



Bi-Monthly
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Operating systems are the bane of the information highway

How can anyone understand all of the options and directions of this technology?

Over the last several months we have all been bombarded with words like OS/2, Chicago, Warp, Windows 95 and NT. What does all that mean? In real terms many of us have to explain what the advantages and disadvantages of each are. A frustrating exercise at best.

In no other industry could the core offerings be so misunderstood, be of such poor quality and still be successful. That being the case, imagine if you will that operating systems are airlines.



**The liberals view of the American voter
rich or poor equal treatment**

DOS Air

Passengers walk out onto the runway, grab hold of the plane, push it until it gets in the air, hop on, then jump off when it hits the ground. They grab the plane again, push it back in the air, hop on, jump off as many times as it takes them to walk to their destination.

If they have to cross a body of water they do require a floating island or aircraft carrier to provide the necessary infrastructure to support the trip.

Mac Airways

The cashiers, flight attendants, and pilots all look the same and act the same. The equipment they fly is unique to them and they often need to

Career paths - responsibility of individual or organization?

In the 60's and 70's corporate children had all of their needs met by the organization - what about today?

Organizations are now driven by individuals who often do not have a long term focus on the value of their key employees. It is not unusual for the upper layer of management to change more frequently than the mail room clerks. It is with this in mind that many are asking themselves how they should operate in order to be successful.

Many look at the Human Resources (HR) function as a way to chart a successful course. It is best to not be negative about HR, but I would remind the reader that past (and current) history shows with or without

HR's support, organizations can still fail.

As employees look out to their futures they see a environment in which the government will not fund their Medicare/Medicaid because they are "high income" individuals. They also see an environment in which the organizations they are with are no longer providing the "long term" pension plans. As they look at their jobs they do not see any commitment by organizations to develop the skills necessary to broaden ones horizon. It is with all of this that we now are seeing significant employee dissatisfaction on the pace and direction of their own careers.

Good employees leave organizations at the drop of a hat. These employees then have to develop their own skills so they have a new career path. Given this, it is easy to see that it is everyone's responsibility to provide a career path program for all of the employees within an organization. From an organizational perspective, if your employees have a place to move within your



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build special runways for the planes to land in regular airports.

When you ask them questions about the flight, they reply you don't want to know, don't need to know, and would you please return to your seat and watch the movie. At the same time they talk amongst themselves and comment on how much better they are than any other airline.

Windows Airlines

The terminal is neat and clean, the attendants courteous, the pilots capable. The fleet of Lear Jets the carrier operates is immense. Most cities can be reached from any airport. Published schedules do not mean anything. Neither time of departure or destination are set in concrete. They can change at the last minute.

What you can see of the inside of the plane is well kept and clean. However, under the surface there are several different groups all arguing about the best way to do something. Your jet takes off without a hitch, pushes above the clouds, and, at 20,000 feet, explodes without warning.

OS/2 Skyways

The terminal is almost empty, only a few prospective passengers mill about. The announcer says that a flight has just departed, although no planes appear to be on the runway. Airline personnel apologize profusely to customers in hushed voices, pointing from time to time to the sleek, powerful jets outside. They tell each passenger how great the flight will be on these new jets and how much safer it will be than Windows Airlines, but they will have to wait a little longer for the technicians to finish the flight systems. Maybe several quarters later. Maybe longer. The flight schedule of the airline is always subject to change. Every time management

discusses future directions, they say that they are going to change their name to the Strategic Airline. They never do make the change.

Fly Windows 95

They have the largest advertising budget of all. You can not open a magazine, look at a TV show or buy a ticket without seeing large displays telling you how many people have already flown this airline. They have hired the head Windows Airlines flight scheduler and he is providing the same features that Windows did.

Passengers carry their seats out onto the tarmac and place them in the outline of a plane. They sit down, flap their arms, and make jet swooshing sounds as if they are flying.

Unix Express

Passengers bring a piece of the airplane and a box of tools with them to the airport. They gather on the tarmac, arguing about what kind of plane they want to build. The passengers split into groups and build several different aircraft, but give them all the same name.

The aircrafts that the passengers design all do some wonderful things. Some fly straight up and land when they run out of fuel - fuel gauges are an option. Others can fly but can only turn right or left - flying in circles is better than staying on the ground. Some passengers reach their destinations, but all of them believe they have arrived.

Next month there will be some new regulation and some of the airlines will no longer be able to fly planes with seats. Prices and destinations will be set by an executive that sits in a large white building and wears black robes. I know, maybe this is a cult. ☹

JUST RELEASED

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organization then they have an option to stay with you versus going to work for a competitor. In order to have a good career path program in place within an organization, the organization should have a way to measure competency and performance.

Job Classifications

Jobs typically have different levels which act as a normal career ladder. For example in the programmer area they are

- ⇒ Programmer Trainee,
- ⇒ Associate Programmer,
- ⇒ Programmer,
- ⇒ Senior Programmer, and
- ⇒ Senior Programmer Specialist.

Each of these positions has a broad set of position requirements and performance criteria. Some of these factors are technical and others are associated with the interpersonal nature of the positions.

The job classifications are built on the foundation of well defined job descriptions which address the position requirements, competency requirements and performance objectives. In addition a career ladder that provides options such as technical versus managerial paths is best.

