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COMPUTERWORLD

In Search of Integration Gratification DOES YOUR SYSTEMS INTEGRATOR MEASURE UP?

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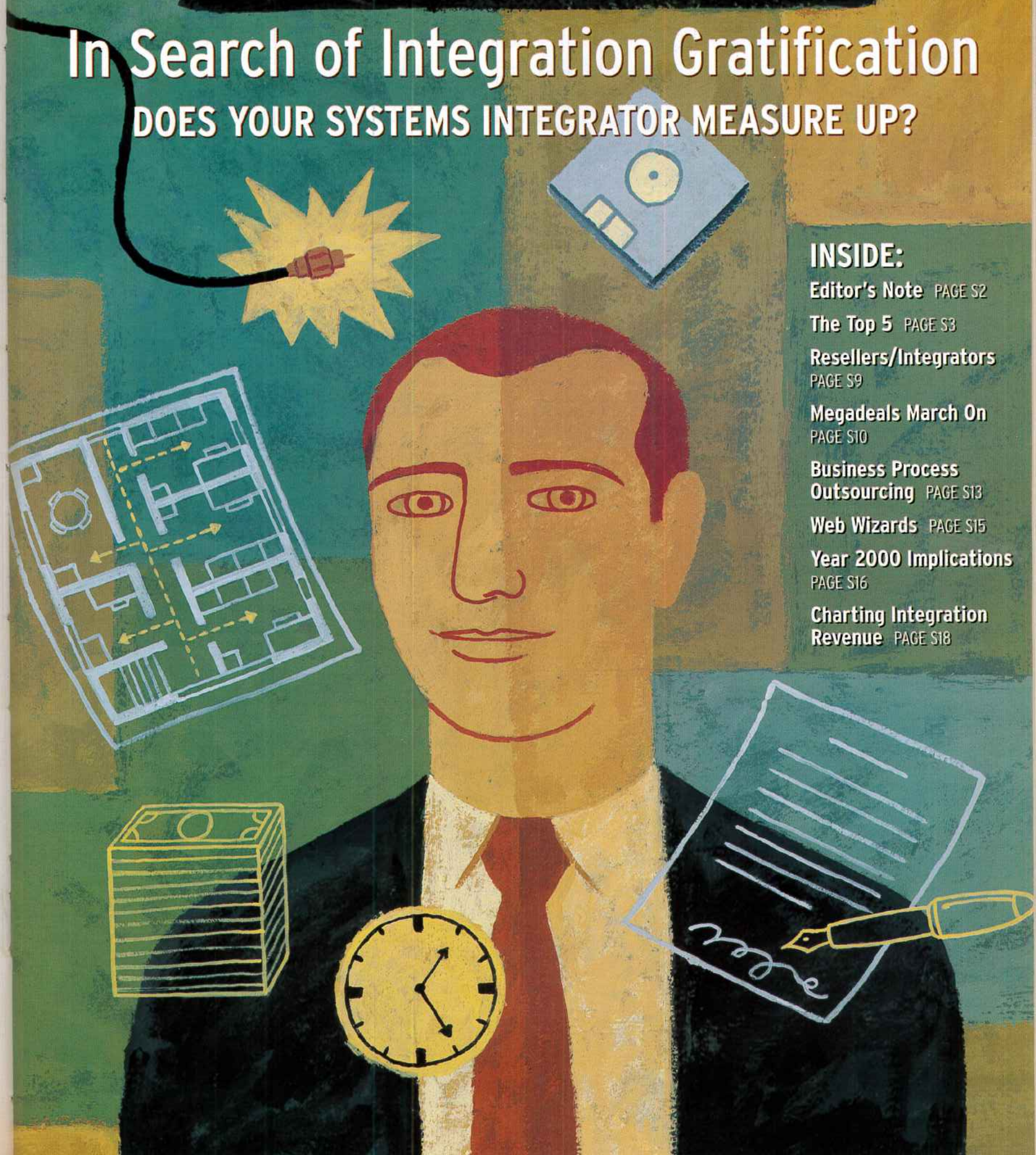
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Oracle, PeopleSoft skills in high demand

By Randy Weston

ARE YOU KICKING yourself for missing the big-bucks market for SAP R/3 skills because you focused on other enterprise applications packages?

Don't fret. Recruiters across the country are scrambling for people who have worked with the client/server applications from SAP AG's competitors, namely PeopleSoft, Inc. and Oracle Corp.

"The demand right now for people is very high. The supply is very low," said Becki Tschirpke, a director at PeopleIndex LLP, a Denver-based placement company that specializes in the PeopleSoft market.

