



# THE VIRTUOSOS

a newsletter from

## CC INTELLIGENT SOLUTIONS, INC.

2009, Quarter 3&4 Issue 4

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**

All of us at CC Intelligent Solutions, Inc. wish all of you a merry and safe holiday season and a very successful New Year.

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### EDITORIAL

Rather than my typical views regarding the content of this newsletter I thought it much more appropriate to remind us with a poem that this festive season will be coming soon and some credit is due to our U.S. service men and women for our being able to celebrate these festivities in peace. Let's try in some small way to pay a tiny bit of what we owe. Stop and think of our heroes, living and dead, who sacrificed themselves for us.

### ***A Different Kind Of Christmas Poem***

*The embers glowed softly, and in their dim light,  
I gazed round the room and I cherished the sight.  
My wife was asleep, her head on my chest,  
My daughter beside me, angelic in rest.  
Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white,  
Transforming the yard to a winter delight.*

*The sparkling lights in the tree I believe,  
Completed the magic that was Christmas Eve.  
My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep,  
Secure and surrounded by love I would sleep.  
In perfect contentment, or so it would seem,  
So I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.*

*The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near,  
But I opened my eyes when it tickled my ear.  
Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know, Then the  
sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.  
My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear,  
And I crept to the door just to see who was near.*

***Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night,  
A lone figure stood, his face weary and tight.  
A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old,  
Perhaps a Marine, huddled here in the cold.  
Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled,  
Standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.***

***"What are you doing?" I asked without fear,  
"Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!  
Put down your pack, brush the snow from your sleeve,  
You should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"  
For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift,  
Away from the cold and the snow blown in drifts...***

***To the window that danced with a warm fire's light  
Then he sighed and he said, "Its really all right,  
I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night.  
"It's my duty to stand at the front of the line,  
That separates you from the darkest of times.***

***No one had to ask or beg or implore me,  
I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before me.  
My Gramps died at ' Pearl on a day in December,"  
Then he sighed, "That's a Christmas 'Gram always  
remembers."***

***My dad stood his watch in the jungles of ' Nam ',  
And now it is my turn and so, here I am.***

***I've not seen my own son in more than a while,  
But my wife sends me pictures, he's sure got her smile."  
Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag,  
The red, white, and blue... an American flag.  
"I can live through the cold and the being alone,  
Away from my family, my house and my home.***



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*I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet,  
I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat.  
I can carry the weight of killing another,  
Or lay down my life with my sister and brother..  
Who stand at the front against any and all,  
To ensure for all time that this flag will not fall."*

*"So go back inside," he said, "harbor no fright,  
Your family is waiting and I'll be all right."  
"But isn't there something I can do, at the least,  
"Give you money," I asked, "or prepare you a feast?  
It seems all too little for all that you've done,  
For being away from your wife and your son."*

*Then his eye welled a tear that held no regret,  
"Just tell us you love us, and never forget.  
To fight for our rights back at home while we're gone,  
To stand your own watch, no matter how long.  
For when we come home, either standing or dead,  
To know you remember we fought and we bled.  
Is payment enough, and with that we will trust,  
That we mattered to you as you mattered to us."*

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# THE VIRTUOSOS CC INTELLIGENT SOLUTIONS, INC.



## ON YOUR MARK, GET SET, GO TO IACA!

IACA will be holding its 33<sup>rd</sup> annual conference May 23-27, 2010 in Austin, Texas.

If you are not familiar with IACA, then let me expound. IACA stands for the International Association of Commercial Administrators. IACA is a nonprofit association composed of members who work in government filing offices throughout the United States, Canada and numerous other countries around the world. In addition to its Board of Directors, there are four sections that operate within IACA: Business Organizations (“BOS”), Secured Transactions (“STS”), Information Technology (“ITS”) and International Relations (“IRS”).