Many organizations are just now starting to undertake a reclassification of all the positions within the data processing arena. The ones that will be successful will use this as a vehicle to manage the retention of key individuals and functions within the organization.

In addition if an organization is looking at outsourcing, the career ladder job progression process can be used as a way to identify those positions that could be passed to the outside.

Process for Classification

Within each function of an organization there are sets of job classes. In the case of Data Processing some generic job classes are Programmers, Systems Analysts, Computer Operators and Managers. There is some overlap but each has several levels.

One of the first things that needs to be done in a Job Classification process is to define the generic job families and assign each individual to a particular class. This will be the basis for the grouping of individuals. For example, is there a real difference between a Cobol programmer and a PL/1 programmer and Visual Basic programmer? Once this question is

answered the individual job descriptions can be created for each of the individuals and properly grouped.

Given that there are levels of jobs within a family, it is clear that this is an iterative process. For it to be successful there must be some standardization on the major sets of requirements and job competencies that are going to be described. We have found that with seven major categories of job requirements and competencies most job families can be classified very effectively.

- ⇒ Job/Skill Knowledge,
- ⇒ Problem Solving,
- ⇒ Leadership,
- ⇒ Project Management,
- ⇒ Self Management,
- ⇒ Contribution, and
- ⇒ Communication.

With a career progression matrix built on competencies it's not too difficult to create consistent job families.

Then the real challenge is faced. Performance and compensation that is competency based needs to be assigned. Most reclassification activities that fail, fail at this point. If the organization is not in sync with this process it will fight the standardization of compensation and performance criteria. At times we have found that it is easier to outsource a function, along with the people, than reclassify a position (along with determine the compensation level) and finally move the position back into the organization.

This works reasonably well if there is not a significant number of people who are over-compensated. Not too long ago we had a client that had continued to escalate the number of jobs that it had because people were promoted and the compensation program the company was using did not allow for a promotion with an appropriate increase in the base rate and job pay class level. That was not the bad part. What had actually occurred was that a number of individuals decided that they did not want to take the promotion so they just moved to a lateral position without a decrease in job pay grade.

Combine that with the fact that over 30% of the staff was "over graded" and "overpaid". Attrition within these positions was less than 3% per year. What was bad was that the other lower positions within the organization had attrition levels of over 35% per year. Worse yet the individuals leaving were the "newer skilled" that the organization could least afford to lose. They had several "special projects" people with no responsibility who were paid in excess \$100,000. Nice job if you can get it. ☹



Forecast for the National Information Systems Market

BEWARE - There is a good chance that things are going to slow down before the election - A bad omen for "Billy Boy"

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Aside from death and taxes another sure thing is that voters and business vote with their pocketbooks. Softness is seen everywhere - low job creation, higher unemployment, lower car and truck sales, and delays in interim purchasing arrangements. A sure sign the economy is slowing down is the focus by many on how to get more for free out of the so called rich to pay for new programs.

Many organization are conducting job classification studies in order to determine if their staff has the right "competencies" and skills to perform as required. This is being used by some as a way to reduce personnel cost by elimination of jobs and reductions in pay rates.

By the time this is published the trade sanctions, if any, will have been implemented. If that happens look for inflation to rear its ugly head and watch the FEDs as they jack up rates trying to slow down what can not be seen.

The effect of this is now seen in the slowdown of the job market. It is no coincidence that as jobs go away people start to look over their shoulders. The term "right sizing" only means that companies and government institutions are continuing to try and cut cost. As that happens expansion will not continue and

fewer jobs will be created and more jobs will be lost.

The computer industry in particular is now faced with the possibility of a slow down if Microsoft's release of 95 is delayed. So many companies are setting themselves to ride on the coattails of Microsoft that it is now the GM of American Industry. We all know what happened to them.

The Japanese continue to jump into selected US markets at the wrong time. They missed the boat with real estate and the entertainment industry - now that they have acquired COMDEX we can look for a downturn there. A delay in 95 can only make it happen faster.

Some brighter notes are in the possibility that a capital gains tax cut will finally pass along with an expansion of the expensing of capital for small businesses. Both of these "tax cuts" are ones that could keep the economy moving for the next several quarters. If congress continues to politicize this they will guarantee that the economy will falter

As we look ahead where will the economy advance?

⇒ **"New Information Highway Markets"** - As businesses and their customers continue to explore the new distribution

channels there are opportunities for those who mine the high-way. Questions that you and your company should ask are how will things be done differently because of the new highways? For example, when Paramount released Stargate they also did extensive "advertising" on the Internet which resulted in higher gate receipts.

⇒ **"Health Care - Infrastructure Improvement"** - It will no longer be fair to tax higher incomes at a progressively higher rate for benefits and then make it so they will not qualify for benefits under the program. Much will be made by companies that know how to leverage this pent up frustration with the old socialistic ways of redistributing our wealth. Even Maxine Waters is frustrated with the new service charges that are finally making it down to the lower income levels.

The job market is now at a point that success is measured by how long you can keep your job. It is a rare individual that is able to say they have a long term career path and are following it. ➡

Vic

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Location	Prospects Short Term	Prospects Long Term
Northeast	Good	Good
Mid-Atlantic	Poor	Good
Southeast	Poor	Good
South	Good	Good
Midwest	Excellent	Good
Southwest	Good	Good
West	Excellent/Good	Good
Pacific Northwest	Good/Poor	Good/Poor
Best Location	West	West