

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

Vacations are my favorite time of year! I spent last week in the Reno/Lake Tahoe area and enjoyed it immensely. If you haven't taken some time off lately, do so as soon as possible. Gambling really isn't my thing, so, we found a "desert" golf course that was very challenging and pursued the ball through the sage brush. The mountain climate has always appealed to me, and I am now considering a retirement home at Incline instead of Maui. I still have some time before I have to make a decision, so it isn't a rush deal.

My oldest daughter (college senior this fall) came along on the trip, and it was her first exposure to gambling. She sort of reminded me of some people getting their first taste of the UNIX marketplace. She invested some of her money at the roulette wheel and found it pretty easy pickings for a while. Building on this initial success was substantially more difficult, and, when the trip was all over, she was out twenty-eight dollars.

The UNIX market is a little bit like the roulette wheel, and the negative results that some newcomers encounter may be more than twenty-eight bucks. The dollar volumes that multiuser systems generate are attractive when compared to PCs at \$495 retail. There will be more dealers, distributors and manufacturers attracted to this up-scale market, but a percentage will lose their stake if they aren't prepared to play the game.

I have long held the conviction that if people understood the mechanics of the game, there would be no players at all. Then, I meet someone with a book they bought on beating the odds at the table, and I realized that there is no impending shortage of players. Fortunately, it is possible to reach a point with UNIX when you can beat the odds. It will probably not be as easy as "UNIX Made Simple", but the industry can develop the capability of delivering a much more complicated product than is currently being provided.

One of the methods used to solve a complicated problem is to break the problem into smaller segments that can be more easily managed. Computer Support has evolved into a company that utilizes this approach. In our younger days, we attempted to provide everything that a customer could need for his business. We provided hardware and technical support, UNIX and it's support, and applications with their specialized support. Even with a fairly talented staff, we were sometimes in over our heads.

It became evident that a better approach was that of placing some limits on what we attempted to provide. We became a provider of hardware and UNIX support and moved applications off to specialists within the field. We have developed mutually rewarding relationships with vertical software companies and consultants. I think we could make a deal with the devil if he provided a good package and support for it. We are now moving more directly into providing vertical

packages ourselves, but we intend to maintain a substantial separation with this effort.

A well supported vertical is truly a pleasure to work with, while a poorly finished package is a nightmare. We found several verticals that truly are well supported and we promote them with enthusiasm. The poor ones have been more than a curse to us, and, I would have to say, that we lost at least our ante on these. If the UNIX market niche is going to prosper, it must have some mechanism for weeding out the bad eggs. It is our intent to address this problem head-on with our verticals, and I would personally enjoy hearing from those of you who have found a marketing effort that works. No horror stories please. I still have a couple of nightmares hanging around. ■

... and then there were none!

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So You Want to Be a Salesman . . .

Back to one of my favorite topics this month - upgrade sales. While we haven't publicized it a great deal, CSSC has always provided a substantial number of CPU upgrades for installed systems. The most popular has been the Series 1000 CPU exchange, because the performance increase can be very dramatic. While these upgrades require some technical skill to accomplish, they are totally transparent to software, a real plus.

The original 16 MHz CPUs are prime candidates for replacement because, a customer can understand why 33 MHz is faster than 16 MHz without being a rocket scientist. CSSC will exchange the CPU for a genuine Altos CPU (both with four megabytes of RAM) for only \$2,900. The installation requires about 30 minutes and involves removing the original board and inserting the replacement. If the customer needs an increase in memory, we will provide an additional four megabytes of RAM for \$500. The dealer total of \$3,400 compares very favorably with the cost of a four megabyte add-on from Altos spares (\$2,008).

The 25 MHz system doesn't benefit as much from the increase to 33 MHz, but a dealer cost of \$1,200 makes it worth consideration when you are pushing a system hard. It is something you should suggest when a customer is adding serial ports and terminals, because the additional load can cause degradation of system performance.

We have provided a large number of upgrades to 2086 systems, but the new CPU costs are at the point where we don't feel it is cost efficient at this time. Down the road, we hope to provide an upgrade to an 80486 for this system and quite possibly, for the Series 1000 as well. Yes, we know that Altos has one for the 1000; ours should be substantially more cost efficient. Altos will certainly not offer one for the 2000, so if we put it together we could have an exclusive.

