

Bi-Monthly
Newsletter
for
Positive
Support
Review's
Clients
and
Subscribers

Salaries Stay Flat For MIS -- First Time in Over Ten Years

Positive Support Review has just compiled the initial results for its 10th annual salary survey for the Southern California MIS job market. For the first time in the history of the survey, the levels of salary increase have stayed flat relative to last year and inflation. However, top level positions showed some increase. Most top MIS executives in California are paid over \$110,000. Interestingly, the scope of responsibility for these same executives is decreasing. In addition, there are an increasing number of MIS professionals that now report to end user and operational groups.

The survey was conducted in September and October. Over 2,500 positions were evaluated and 40 plus Southern California organizations with MIS budgets between \$10MM to \$125MM were included in the study. The final report will be available by the middle of November. If you are interested in this study, please contact us directly. ☎

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Surviving In Today's Competitive Market

Client Support is where the action is

As the movement towards client server solutions continues client support is becoming that much more important. The old concepts of a help desk or client services no longer is sufficient. Clients often know more about the application than your support staff. Questions and problems are now more complex and tied closely to business operations. Your MIS organization must focus on creating a support organization that is second to none in providing this needed support. No longer can you deal with problems as they occur. You must have the right tools in place to anticipate needs before a problem turns critical. (continued on page 2)



**BIG BROTHER
IS WATCHING**



George Orwell lives.....

The advances in magnetic card technology and relational data bases are creating an opportunity for the loss of personal privacy. The Thailand government is in the final stages of implementing a credit card type identification system that has extensive personal information recorded on it. A pocket-sized card contains everything you want to know about any Thai citizen including:

- Name
- Photograph
- Fingerprints
- Home address
- Parent's names
- Children's names
- Marital status
- Education
- Occupation
- Income
- Nationality
- Religion
- Family history
- Tax return information
- Criminal record, if any

This information, if not properly controlled, can give a government the greatest weapon possible to control its population. We are not controlling which third world governments and 'leaders' we export the technology necessary to implement these systems. Rather the Smithsonian Institution and *COMPUTER-WORLD* gave the government of Thailand an award for being a 'hero of the information age.'

But we are only talking about a third world

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Ten Years - - PCs Not Integrated

by Robert Laskey

It's been ten years since the official recognition of the personal computer by IBM. One MIS CIO with over 2,000 PCs installed said he views PCs as an expensive replacement for the typewriter. In his view, word processing software is not a major productivity tool. In many business situations people tend to "over edit" their work. He acknowledged that there are significant productivity gains in using word processing software if you are maintaining publications, manuals, and other large documents. He stressed that buying a PC for everyone with a desk does not contribute to bottom line profits. He found the mind set that a PC goes with the desk objectionable. This CIO is not alone. Are these folks mainframe bigots or are they correct?

PCs are not fully integrated into many business environments. LANs have come a long way in the last few years, but in many instances (other than electronic mail, host connectivity, and print sharing) they have not yet produced tangible results. Some believe that software growth (in feature and function) once again lags hardware progress. Others believe that the productivity gains promised by the vendors are a whole lot of vapor and not a lot of substance. Yet there are businesses that are making progress in justifying their investments in PCs. Which position is correct?

Looking around at those MIS CIOs that are more content with their installed PC base, you can see one common thread. **They are making it happen.** They are using MIS resources to create added value. They are not just sitting and waiting for the vendors to make it happen. One recent conversation drove the point home. "PCs are there whether you like it or not. We might as well make use of them." Maybe vendors have not done such a good job of making it happen. Yet in the mainframe world we probably would still be waiting for value added function to appear (assuming management had the patience) if MIS had lingered and let the vendor community make it happen.

One of the dilemmas some CIOs face is the lack of comprehensive PC management practices, which reflects their underlying attitude toward PCs. Many companies still do not know how many PCs they have and where they are located. A bigger issue is the software varieties and version levels installed on each PC. Speaking as a firm that deals with these management issues, I am appalled over the lack of knowledge (and interest) that businesses have in their installed PC asset base. Far too many businesses treat these assets as though they are expensive typewriters. As long as this view prevails, don't look for tremendous strides in integrating the PC into the work place. Perhaps vendors recognize this attitude and are acting accordingly. Their attitude may be one of, "if your not interested in making it happen, neither am I." Who will manage?

Going full circle on this issue, who's fault is it that I don't have full functions and features? The vendor of course. It can't be my fault! ❖

Surviving In Today's Competitive Market

(continued from page 1)

The support staff must have:

- Application Expertise
- Technical Expertise
- Communication Skills
- Event/Problem Management Skills

One of the most important steps will be status reporting and communications between your clients and support groups. You do not want to be in the position where your management knows about a problem before you do.

Seemingly very simple issues such as what to do when a problem occurs can turn into a nightmare if you do not have the right support organization and processes in place. Both you and your client need to know what to do before a problem is reported and how to respond once the problem has been presented. Dealing with each as a new fire drill is not acceptable.

Levels of support need to be contracted between users and MIS. If this is not addressed, then you are wasting limited company resources. Rules and guidelines need to be defined so the proper level of diagnostic data can be captured as soon as possible to assist in the problem resolution process. Once a problem has been solved, there should be a way to categorize the solution so others do not have to "re-invent the wheel". On top of that, if the solution requires an update to software or hardware, a way to track the implementation of the long term solution needs to be in place.

