

So why did he go? That's the question on the lips of IBMers and commentators following the news that Nick Temple, chairman of IBM UK, has retired at the tender age of 49. In a brief report last week, this newspaper said Mr Temple had stepped down for "personal reasons", but did not elaborate. The unofficial official reason doing the rounds at IBM is that Mr T was asked to move to the US but didn't want to uproot his family. There will be those, Mole among them, who find this implausible.

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As anyone who follows IBM will already know, mobility goes with the territory - indeed, the old joke has it that IBM stands for "I've Been Moved". What is also well known is that IBM senior managers never leave, but just keep hopping from job to job until they reach 60 and compulsory retirement.

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Several calls to the IBM press office yielded nothing remotely intelligible and as he was giving up hope of ever solving the mystery, Mole stumbled upon a remarkable story that may turn out to explain everything. IBM, in its increasing desperation to appear like the trendy and happening company it so clearly isn't has retained the services of Spinal Tap for a worldwide advertising campaign.

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For PC Week readers over the age of 30, Spinal Tap are a spoof rock band featured in a Rob Reiner film that rapidly reached cult status. Famous more for being among Britain's loudest bands rather than for any particular musical talent, the Tap - as they are known to aficionados - performed such memorable songs as Sex Farm, Lick My Love Pump and Big Bottom before declining into a well-deserved obscurity.

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Tap fans will also remember that the band had a habit of going through drummers at an alarming rate. In the IBM announcement of the deal, the principal members of the band (Nigel Tufnel, David St Hubbins and Derek Smalls) are named, but there is no mention of a drummer. Could it be that Nick Temple is set to join a line up that includes such illustrious names as Mick Shrimpton, Denny Upham, Eric "Stumpy Joe" Childs, Ross McLossness and Peter James Bond? If so, he should be told that he is about to accept a poison chalice, for every one of the above named died in mysterious circumstances. One choked on vomit (not his own), another perished in "a bizarre gardening accident", and most of the rest simply exploded on stage.

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Mole will be watching Mr Temple's progress with interest and not a little trepidation.