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BT



Off-peak & cheap



Joanne Offer looks at Stocks to watch on AIM, Ofex and Easdaq



Largest offering on Ofex, ASAP



Largest ever IPO: ASAP chief executive Mark Blain

ASAP International is gearing up for the largest ever initial public offering (IPO) on Ofex. The IT services group is seeking to raise £5 million net of expenses to fund a sales and marketing drive and provide additional working capital. By comparison, the largest IPO to date has been that of Ellen Group, a credit hire and accident management company which set out to raise £3.3 million.

ASAP provides consultancy, training and recruitment services to the expanding customer relationship market (CRM). The company has been behind six books on the CRM market, published in conjunction with Macmillan Computer Publishing, the world's largest computer book publisher, and hopes to use its reputation for education and training to create a niche position in the IT recruitment market.

The company has a strategic alliance with GoldMine, a leading CRM software developer, which, in turn, has a strategic partnership with software giant Microsoft.

GoldMine persuaded Microsoft president Steve Ballmer to speak at its recent conference.

To date, ASAP has focused on the enterprise resource planning (ERP) market, but the company is switching its attention to CRM as the ERP market matures. Microsoft's Ballmer says the CRM market is likely to be the biggest application market for the next five years, while US company AMR Research predicts it will have a worldwide market valuation of \$18.6 billion by 2003. IBM has said it expects two thirds of its customers to adopt a CRM strategy in the future.

Following the IPO, ASAP expects to recruit trainers to its GoldMine recruitment programme and should be ready for the first intake of trainees in August. The company's directors expect revenues from the new line of business to come on stream from October and move into profit during the course of next year. They see an overall pre-tax loss of £1.9 million for 2000, but a move into profit, to the tune of £711,000 in 2001, rising to just under £5 million by 2002.

For the year ended 31 December 1999, the company recorded an 11% drop in turnover to £363,000 and a 65% fall in pre-tax profits to £17,000. It posted a retained loss of £7,000 for the same period. ASAP's books give the company a great marketing advantage and it has existing clients such as the BBC, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Royal & SunAlliance and SAP. The company now needs to leverage this reputation into the CRM market place.

Buy - Ofex.

Price: 80p.

Market capitalisation: expected to be £25 million after IPO.

Internet Times (Ofex) may not have had the marketing push of rivals such as Monster and StepStone, but the online recruitment specialist has been making good progress since its flotation in December of last year. Internet Times now has two recruitment sites up and running for the IT and telecoms sectors and is already looking at plans for a third, possibly in the financial services or graduate jobs area.

The site allows IT and telecoms professionals to create their own electronic business card which then goes live on the site. The user maintains control of the card and can update skills or comments at any time. Recruitment agencies pay Internet Times a fee to search these cards for suitable candidates for any outstanding vacancies. The agencies can also pay to advertise forthcoming positions on the site in the hope of attracting interested professionals.

Internet Times has succeeded in signing up 16 of the top 20 recruitment agencies, including Manpower, Computer People, Lorien and Hays IT. It is used by more than 1,500 agencies in Europe and the sites currently advertise about 15,000 jobs. Specialist supplements and new stories on the relevant sectors are also available as the company hopes this will keep users and agencies visiting the sites on a regular basis.

To date Internet Times has relied mainly on word of mouth, but it has started a tube and bus advertising campaign. The management team is well known in the recruitment

