FollowMe PROJECT SUMMARY

FollowMe will free the user from the **confines of the fixed-location desk-top**, delivering new mechanisms to use and access information and services in global networks. Users will no longer need to be tied to a particular location or device, instead they will be able to interact via a **variety of devices and media**, such as Psion-stype organisers, portables, pcs, gsm phones. FollowMe will develop an architecture for **intelligent agent technology** to create persistent user profiles and develop a process-driven approach to achieving user goals. The architecture will be validated through **two industrial application pilots**. The project will deliver **Seedware** which will be made **freely available** to encourage external development of additional applications outside the project.

The Need

The majority of IT users are restricted in their information use to a fixed desktop. The small percentage of users who attempt to be mobile find that this very mobility actually restricts their access to information. Mobility can affect many different types of user, for example:

- a technical director needs to be able to hold meetings, discuss and share information in a variety of places, and be contactable at all times
- sales representatives,sharing up-to-date information with customers, putting in orders and arranging schedules
- service engineers contactable for service enquiries and able access information using the available devices in their current location.
- a non-business user to access services, buy products, check email and send voice-mail from home, in the car or in a hotel.

For these users, it can be difficult to keep up-to-date information with them, and carrying around a laptop and mobile phone allows restricted access at best to the full breadth of information which they need. The key need is to remove the distinction between mobile and fixed-base users: the proposed paradigm creates one class of user, with the ability to access the full range of services and information available to them, wherever they may be. This market is expected to expand rapidly as more users make use of this new paradigm at leisure and work, and as the difference between different types of information - MS Word documents, email, GSM voice-mail, HTML pages, video, etc. - becomes blurred, and information becomes conceived as simply ‘ information’ . More users will work from home, and more users will need to share information with a variety of people.

The Market Drivers

- Business-to-business electronic commerce
- Mobile users
- Network computers
- New service providers.

In the world of electronic commerce there is a growing awareness that ‘ business-to-business’ transactions will rapidly follow on from the currently emerging ‘ (human) customer-to-business’ systems and that the former systems will automate important business processes - for example negotiating re-order levels and prices for parts in Just-in-Time manufacturing. In the field of communications there is a pressing need for integration of the many forms of messaging by which people can keep in contact with one another. Moreover, it should be possible to use the same communications infrastructure that are used for messaging to command important applications that support users’ electronic life. Network computers are an exciting innovation which provide an opportunity for new service providers (and their technology suppliers - e.g. Marimba) to download services for users in a business and to provide management of those services for the business. The network computer should not be solely an ‘ Internet terminal’ but also the user’ s customised device for participating in collaborative tasks and acting as the user’ s ‘ virtual secretary’ .

Partners, countries, skills and roles

APM	UK/SME	Software products	Project management, distributed systems architecture
IZB	D/SME	Internet services provider	User access, Internet application pilot
INRIA	F	Intelligent agents & systems	News application pilot withOuest-France
C&T	F/Industrial	Newspaper publishing products	User needs, news application pilot withOuest-France
FAST	G/ /SME	Advanced systems/consulting	Internet application pilot
UWE	UK/Academic	Intelligent agents	Mobile agents software.

The Results

The market drivers described above emphasise a transition in IT away from data-centric models, based in client-server relationships, to a process-centric approach. Moreover, these processes can be mobile, global in scope, shared by users, interactive and media-rich. The results include

- an **exploitation plan** examining, in broad terms, a plan for exploiting the results of the FollowMe project
- an **architecture**, including design principles, interface specifications and implementation guidelines
- an **infrastructure prototype,** providing a complete basic version of a FollowMe working system, implementing the architecture
- **Seedware** - example software to encourage software generation by outside developers, made publicly available over the Internet to this end.
- two **proof of concept pilots** - system to be built by FAST and IZB allowing users to interact with services provided by businesses via an ISP, the services personalising the information they provide based on the profiles, and one by INRIA and Ouest-France (T&C), allowing users access to news on a variety of devices, personalised to their tastes.
- a report on the architecture, user needs, Seedware guide, the pilots and the experience in building them, for **publication as a book**, to be published within the Commission ‘ s arrangements with Springer Verlag.

The Future - Products and Services

FollowMe technology will allow new products and services to enhance productivity in wide range of industry and service sectors including:

- health - sharing of information between users in many locations, access to information from a variety of sources by mobile users
- travel - availability of flights, hotels, etc. to users in many locations, then allowing ordering via agents with access to financial services.

- marketing & sales - mobile users' information which can then be shared with customers, allowing ordering from a variety of platforms and locations
- media and publishing - access by collaborating users to common bases of information, both read and write, movement between different information types, information sourcing controlled by agents
- banking and finance - access to information in a variety of formats, shared between many users in many locations
- support and engineering environments - providing information to users ' in the field' , sensitive to their needs.

This will create opportunities for European growth in:

- software developers
- service providers for infrastructure, especially ISPs
- consultants with experience in applying the technology.