The Expert's Opinion

Gail T. South is the strategy advisor in the National Service Division of IBM Corporation, where she develops business direction for the division. In her current position since 1986, South has also held positions in the areas of distribution and equal opportunity.

Interview conducted by Karen Mowery

**IRMJ:** How do you make top executives aware of the importance of information resources?

**South:** Internal selling is at least as difficult as selling to "real" customers. But structuring meetings around critical success factors for business functions does get attention. We recently had a strategic planning conference at which executive management discussed ways customers have used I/R for competitive advantage and the status of IBM's efforts across the corporation.

**IRMJ:** What is the role of information resources in the overall growth and success of an organization?

**South:** No matter what an organization actually produces, it must have information to be successful. Information about the marketplace, customer requirements, competition, reaction to the organization's product, availability of raw material for the manufacturing process, etc., are all essential to the overall growth and success of any organization.

In fact, access to timely, accurate and current information is key to making good decisions. One of the current trends in the industry is to provide executive information systems which cut business performance in a variety of ways. It is the challenge of the I/S organization to collect the data from a variety of systems and present it as usable information for non-I/S executives.

**IRMJ:** What do you consider to be some of the major problems in management of information resources in organizations?

**South:** Some of the most significant problems are incomplete or inaccurate inventory of the resources, duplication of information, timely delivery of the proper information to the right user, and avoiding information overload.

**IRMJ:** Do you consider information resources as important as other major corporate resources, such as material, financial, human or management resources?

**South:** As I indicated earlier, information may be the most valuable corporate resource. Most business decisions are made easier and with greater confidence by having accurate, timely information.

**IRMJ:** What is your assessment of end-user computing?

**South:** End user computing is part of a growing trend to empower employees and increase productivity by providing users with more access to applications and information at their desks.

Technology is driving costs down and power up at such astounding rates that today's programmable workstations (PWS) are capable...