Among this year’s topics, the BOS will discuss the current draft of the Business Organization Act, Low-Profit Limited Liability Companies (LLLC), Beneficial Ownership, Day-to-Day Filing Office Issues, Transitioning to Online Filing, and Effects of Administrative Dissolution. STS will discuss Model Administrative Rules, Update on Article 9 changes being discussed by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws (NCCUSL) Joint Review Committee, NCCUSL’s consideration to add a bogus filing section to the Article 9 revision, Filing Chart, and Electronic Filing. ITS topics will include Mobile Access: Providing Government Services in a Mobile World, Future of the IT Workforce, Project Management: Working within the Government Model (Appropriation/Costing/Justifying), and GOV 2.0: What does it mean for IACA and Government Jurisdictions. IRS topics will include Sharing Experiences from Growing Nations, Registry Reviews by the World Bank, Report on European Corporate Registries’ Forum (ECRF) and Corporate Registers Forum (CRF), and Issues with Foreign Companies Migrating to the United States.

Since the association formed in 1973, IACA has been providing its members and their constituents with an opportunity to share ideas, collaborate on best practices, and further the effective administration of business and commercial document recordings through its annual conference.

I attended my first IACA Conference in Ashville, NC in 1995 and have not missed since. The IACA Conference is like no other conference I have been to. Many IACA members are long time attendees, but if this year is your first time to attend, we start you off with a 1<sup>st</sup> time attendee’s reception to make sure you feel at home and meet the Board of Directors. Before you know it, you will feel like part of the family. You will soon realize that you have resources from all over the world to assist you with your day-to-day Business Filings issues, Secured Transaction issues as well as Technology issues.

So mark your calendar and I look forward to seeing you on May 23-27, 2010 in Austin, Texas, the “Live Music Capital of the World.”

Randy Moes, IACA President  
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## “Packing Tips” for Supporting Legacy Applications Secretary of State Office Systems

### The Hiking Trip Story

Imagine going out on a hiking trip in an area infiltrated by poisonous snakes and slippery slopes next to steep cliffs. If you're prepared with well-constructed hiking boots, know how to stay on the trail, and use an experienced guide or accurate map, you might be fine and even enjoy the scenery. But if you're cutting corners and wishfully thinking you'll see the trail markers in advance, you might be in a world of hurt. Serious hurt.

The analogy parlays perfectly to supporting enterprise applications known for their complexity and pitfalls. Some applications are like the neighborhood street: new, perfectly lit, well-marked and potentially safe from disastrous risks. And for these, you can navigate the excursion at a low cost and with a smart, less experienced team.

But for those legacy applications that are full of hidden “snake pits,” prudence is recommended for the sake of system stability, security and functionality. This is especially true of

enterprise-level applications, such as some of those currently in use in several secretary of state offices around the country. Often, these applications have evolved over a decade and are based on competing interests and lack of long-term funding or planning. Due to their antiquated code, along with their suspect development, test and deployment processes used along the way, managing these applications without skill and experience is like hiking through the slippery snake pit blindfolded and barefooted. The question is not whether one will get struck, but when, how and for how long.

### *Real Life Snake Pit Examples*

- ❖ **Hardcoded passwords.** These are often embedded throughout the application and/or registry, which significantly increases the risk of a security penetration unless the support approach is meticulous, pervasive and based on experience
- ❖ **Code duplication.** This may become an issue if a change is made in only one location, forcing the developer and tester to have prior knowledge of the other locations. Not knowing these in advance leads to inconsistent code and errors, sometimes very subtle but potentially costly errors, when any changes are made.
- ❖ **Incomplete or outdated documentation.** Sometimes a bad map is worse than no map at all. Some documentation might exist that refers to executables and other files that may not actually exist. This may lead to false hope if the system crashes or when an error surfaces.

### Six “Packing Tips” for the Enterprise Support Mission

Before signing up for support for your mission-critical application, make sure the vendor of choice has the following six items fully covered:

**Knowledge of the Code Base** – There is no substitute for experience in the code. Only by implementing and supporting the code in multiple scenarios do you start to understand the pitfalls and dangers within the application. Complete end-to-end experience with some applications is a must for functioning deployments, as not knowing all the places to change settings or hardcoded text in places like encrypted client registries, database tables and web services will lead to non-working software. Further, because the development and QA environments are usually separated from development tools,

troubleshooting errors can be quite challenging, even for seasoned professionals.

