

The accidental tourist

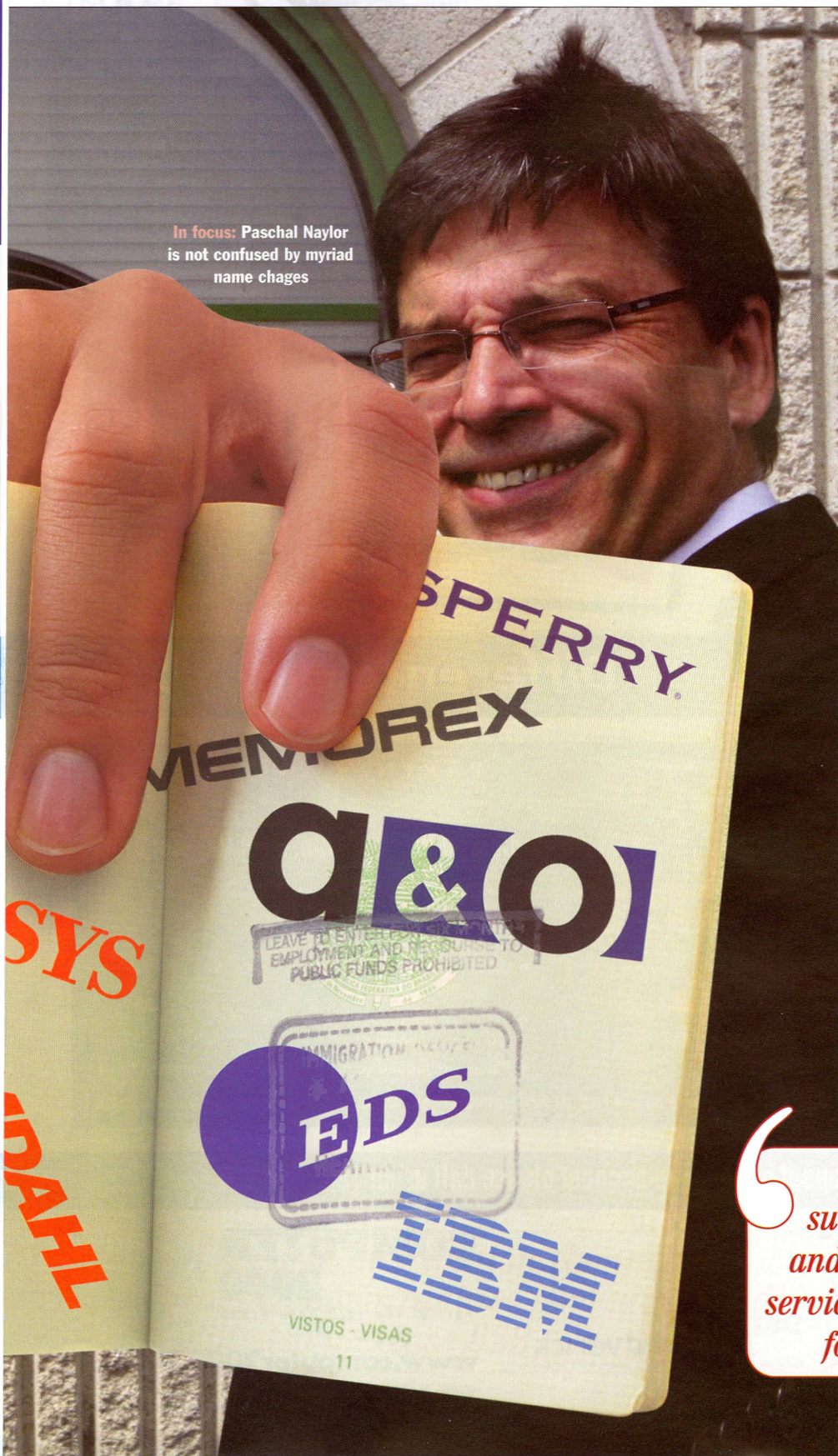
In focus: Paschal Naylor is not confused by myriad name changes

If **Paschal Naylor** collected company logos in his passport, he'd be a well travelled man. But he tells **Billy MacInnes** that he has spent most of his career with one outfit

THE CAREERS of people in the IT industry tend to fall into distinctive groups. You have those who spend a few years at one company before moving on until they finally land a top job somewhere. You have others who stay at the same company for virtually their entire career and emerge at the top of the heap. Then you have people in the middle like Paschal Naylor. True, he's been at the same company for years and has risen to the top – but the company has changed quite a few times in those years.

