Preface

Welcome to our first issue for 1991! We thank you for your support for our publication in the last year and look forward to keeping you informed and challenging you with our upcoming articles this year.

As we have noted many times, microcomputers have had a major impact on the way organizations accomplish their goals. In this issue, we start the new year by exploring three specific ways organizations have been or can be affected by the use of microcomputers.

In any organization, the performance appraisal process is of interest to every employee. Even in the pre-employment interview, the frequency of the performance appraisal and its link, if any, to a salary increase is often a question raised by the prospective employee. As a result, there is much concern about the review process, especially its objectivity and consistency. James S. Moore presents us with a more objective approach to performance appraisal in his article entitled An Expert System Prototype for Performance Appraisal of Managerial Communication. After reviewing the literature, he notes the recent trend away from the qualitative approach and toward a more analytical approach to performance evaluation. This direction is a result of decisions in the legal arena and, perhaps more importantly, the realization on the part of management in many companies that performance appraisal is not simply a periodic event. To aid in this process and to make the review more objective, Moore details the development of a PC-based expert system for evaluating one aspect of managerial performance, namely communication skills. The results provided herein yield valuable information for extending this idea to other managerial performance factors.

In today’s end user computing environment, one concern of people with an information systems background is end users’ ignorance of traditional computer system development and processing standards. As increasingly powerful software has made it possible for users to become less dependent on information systems professionals, standards-related issues, such as data integrity, data consistency, security, and documentation remain potential points of contention. In our second article, Application Controls for Spreadsheet Development, Ming-Te Lu, Charles R. Litecky, and Debra H. Lu explore ways of applying information system controls to the most commonly used PC software, spreadsheets. They define a framework that is later used to recommend which controls to use and enumerate suggestions for effectively implementing the controls within an organization.

Our final article, Integration of Microcomputers into the Human Adaptation Model and the Organizational Response by Meg Kletke, James E. Trumbly, and Debra L. Nelson, explore more directly the impact of the microcomputer on organizations. The introduction of microcomputers carries with it many promises. One of these promises, well-known but frequently unchallenged, is that employee productivity will significantly increase after the user has learned how to use the equipment and associated software properly. However, far too many companies have found that this productivity change is either too hard to measure or has not happened at all. Our authors suggest that a primary reason for this lack of increased productivity is a failure on the organization’s part to determine how to effectively integrate microcomputer usage into the individual’s job and then to provide proper training so the employee can use it for that purpose.

In The Expert's Opinion, Tom Sterling, president of Information Services Group, Inc., outlines what he sees as the major issue concerning microcomputer technology in the 1990s.

In our hardware review section, Maria Flories takes a look at Hewlett-Packard’s RuggedWriter 480 printer. This printer, designed for high-volume environments, is a 24 pin dot matrix printer with several optional features which can make it quite attractive for certain users.

The Division of Graphic Services of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania collectively reviews the software package Smart Art I and recommends it for its user friendliness and versatility.

Donald Pollard reviews a book on Microsoft’s WORKS software, one of the integrated packages available for use on personal computers. This book, Discovering Microsoft Works by David Sachs and Babette Kronstadt, provides an overview of each component of the WORKS software and then gives the reader exercises and projects to test their knowledge and understanding of what they have read.

As always, we welcome your comments.

Glenn Byerly
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