- ☑ **Experience in the Domain** – By understanding best practices and emerging issues within the domain, such as redaction and potential legislation (e.g. §.569), one will be able to proactively ask the right questions and implement intelligent solutions that add value to the team needing the application.
- ☑ **Repeatable QA Experience** – An established quality assurance practice will help ensure that code and configuration changes do not result in undesirable side-effects—such as new bugs, or breaking existing functionality.
- ☑ **Deployment Expertise** – There is art, science and discipline related to supporting enterprise applications, especially as it relates to configuration management and effectively deploying an application from development, to test or QA, and then to production. This is especially critical when multiple technologies—including VB6, ASP, ASP.Net, VB.Net and C#, some of which have more than one technology framework—have all been used and are intertwined.
- ☑ **Effective Documentation** – Enterprise-level providers are adept at creating and maintaining the right amount and type of documentation to properly support and sustain an enterprise-level application, especially one with complexities. They're used to having others read and rely on their guides, which have to be easy to read, precise and useful.
- ☑ **Comprehensive Support Model** – Issues will develop with any application, and the key to resolution is quickly troubleshooting where the issue manifests itself. Only by having a team in place that understands the entire enterprise stack—running from the network, through the hardware, to the operating system, and into the code and database, and how they all integrate—can you troubleshoot issues and fix them in an efficient and timely way.

### Moral of the Story

Nobody wants to be bitten by a snake or fall off a slippery slope onto the jagged rocks below. Unfortunately, sometimes it takes an actual snake bite to fully appreciate the particular pain that occurs, and the same is definitely true with managing enterprise applications in a Secretary of State office. Hopefully, by following the “packing tip” steps outlined above, you can minimize the pain and ensure the system is fully supported, maintained and continuing to add value to the busy team in the SOS office.



## Is Using GSA Advantage a Viable Option For State Governments?

**What is GSA Advantage?** General Services Administration (GSA) has made it convenient and easily accessible for states and government municipalities to procure their IT products and services through e-Buy, a subcomponent of GSA Advantage. GSA Advantage is the government's central online shopping superstore and provides access to millions of products and services from thousands of federally recognized contractors. e-Buy is an electronic Request for Quote (RFQ) system designed for Federal and State buyers to prepare RFQs directly on line for a whole range of products and services offered through GSA's Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) program. Purchases can be made with SmartPay Government Purchase card, an Activity Address, state or local government issued credit cards and Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPA).

**Who should use it?** Using GSA Advantage ensures you are getting the most competitive pricing from GSA-approved sources. Federal government agencies and activities as well as States and other municipalities can go directly to GSA-approved vendors working in the IT domain of interest to solicit quotes for products or services and to even obtain assistance in Request for Proposal (RFP)/Request for Quote (RFQ)/Request for Information (RFI) development. There is no cost to use GSA Advantage or e-Buy.

**Why should you use it?** Some states have already leveraged GSA Advantage to purchase products and services. This procurement activity complies with the three bids and RFP process. When searching for and seeking IT Professional Services, GSA Advantage and e-Buy simplifies the entire vetting process – RFP/RFQ development and response, contractor/vendor identification and assessment, pricing analysis, contractor/vendor selection process and payment process. The entire lifecycle is simple, efficient, economical and aligns you with the right contractor/vendor and with the right product or service, ultimately acquiring best value solutions. Additionally, when ordering through this system, shipping and payment status can be easily tracked and monitored.

**How do you use it?** Interested parties can even browse GSA Advantage without registering. The process is simple. As a customer, you can browse GSA Advantage by simply entering key words, parts numbers, NSN's, specialized products, manufacturer name, contractor name, contract number or by Special Item Number (SIN). For IT Professional Services, the SIN is 132-51. By entering the SIN, one can access all registered GSA approved contractors/vendors, their offerings, labor rates and other pertinent information. It is strongly recommended that interested states and government municipalities refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), as it provides a wealth of detailed information.