All of this just means continuing support for your clients. If they need off-line storage, memory, or processing power, you should be willing and able to provide it. We have always felt that this area was less competitive and, if they are satisfied with your support, less price sensitive than new equipment sales. I would certainly prefer to sell a \$5,000 upgrade to a real computer than the same dollar amount for a PC. ■

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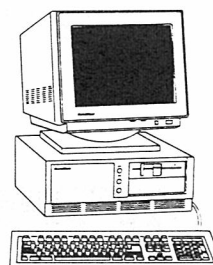
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TECH NOTES: Networking the Altos Way

I'm not sure if the Altos networking solutions are really being taken seriously yet. There are a few people out there working with networking products, but there is a larger group that either avoids networking out of fear that it will be too much hassle, or they feel that many of the DOS/UNIX integration products are kludgy. Some dealers that could benefit from getting into the DOS/UNIX integration market have tried other DOS/UNIX products and have found them to be inconsistent, slow and just not fully functional. After this initial disappointment, these same adventuresome resellers are not ready to play guinea pig again. Unfortunately, as a result, a very good Altos' DOS SERVER package hasn't been fully utilized.

Altos' DOS SERVER is very easy to install on both the Altos and PCs, and the cost for the combination software and hardware package that goes into the PC is still hard to beat by any network package on the market.

Altos' DOS SERVER package allows any PC in an office environment to be working on an Altos, using shared directories and printers in a very transparent way, and the speed of the network is impressive. DOS SERVER still cannot use multiple hosts, but if that is not a prerequisite, then any office environment with an Altos and multiple PCs should consider linking them together with DOS SERVER.

Altos has also done a good job of getting all the pieces together for a traditional TCP/IP network on the 1000. With TCP/IP and NFS, an effective mixed OS network environment can be put together, Resellers could find a very profitable market segment by implementing this kind of distributed network environment.

The 2000 doesn't have NFS among its available packages, but the machine is powerful enough to support a lot of users in the DOS Server-type of environment and there are useful applications of the TCP/IP network. The Series 1000 is a completely supported package which may be the best value in the marketplace. ■



Vonda Anfinson in her unusually neat office.

CSSC SPOTLIGHT



410-20061-001, 615-13876-001, 430-14164-001. These numbers and hundreds more flow from the memory of our Computer Support employee in the Spotlight this month. Vonda (with a V, please) Anfinson is CSSC's Altos Parts Manager. The terminal in her office is surrounded by stacks of bubble-packed, bar-coded CPUs, filter screens, disk drives, and memory boards - all identifiable by 11-digit numbers. But amidst the seeming confusion is order. Vonda knows Parts!!

Vonda's department is one of the busiest at Computer Support. Her phone rings constantly with referrals from salesmen, and questions from customers. Vonda (not Wanda), handles all orders of Altos replacement parts, and all warranty orders, and keeps her sanity and sense of humor, even when things get crazy.

"She's fun to work with," says Randy Thomas in shipping. "She always pitches in when we need an extra hand. She's very competitive, too." Vonda (not Bonda) plays basketball on her breaks and can always find someone to play "one on one". She likes to bowl and almost any clear day you can see her out for a brisk walk after lunch. Other co-workers (to remain anonymous) say, "We like her, even with her new hairdo."

Vonda's been married to Garrett for 17 years and has two teenage daughters, Jeanine, 16, and Stephanie, 13, and a one-eyed dog named Harley. Her family lives on an acreage south of Sioux City in Sergeant Bluff, Iowa, where they have a barn full of Mustangs, (the car, not the horse), Studebakers, Ford Falcons and other "collectibles". If you're in the area, stop in. They don't charge admission...yet.

In Vonda's former position as an employment counselor, she placed clerical workers and did such a good job that she was asked to interview **all** employment applicants. Two years ago she came to Computer Support looking for a more relaxed work atmosphere, and a challenge. Her Words of Wisdom are "Push Yourself to the Limit". She does this every day as an integral part of the Computer Support team. If you want Altos parts, call and ask for Vonda, (not Rhonda.) Whether you need 410-21885-001 or 615-21860-002, she's got your number. ■

The Time is NOW!

Actually, there is no deadline on being Bullish in the 90's. You don't have to make a decision immediately. But the chance to get "on board" is here. Hopefully, you have had time to study the packet that we sent you with information on BULL products. We hope you liked the first edition of the **Bull'sEye**. Maybe your interest in BULL has been aroused. If you are thinking about becoming a BULL IVAR, you can call our special line, (712) 277-BULL, and get the information you need. Don't ask for whom the BULL toils. It toils for you! ■

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