rentals. Proven revenue management features add 3% in gross rent receipts per year. Improved recording of marketing data gives a more detailed breakdown of customer groups. Owners better connect with existing, previous and reservation clients.

#### **B. To self-storage customers:**

Increasingly internet-savvy consumers expect powerful, engaging web sites. Online reservations, including store specials, deliver the instant outcome customers demand. Self-storage is no different from any other service business delivering solid content and shopping on the Internet. Our industry has fallen behind others in technology-until now. Web Edition lets tenants access pricing, availability and account details on a store's website. Overseas or traveling tenants find this feature convenient and avoid calls from stores for not keeping the contact details up to date: they can even pay by credit card on a store's web site. Tenants receive notices and leases via email. Call center integration gives customers access to live phone operators anytime. Because Web Edition creates specials better attuned to seasons, demand, and customer groups, including coupon codes, tenants prefer offers at stores on Web Edition.

#### **4. Show how your innovation meets an industry need**

We developed Web Edition solely for self-storage operators around the world. With cloud computing, operators have real-time data for better decision-making and can take advantage of new features instantaneously. Automatic, monthly updates result from consultations with single- and multi-store operators. We request feedback from all users to focus development on stores' needs.

Single and multi-store operators are always seeking new revenue streams. Rent increases are pivotal in the sustainability of the industry. The science behind revenue management is complex. It's more than a simple case of raising rates when occupancy crosses pre-set levels. Web Edition combines assumptions like street rates, customers' rates, occupancy, seasons, tenure, and months past since the last rent change into one simple tool. Revenue management is self-storage science.

Overwhelmingly, operators request features like scalability, web site integration, revenue management, and quality of collecting and mining data in use at REITS like Extra Space, Public Storage and others. Web Edition offers these and other functions with critical improvements over REITs' programs: responsive customer service and lower cost of ownership.

## **5. Outline the potential application of the innovation across the broader industry**

One of the broader implications of Web Edition rests in the subscription-based concept of delivering self-storage software. Web Edition dramatically lowers the cost of ownership. Each month, stores pay for the use of the software. Owners no longer face hefty upfront fees, expensive add-ons, servers, backups and costly, un-reliable restore procedures and system recoveries. Web Edition offers better data security than any on-premise program or server.

Software as a service, or SAAS, puts the burden of proving itself all over again every month squarely on the software vendor. Owners own their data, sign no binding contracts and owe no more than a month's subscription. SiteLink took dramatic steps to show its commitment to data safety. It remains the only software to pass the rigorous SAS 70 and PCI certification to satisfy shareholders big and small demanding accountability of credit card and other financial data.

## 6. Case Study – [www.storewithus.co.uk](http://www.storewithus.co.uk)

With over 700 tenants, Andy Wilkey's Store With Us Self-Storage in Bridgend is one of the larger stores. In 2006, the company still used Excel for daily operations. After many successful years in the business, Andy had a clear idea for his new software. Comparison of other storage programs, even local ones, began with fully functioning demos. In the end, SiteLink stood as the software of choice. Andy chose SiteLink with ambitious goals in mind:

Online management features like reservations with real-time connectivity to pricing, specials and availability to capture an increasingly younger market accustomed to shopping online. Says Andy: "I knew linking our webpage to SiteLink would bring online reservations. Today, most of our business is coming through the internet." Because SiteLink runs on uninterruptable, powerful web servers, SiteLink updates web sites with real-time pricing, availability and tenant account details. Without manager interaction, reservations and payments from the web site automatically go right into SiteLink. Via the Inquiry Tracking report, Andy monitors reservations and how his staff converts them to paying rentals.

Changes in marketing, evidenced by slowly decreasing Yellow Pages, demanded better insight into Andy's client base. His managers quickly adjusted to collect and enter more tenant info than before into Web Edition: email addresses for electronic correspondence and marketing profiles (how tenants heard about the store, gender, goods being stored, why they chose the store, if they had used storage before, etc.). "It was time to stop wasting money and better aim advertising campaigns," explains Andy. Managers quickly converted incoming online reservations to rentals for handsome revenue growth.

Setting up Web Edition was a simple, natural process: procedures had existed for years and were easy to enter into the logical, intuitive user interface. Going from Excel to a web system allowed managers get through tasks more quickly. They share data by working on the 4 office computers simultaneously, all without servers or special setup. More efficient managers translate into more rentals. Computers already in place made the transition inexpensive and easy: Web Edition loads on any computer with a normal internet connection, which already existed (Web Edition works flawlessly even with slower internet connections).