**How do you access it?** To obtain access and register with GSA Advantage, go to [www.gsaadvantage.gov](http://www.gsaadvantage.gov). This will take you to the GSA Advantage home page. This page includes tabs for Tutorial, Customer Assistance, Registration and Login. Should you want to register, go to the right column box entitled State and Local. At the bottom of this box, key on to "Register Here". It then will take you through a series of simple steps to get you quickly on your way to accessing and using GSA Advantage. There is absolutely no cost and no other administrative requirements.

**For more info, who do I contact?** If you have immediate questions regarding GSA Advantage or e-Buy, please direct them to Tom Foster, CCIS Government Contracts and Program Manager at 919-844-2111, EXT 215 or at [tfoster@ccis-inc.com](mailto:tfoster@ccis-inc.com)

### RECIPE

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I guarantee you that anyone eating these cookies will absolutely want more. (If you want to know who Auntie Teen is, you need to contact the Editor.)

#### Auntie Teen's Rolo Cookie Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1 cup butter softened
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 ¼ cups all purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ¾ cup unsweetened cocoa
- 1 cup finely chopped walnuts or pecans
- 1 tablespoon white sugar
- 48 Rolos

Beat butter until it is creamy. Add cups of white and brown sugar and beat well. Add eggs and vanilla and beat well. Separately combine flour, baking soda and cocoa and gradually add to the butter mixture. Stir in ½ of the nuts. (Adding nuts here is optional as I only put the nuts on top of the cookies and none into the actual mix.) Cover and chill the mixture for at least 2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 375°.

Combine remaining ½ nuts with 1 tablespoon of white sugar.

Divide dough into 4 parts. Work 1 part at a time leaving the rest in the fridge.

Divide the part you are working with into 12 smaller parts. Quickly roll the each small dough part around a Rolo. Dip one side into the sugar/nut mixture. Place nut

side up spread 2 inches apart on a cookie sheet. Bake 8 minutes. Cool sheet until the bottom of the cookies are set. (The caramel in the Rolos will come out on the bottom of the cookies.) Then place the cookies upside down on a wire rack to cool completely. (If you figure out a better way to cool them without losing the inside, let me know.)

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### PUZZLE

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#### Answer to last VirtuoSOS Puzzles

Truly, these were very easy:

- 1) Mary's father has 4 children; three are named Nana, Nene, and Nini. So what is the 4th child's name?

Answer: Mary

- 2) What is half of 2 + 2?

Answer: (half of 2 = 1) + 2 = 3

- 3) You are participating in a race. You overtake the second person. What position do you finish?

Answer: Second.

- 4) Why are manhole covers round and not square?

Answer: A round manhole cover will not fall into the manhole whereas a square one could. (Ouch!)



## CHRISTMAS TRIVIA

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So you think you know all about Christmas. Very well – let's see. Test your skill on the following.

(Answers are on the pages following the questions but don't cheat!)

1) Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer made his first appearance in 1939, in a story that was written to:

- A) Advertise a new brand of light-bulb
- B) Be read on a Christmas radio broadcast
- C) Entertain the author's sick daughter
- D) Promote a department store

2) After Scrooge has reformed his life at the end of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol", he proposes getting together with Bob Cratchit for some "smoking bishop", which was:

- A) A fast variation of chess popular in Victorian London
- B) A premium pipe tobacco
- C) A hot spiced drink
- D) A Christmas pudding, soaked in brandy and set alight

3) Most of us like to spend Christmas with our families, but sometimes we must be far away. Even then, most of us get to stay on the planet. Prior to the continuous occupation of the International Space Station in 2001, how many people actually spent Christmas Day in space?

- A) None - mission planners have always worked around it
- B) Just three - the Apollo-8 team
- C) Twelve
- D) Thirty-five

4) In the Ukraine, if you find a spider web in the house on Christmas morning it is believed to mean:

- A) Good luck
- B) Misfortune will strike in the coming year
- C) The winter will be unusually cold
- D) Your house needs cleaning!

