

Office Technology – Detours Ahead

Q&A With Howard Haberman

It may be that you count yourself among the many dizzy folks who are trying to make sensible buying decisions in this time of tumultuous change in office technology. Consider this: a recently as two years ago, the word "internet" would not have appeared in any but the most technical and obscure trade journals. Now it's everywhere.

It is no secret that many companies have doubts about how to invest wisely in computer systems and services. In an effort to clarify the situation, technology whiz and BOMA Member Howard Haberman, President of HMH Associates, is offering his thoughts on some nagging questions submitted by BOMA Members to our staff at various times over the past few months, or few minutes, we forget exactly.

Q: Given troubles at Apple Computer, just what is the right system platform businesses should be using?

A: The IBM pc compatible software library

is much more extensive than the Apple library, and regardless of the problems at Apple, there are far wider variety of software available for pc compatible systems for business use.

Q: What about networks? When and how do we decide to set up a LAN?

A: You decide to set up a Local Area Network (LAN) when you have information that needs to be shared among your users. Networks for small offices for document and printer sharing can cost as little as \$100 per workstation (in addition to the computer used at the workstation) and networks with a dedicated file server (which would be required by most multi-user property management systems) can be installed for as little as \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Q: There are so many electronic mail options out there. Is e-mail as widely used as the hype about it would suggest? What's the best way to go?

A: Email is exploding currently. It is estimated that fully 80% of the computer traffic on the Internet is email. There are two kinds of email for companies to consider: 1) Interoffice and 2) Internet. Interoffice email software is included with every copy of Windows for Workgroups or Windows 95, and, in a small office, can be configured in less than an hour. Internet email requires and account with an ISP such as America Online or Netcom, and a modem; the Internet account may run approximately \$20 per month per individual. We feel that inter-office email is a great tool, even for offices of 3+ individuals, and that Internet email by the end of 1997 will be as critical to doing business as having a fax.

Q: Online services are undergoing a major explosion. We

have the Internet, and we've also heard of "Intranet." How can companies make best use of these new capabilities?

A: The Internet can be used for email (see above) with just the most basic tools (a computer and a modem) and to research the products and services (weather, demographics) of companies. With a slight additional commitment of resources in time and money, the Internet can be used to promote your products and services to the entire world via the World Wide Web. For companies with existing computer networks, Intranets can be used in a very cost effective way to distribute company held information such as company employee policies, payroll benefit plans, procedures, bulletins, and job openings.

Q: What is happening with software designed for real estate use? What's the latest?

A: Two Fronts:

1) all of the major property management accounting software is undergoing the conversion to "Windows and Windows95 and this is not a painless process; it involves the publisher's complete commitment of resources to rewrite their software for a Windows environment. Not all of the current vendors will successfully make this transition. To date, only one of the major players has been able to successfully market a Windows based property management program. Regardless of how the transition is navigated by the vendors, users will see more powerful easier to use programs being introduced over the next 2 years.


2) The second front has to do with office automation and contact management. A great deal of software is currently available, while not all specifically designed for real estate management. There are powerful programs available to automate contacts, do project management, create calendars, and produce documents.

If you have additional questions for Howard, please call us and we will submit them for future publication in the Bulletin. In strict confidentiality, of course. You can reach Howard by calling 415/666-0699, fax him at 415/666-0697, or e-mail him at howard@hminus.com. Or, you can call his dog, Max, who can be found walking around Noe Valley.

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