Andy reaped thousands of pounds in savings because Windows servers were not necessary to run SiteLink on his computers. Without networking or servers, Andy's 4 computers are up simultaneously and afford him real-time access to data from anywhere so he can keep up with his businesses.

Superior customer support, which is always available at USA headquarters, assisted during the switch. Specially trained techs walked through integrating SiteLink with Andy's accounting software. Quality product and support are not about geography but attitude and expertise. Phone calls are cheap, Skype calls are free. All 35 SMD employees, including service, programming, and sales departments, working in one office were critical for a seamless launch. Integrating service with programming and sales departments under one roof leads to instant help, elevating more elaborate questions and releasing changes based on client feedback via automatic monthly updates. Web Edition's support system, available on weekends also, never has callers wait for answers.

Says Andy Wilkey, proprietor: "Overall SiteLink Web Edition is ideal. We started off using spreadsheets, now with over 700 customers – I can't imagine being without Web Edition. It keeps us on track and on top of everything. We are still looking to grow – and SiteLink is built for growth."

**7. Outline any challenges to the innovation presented during development or implementation and show how you overcame these challenges**

Introducing a new self-storage software brand to Europe took time. Growing the Web Edition footprint in Europe started slowly because operators are naturally skeptical about new entrants. Most look for regional products, not those made in and maintained from the USA. Ultimately, Andy Wilkey and his team realized the many features in Web Edition no other system has or will have (integrated credit card processing, real-time integration with web sites, marketing tracking, dashboards, data mining). The evaluation also validated the quality of Web Edition support.

Single store operators, by far, dominate the American market and demand custom features. Therefore, adapting to the European market was a natural step: SMD Software completed work on the European version before launching Web Edition: the user interface is available in various languages, operators direct-debit rent or charge it to credit cards (even via their web site), discount plans and VAT meet local requirements, and rounding to the fourth decimal place (unheard of in other software, including QuickBooks and MYOB) keeps charges accurate.

The Bridgend group grew accustomed to SiteLink support immediately and overcame any reservation about working with a vendor 5 time zones away. Most SiteLink users are in different time zones. Most product support today comes from outside the borders of users. Andy's team realized how SMD ensures quality support by keeping techs, sales, and programming under one roof. SiteLink techs respond usually immediately; the automatic, monthly updates, more than a huge cost savings, underscore SMD's caring, responsiveness and commitment to continuous improvement.

SMD's huge investment in manuals and training paid off: virtually overnight, the Bridgend team became familiar with the user-friendly SiteLink interface resulting from feedback of almost 10,000 users. All training is free and comes via email, phone, and webinars and training videos on [www.smdsoftware.com](http://www.smdsoftware.com). Learning to collect and enter more data in SiteLink than before, such as marketing and emails, was an easy step for managers to master: powerful marketing reports and notices going out via email yielded instant payback.

**8. Describe the effect of the innovation has had or will have on your community and or the environment.**

Web Edition brings rentals and adds substantial savings in many areas. As a part of the online community, Web Edition allows for operators to reduce their consumption of unnecessary servers, paper and ink, and even eliminates trips to stores. Both single- and multi-user environments require fewer computers, dramatically lowering hardware cost and expensive electricity usage. With energy cost at a premium, fewer computers without power-hungry servers and backup systems are better. Lower cost of ownership lets owners' direct funds toward growing storage and improving customer service.

Web Edition allows storage operators to be a part of a greater community. In today's climate of instant access and social media, operators cannot afford to be left behind. Web-reporting, real-time access anywhere and the ability to instantaneously track your marketing dollars are a must for today's competitive market. Engaging web sites offer online payments, reservations, and rentals. Now, every person in the rent cycle saves because clients select a space, reserve, pay, and manage the account online.

Web Edition delivers real data security via encryption and hosting data in class-A data centers ([www.hostedsolutions.com](http://www.hostedsolutions.com)) to owners and customers alike. Alternatives are worrisome: computers in unsecured, ordinary offices give thieves access to customer data, emails and credit card numbers. Disasters (catastrophic hardware, fire, floods) expose owners and tenants. Consider, in contrast, SiteLink's 5 levels of redundancy in their data center, including backups to tapes and disks in multiple or co-locations. Data is safe. Always.

The global self-storage software market of fewer than 70,000 stores will leave only a small number of core, key software companies. Only a global vendor can deliver the complex, varying features demanded by customers operating in different continents - at a cost self-storage operators can afford. Companies like Microsoft, Google and Salesforce.com place their development dollars on internet-centric platforms. Only "cloud-based" solutions can quickly deploy the right features to a diverse client base - and satisfy impatient customers with ever-changing tastes fast enough.