5) America's official national Christmas tree is:

- A) Displayed at the Rockefeller Center in New York
- B) Brought from Canada and erected in Washington each year
- C) Located in King's Canyon National Park in California
- D) A Scotch pine



6) A modern Christmas custom borrowed from ancient Rome's New Year's celebrations is:

- A) Putting up mistletoe to make a "kissing bough"
- B) Decorating a tree
- C) Displaying a wreath on the front door of one's house
- D) Hanging stockings by the fireplace

7) The first instrument on which the carol "Silent Night" was played was:

- A) A harp
- B) A pipe organ
- C) A guitar
- D) A kazoo

8) Good King Wenceslas was king of which country?

- A) Abyssinia
- B) England
- C) Bohemia
- D) Gondor

9) The real St. Nicholas lived:

- A) At the North Pole
- B) On the island of Malta
- C) In Turkey
- D) In Holland

10) Believe it or not, one Indiana town is called:

- A) Christmasville
- B) Wenceslas
- C) Noel
- D) Santa Claus

## Answers to Christmas Trivia

1) Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer made his first appearance in 1939, in a story that was written to:

D) Promote a department store

The story was written by Robert L. May, the advertising editor of the Montgomery Ward department store chain. His four-year-old daughter picked the name Rudolph. May's brother-in-law, Johnny Marks, later turned it into the now-familiar song, which was popularized by singer Gene Autry in 1949.

2) After Scrooge has reformed his life at the end of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol", he proposes getting together with Bob Cratchit for some "smoking bishop", which was:

C) A hot spiced drink

Mulled wines were popular festive drinks in 19th-century London. They were undoubtedly much safer to drink than the untreated water. To make Smoking Bishop, take 6 bitter oranges and stick them with 6 cloves each. Put them in a bowl, cover with (cheap) red wine, and set in a warm place for a day. Squeeze the oranges into the wine and strain. Add port. Heat, and serve with a cinnamon stick.

3) Most of us like to spend Christmas with our families, but sometimes we must be far away. Even then, most of us get to stay on the planet. Prior to the continuous

occupation of the International Space Station in 2001, how many people actually spent Christmas Day in space?

D) Thirty-five

The first people in space at Christmas were Borman, Lovell and Anders, who orbited the moon in Apollo-8. Since then, 32 others have spent December 25 either in Salyut 6, MIR, or the International Space Station. Russian cosmonaut Sergei Krikalev was there three times, in 1988, 1991 and 2000. Now that the ISS is continuously occupied, the number should continue to increase steadily.

4) In the Ukraine, if you find a spider web in the house on Christmas morning it is believed to mean:

A) Good luck

One Christmas morning, a poor woman, who could not afford decorations, found that spiders had trimmed her children's tree with their webs. When the morning sun shone on them, the webs turned to silver. An artificial spider and web are often included in the decorations on Ukrainian Christmas trees.

5) America's official national Christmas tree is:

C) Located in King's Canyon National Park in California

The tree, a giant sequoia called the "General Grant Tree", is over 90 meters (300 feet) high. It was made the official Christmas tree in 1925.

6) A modern Christmas custom borrowed from ancient Rome's New Year's celebrations is:

C) Displaying a wreath on the front door of one's house

Romans wished each other "good health" by exchanging branches of evergreens. They called these gifts "strenae" after Strenia, the goddess of health. It became the custom to bend these into a ring and display them on doorways.

7) The first instrument on which the carol "Silent Night" was played was:

C) A guitar

The carol was first sung as part of a church service in Oberndorf, Austria. The unusual choice of guitar for the accompaniment rather than the traditional church organ has given rise to a number of picturesque stories (the organ bellows had been damaged by mice; the organ had been sabotaged; etc.), but in fact it was simply a matter of preference on the part of the author, Joseph Mohr.

8) Good King Wenceslas was king of which country?

C) Bohemia

The historical Wenceslas was actually only Duke of Bohemia, not a king. He lived in the tenth century.

9) The real St. Nicholas lived:

C) In Turkey

St. Nicholas was bishop of the Turkish town of Myra in the early 4th century. It was the Dutch who first made him into a Christmas gift-giver, and Dutch settlers brought him to America where his name eventually became the familiar Santa Claus.

10) Believe it or not, one Indiana town is called:

D) Santa Claus.

There is also a Santa Claus, Idaho.