There are a number of tools that are available to mechanize this process. However, they should be implemented only after a strategy has been defined for the level and type of client support that you will provide. ❖

Modeling Packages

by Robert Aholt

At PSR we occasionally run across new applications that really do help people get their work done. Recently, we reviewed and demo'd Comshare's One-Up Plus and Computer Associate's Compete! programs.

These are PC based modeling programs that combine the best of large scale modeling and user-friendly spreadsheet packages. They go one step beyond the typical two or three dimensional spreadsheets to provide "what-if", "what-is", and decision support capabilities. They allow users to build real life examples of business scenarios in manageable models. And to help make the data accessible, they support data export and import to and from all the main PC programs (123, Excel, dBase, etc.).

The real benefit of these packages is to the executive or analyst who has several types or categories of data and wants to compare them to form their next decisions. The packages allow the user to quickly build in different scenarios based on current numbers, percentage increases, last years results, specific target goals, or what ever is relevant at that point in time.

A good example of this is the budget/forecast/planning scenario. As opposed to a spreadsheet package that requires either separate files or multiple columns and rows, these packages allow the user to scroll through actual, budget, forecast and last year numbers based on viewing the dimensions of their choice. Within a single spreadsheet, the user would typically build a set of columns for the time dimension, a group of rows for the categories being tracked, and then duplicate the matrix for actual, budget, and so forth. The modeling packages allow the user to view the appropriate information in one matrix. If variances or totals are required, a simple summation provides the results.

Variances, percent of total, and growth curves can all be added in a simple manner. While these programs do not provide some of the complex regression analysis and linear programming techniques of the large scale modeling packages, they do put a quality modeling program in the hands of a typical spreadsheet user.

Please contact us if you would like more information on our use of these packages or how PSR has implemented these products for our clients. Our comments are not meant as an endorsement of these products but as a preliminary evaluation, and should be viewed as such by the reader. 

George Orwell lives.....

(continued from page 1)

country and do not have to worry about that happening here in the US. WRONG!!!!

The State of California is currently in the process of implementing a similar system under the guise of a new driver's license program. The only thing missing is the link to other relational databases to give it power equal to a third world dictator. Currently the State of California shares the information on its drivers with the insurance industry, law enforcement agencies, court systems, and taxing bodies.

It is not all unlikely that retail establishments, hospitals, and banks will require a 'swipe' of your driver's license as part of a normal transaction. Now we just have to worry about our credit card numbers and expiration dates. Imagine what could be done by the wrong people with all of this additional information. George Orwell here we come..... 

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Forecast Of The Southern California MIS Job Market

Take over of Security Pacific by Bank of America creates an excess supply of MIS professionals in Southern California.

The news at the end of the summer was the merger of Security Pacific with Bank of America. The real news was that it is going to be a take-over and the winner is BofA. The merging of bank and MIS operations is being defined by the staff in the northern part of the State. Estimates that have been communicated to us indicate that upwards of 80% of the Security Pacific MIS staff will not stay with the merged bank.

A few months ago it looked like Southern California was going to be the financial capital of the Pacific Rim. Now that idea only seems like a dream. The best hope for the Southern California financial services industry would be a First Interstate and Wells Fargo merger with First Interstate being the surviving entity. I do not think this will happen however, because Wells Fargo has told other groups that have looked at it that the 'stage-coach' has to survive.

As we look around we see the economy is slowly starting to pick

up. As companies complete the budget cycle there is some talk of expanding MIS staffs. Expansion is in the areas of new client server applications and minor enhancements to existing mainframe applications. There still is a heavy emphasis on cost reduction and elimination of unnecessary centralized bureaucracy.

It seems that the rules needed to make the centralized MIS function operate well will be the thing that cause it to be eliminated. System Development Methodology, Change Control, Project Management, Steering Committees are now out. What is in is pro-active response teams, quality, CASE development tools, and decisions made by operating managers -- not committees.

On the other side of the spectrum, some very interesting things are starting to happen in the distribution industry. The economy has turned around and there is a lot of activity. Interestingly, most of the activity also is in the client server area. There have been a number of situations we have run across in the last thirty to sixty days where MIS

groups are trying to understand how they can implement systems in more of a down-sized environment. The current plans of many organizations include mid-range (i.e. AS/400's) computing solutions with a link to a central site 'file server' application. Systems are following the organizational dynamics of organization structure in the distribution industry.

...heavy emphasis on cost reduction and elimination of unnecessary centralized bureaucracy

Entertainment is hoping for a recovery from a summer that did not produce the blockbusters necessary to fund industry growth. This, in addition to the downturn in the Japanese economy, has caused the Japanese parents of the American film companies to keep the purse strings tight. I do not think that there will be a noticeable turnaround in this segment of the market until next summer at best. I have been wrong before and I could be here -- don't bet on it. 

Vic



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Industry	Prospects Short Term	Prospects Long Term
Defense	Poor	Poor
Distribution	Good to Poor	Good to Poor
Entertainment	Poor	Good to Poor
Financial Services	Poor	Poor
Health Care	Good	Good to Excellent
Manufacturing	Poor to Good	Good
National Consulting	Poor to Good	Good