He may well be managing director at a&o systems + services Ireland, but the company Naylor originally joined was called Memorex, which initially specialised in supplying storage products and 3270 controllers and screens into the IBM market. But before we get to that, let's start at the beginning, when Naylor started work in the family print business before moving into a financial role as a cost analyst in the Clondalkin Group. After a couple of years in

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Stamp collection: Paschal Naylor has quite an assembly of logos

the general foods sector, he moved into IT when he joined Mostek, part of UTC.

At that point, Mostek was the world leader in DRAM, holding 85% of the world market before competition from Japan in the late 1970s began to take its toll. In 1984, Naylor moved to Memorex as finance manager before making the shift into the sales side of the business. At that time, Memorex and Amdahl were heavily involved in what was known as the 'plug-compatible' industry, supplying parts to run with IBM mainframes.

Naylor recalls that, despite some similarities between the print and IT industry – "it's always been about competitiveness and cost but the output was completely different" – the arrival of US companies brought a different culture and flavour of management. "They had a can do, will do attitude," he says.

Memorex went through several transitions over the years as it shifted away from the plug-compatible business. It was split up by its parent company, Burroughs, with the OEM disk drive business being sold to Toshiba in 1985. At the end of 1986, after the merger of Burroughs and Sperry formed Unisys, the Memorex Media, Telecommunications and International businesses (including the IBM user sales and service organisation) were spun off as Memorex International and merged with Telex to form Memorex Telex in January 1988.

"There have been a lot of iterations of that business over the years," Naylor agrees. "There were a number of recreations over that period of time."

What the company eventually became was a provider of IT solutions, including data network and storage products and related services in 18 countries. The business (which was part of German-based MSH International Services) was bought by IT services giant EDS in 2002 and became EDS European Global Field Services (GFS). Throughout all these changes, Naylor remained at the company, moving from managing director of Memorex Telex Ireland to country manager at EDS GFS.

Naylor describes the time spent as part of EDS as tremendously helpful. "We got very familiar with processes and the procedures of a very large outsourcing operation. That knowledge has been very useful."

Six years later, it reverted to German

ownership when EDS sold the business – which had operations in Ireland, Britain, France, Germany, Iberia and the Netherlands – to a&o in November 2006. According to Naylor, EDS had decided that the field services business was not core to its business. With the acquisition, 3,000 employees transferred to a&o, taking its headcount to 4,300, along with contracts to supply EDS with services. At the time, managing director Michael Müller said a&o would "become the market leader for technical services in Europe".

Naylor describes the current version of the company, which only really "kicked off" in 2007, as "like a new company with a long history". He said the firm has been "busy recreating itself, clarifying what we're doing, building our image and our brand". Naylor could be forgiven for getting a bit confused over the names, given the amount of time he's spent at the company, but he says it does have its advantages.

"A lot of our introductions are done based on our historic name," he says, "and a lot of people would have worked with us over the years." Naylor says that, over the company's many iterations, the current incarnation is probably the most interesting. "We've created a very successful services business and we see IT services and IT service management as key areas for growing our business," he claims.

As well as IT service management, the company also provides infrastructure and information management along with hardware, software and supplies. Naylor says the product sales side, which it terms ICT sourcing, is coming more and more into the

services desk. "We're leading with services these days rather than products," he adds.

The company has taken the view that it makes more sense to provide selective outsourcing to clients. "It's the way to go in the current market place," Naylor believes, "and it's

working very well for us. In a tightening market, all companies are being very careful in what they spend. There's been a change in the market. If we can allow CIOs to shine in what they do, then we should be very effective for our customer base over a period of time."

He argues that the market problems "should help us [because] we're not a one-day wonder. We're definitely going into a different timeframe in the economy as we know it," Naylor acknowledges, "but I'm not a doom and gloom merchant."

Naylor says he enjoys the people management aspect of the job and has developed some skills in neuro-linguistic programming. Outside of work, he's a keen walker, mainly up and down mountains in the west of the country, and likes outdoor activity. He's not a golfer "which is unusual in this business", Naylor admits.

As an accountant, Naylor accepts he is "not a high-tech person, but I can see where technology can be used in the business. Technology is very important for our economy". There is a lot of work to do in the industry, he adds. "It's

no longer new and we're no longer the low cost world we were. The industry has moved on. It's a much more knowledge-based business".

In the meantime, Naylor is concentrating his energies on developing the profile of a&o systems + services Ireland. It may well be the same company he's always worked for over the past 20 years or more, but it's also still relatively new to the market. Let's hope for his sake and sanity they don't go changing the name again any time soon. ■

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