



Survey criticises company web sites

A recent market survey carried out by SciVisum has found that most companies are running their web sites blind.

SciVisum surveyed 111 organisations with a large web presence — around 30 of which were from FTSE 100 companies, with the remainder being made up of several top 100 law firms, government bodies and retailers. It found that 81 per cent of them were relying primarily on customer complaints to reveal problems with services and performance degradation while 48 per cent of those surveyed were relying on internal colleagues to notify them of problems on an ad hoc basis.

According to the survey, financial service organisations were further behind government, legal and retail sectors in implementing any programme of testing. Only 50 per cent of them said they bother to test their web sites, compared to 71 per cent of government bodies and 66 per cent of legal firms.

Most damaging of all is the finding that more than a third (34 per cent) of organisations never monitored or tested their web sites while many more only initiated a performance review following customer or

internal complaints. Of those who do test their web sites, less than a third (30 per cent) operate a planned programme of testing performed externally by an independent body, with the majority of testing being carried out only occasionally by in-house staff.

SciVisum says management must have a greater appreciation of 'testing functionality from the user's perspective'. This, it explains, is particularly important in light of the fact that growth of e-commerce in the UK is higher than anywhere in Europe, with more than a billion transactions being carried out each month, and with government deadlines on delivery of efficient e-services fast approaching.

The report makes seven recommendations, including one which says companies should conduct an initial performance test prior to roll-out of new services in order to 'nip potential problems in the bud'. It also calls for 24/7 monitoring of core transactions, the outsourcing of web systems to ensure that companies receive a monthly report as a minimum requirement and it says testing should be an explicit part of a company's web system budget representing at least five to ten per cent of the overall annual figure.