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Welcome to the May edition of What's Emerging.

We hope that you are all doing really well and that you continue to enjoy our newsletter.

Try our business tip for this month - we were sceptical at first but it really works and we miss not having two screens for our computers when we are away from the setup.

This month's article is about what effect high oil prices might have on agriculture, agricultural land prices, the price of food, and our eating habits. It was published in the Australian Farm Journal this month.

Cheers

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Business Tip

Two Screens

The New York Times technology section recently had an article about using the multiple screen set up in Windows so that you can use two screens at once. Research has shown that using two screens instead of one can improve productivity of some workers by up to 25%. We have tried it out, and we are a big fan of how it helps computer work. In particular it is great if you are writing, and want reference material on one screen, while you write on the other. Of course you can get the same effect with a much larger screen, but two smaller screens are much cheaper than a large one, and many of us have a spare screen sitting around already. If you plug an extra screen in and go to control panel in Windows and click on Display then you can alter the setup in the settings tab for multiple screens and have them side by side or top and bottom. Essentially it runs the two screens as one big screen and you can move the mouse from one to the other seamlessly. The front desk staff at our office use the same set up and they love it.

Emerging issues from around the world

Click on the titles to read the full stories.

Social networking for business

Social networks have become serious on the internet with the purchase of MySpace by Rupert Murdoch. Now Visible Path is trying to do the same with social networks in business. Using social network analysis and data mining they seek to help people to understand and utilise relationships in companies and between companies to create business opportunities.

Venture capitalist goes green

Possibly the most famous venture capitalist firm in the world, Kleiner Perkins Caulfield & Byers, is setting aside 15% of its latest round of funding to invest in the green technology sector.

University lectures via iPod

Deakin University in Victoria is offering students the ability to download podcasts and video podcasts of lectures. A pilot program last year resulted in 25,000 downloads and a slight drop in attendance. Some academics are worried about lecture halls emptying but others say that students can use the system to juggle outside commitments, including work commitments, better.

World's smallest car gets a motor

Researchers have built a motor for the world's smallest car. While this may seem frivolous the technique is an important step in testing nanofabricating techniques.

Using yeast to produce anti-malarial drugs

This article in nature describes how researchers are re-working the yeast genome to manufacture the synthetic precursors for anti-malarial drugs. All they need to do now is use the yeast to produce beer that treats malaria – what a killer product that would be.

Is Google about to move into voice activated search?

The publication of a patent that Google filed in 2001, along with the poaching of several speech recognition researchers is raising speculation that Google is close to a voice activated search system. If so this would be a boon for searching use hand held devices, getting around the problems of keyboards.

Sustainable Wal-Mart

Wal-Mart has come under a lot of criticism from a range of people but now they are experimenting with a sustainable store that has a wind turbine out front, recycles waste heat from the freezers to heat the store, has low water toilets, and many other innovations. If these stores work they could change the face of retailing because of their huge market power.

Human Hybrids

Sick of carrying around batteries? In a principle similar to a hybrid car researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology have created a prototype nano generator wire that can be inserted into the body and will generate electricity when muscles are flexed.

Mind reading device

Researchers at MIT have developed a device which can help autistic children better understand the emotions of people that they are communicating with.

Price Waterhouse Cooper Corporate Sustainability Drivers

PWC have published a report looking at the drivers they believe will push increases in interest in corporate sustainability, including the view that globalisation will be one of those forces

Time travel a reality?

A Professor at a university in Connecticut is saying that time travel could be a reality this century

Diesel from coal

We have been able to produce diesel from coal for a long time. In a new development two scientists have reported in Science that they have created a new process that improves how this process can occur. Of course producing diesel from a different non-renewable source still raises questions of sustainability and greenhouse gas issues.

Ethanol boosting performance

Ethanol Boost is developing an internal combustion engine technology that uses ethanol injection to significantly boost engine efficiency and mileage.

Wireless Australia

Austar, Unwired and Soul have announced that they have plans to roll out a wireless Wimax service that will cover 55 percent of Australians, including poorly serviced regional and out urban areas. The competitive outcome between this service and others such as Telstra's new 3G network (Fast 3G Internet) will be very interesting and the developments will alter the way internet services and business models work in Australia.

Smart appliances interact with electricity grid

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory is trialing a program called GridWise where electric appliances are connected to the internet via a broadband connection. The appliances are then fed pricing data so they can be programmed to run only when the price of power is below a certain level. The project intends to stabilise the electricity grid

by reducing peak power requirements.

Pirate turns business partner

Warner Brothers has announced that they are partnering with BitTorrent to distribute their content with 200 movies and television shows available by the middle of the year. BitTorrent is a peer to peer sharing system similar to Napster and Limewire, except that it allows sharing of video files. This means that instead of downloading from a single site the download will come from user computers that have already downloaded the file. This saves on bandwidth costs for large files.

How nanotechnology will affect the food industry

This article describes how the food industry might benefit from mundane improvements in things like packaging rather than direct product applications.

Off shore wind farms

The US Department of Energy and GE are undertaking a multi-year project to build large off shore wind farms that could significantly reduce the cost of wind generated electricity.

What Are We Writing About

This month's article is one that Paul wrote for the Australian Farm Journal on whether high oil prices will affect farmers terms of trade. In our view if oil prices remain high, and go higher it will result in food prices rising, not because higher oil prices mean higher production costs, but because demand for biofuels will inject much higher levels of demand in to the global agricultural market. These changes have the potential to fundamentally re-order world markets and land prices. You can find the downloadable file on the home page at our website:

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