Such a seller's market means those with skills in PeopleSoft products can command salaries of up to \$135,000 per year as a consultant and \$50,000 to \$80,000 per year for a staff position.

Oracle professionals can earn \$144,000 per year or more as consultants and \$80,000 to \$105,000 per year for staff placement, recruiters said.

SPOILS OF INDEPENDENCE

Independent Oracle consultant Debbie Childs decided 18 months ago to test the market demand for her skills in Oracle configuration and business processes. She took her talents on the road after working on an Oracle implementation at Schlage Lock Co. in San Francisco. Since leaving Schlage, she has landed five large contracts and five smaller ones.

But the move wasn't only for the money, which she admits is much better as an independent

contractor than as a permanent employee.

"I love it. It gives me flexibility," Childs said. "Personally, I'm not willing to travel five days a week. That's why I'm an independent contractor. If I was willing to travel, I'd be working for a consulting firm."

Childs acknowledged that she and other consultants are part of the reason companies have to pay higher salaries for permanent staff.

"Companies want to hire people in-house to do the implementation and then support the product," she said. "The problem is people are getting the skills, seeing opportunities to consult and leaving."

The demand for R/3 consultants was driven by big businesses that are now wrapping up client/server projects or finished with them. The next wave of client/server projects is happening at midsize firms that are demanding PeopleSoft and Oracle consultants, analysts said.

Those midsize companies generally have smaller IS staffs and fewer resources to dedicate to such a migration project, so they are looking for help.

Violet O'Brien, a vice president at Torch System Advisors, Inc. in Houston, said another reason for the skills shortage is that consulting firms, including hers, aren't doing enough to cultivate talent by training people in Oracle or PeopleSoft skills.

"We have to bring people in that we can train. There has to be new growth," she said. "The problem is ... thousands of recruiters across the country are picking over the same people." □

Top skills in demand for PeopleSoft implementations:

- PeopleTools, PeopleSoft's proprietary development tools
- Oracle, Informix and DB2 databases, especially native SQL skills
- SQL, the technical procedural language PeopleSoft uses for report writing and developing interfaces
- Manufacturing module, PeopleSoft's newest application

Top resources in demand at Oracle sites:

- Database administration
- Oracle applications and people who can solve business problems using them
- Business analysts

AT&T: A company on the wire

► Lack of vision disconnects telecom giant

By Matt Hamblen

A RECENT television ad depicts an aging factory with letters on the roof that say, "We're Number 1." But the "1" slowly begins to creak and fall, knocking down nearby letters so the message reads, "We're Numb."

An apt metaphor for AT&T Corp., said some analysts and customers of the \$52 billion long-distance and telecommunications giant following the resignation of the president and other jolting developments at the Basking Ridge, N.J.-based company.

OUT OF TOUCH?

"There's no impetus at AT&T toward being a visionary in the industry," said data customer Timothy Petta, a network engineer at Levi Strauss & Co. in Westlake, Texas, speaking for himself. "The top managers are all old guard. They spend too much time on Wall Street and not enough focusing on what the future will bring."

"I see more market vision from [small telecommunications companies] than AT&T, yet you'd expect a company with half the long-distance market to

be a technology leader," said Dan Taylor, a senior telecommunications analyst at Aberdeen Group, Inc. in Boston. "It's like the *Hindenburg* exploding, and it's going to land on something."

Observers said AT&T was hurt earlier this year trying to enter the local telephone service market after spreading itself too thin with an

array of new technologies. The recent top-level management shuffle and other signs indicate there won't be a quick resolution.

President and Chief Operating Officer John R. Walter, 50, abruptly resigned two weeks ago after the AT&T board said it wasn't ready to appoint him CEO by Jan. 1. "We became increasingly concerned about whether he could provide the intellectual leadership for this company," board member Walter Y. Elisha told reporters.

Walter's departure came three weeks after merger talks between AT&T and regional Bell operating company SBC Communications, Inc. fell through. The falling out left AT&T on its own in the bid for local tele-

phone service market share. It didn't help that the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled July 18 against Federal Communications Commission enforcement of uniform local competition, forcing large companies to adhere to a variety of state laws.

Last Monday's second-quarter report showed earnings had plunged 36% on a slight increase in revenue to \$959 million, or 59 cents

per share, just a penny better than analysts' projections. That brought no comfort to those who have noticed that AT&T's share price has recently been in the \$35 range, down from 57 3/4 last September.

A spokeswoman defended the company's strategy. She said it was articulated by CEO Robert E. Allen and Walter when they addressed financial analysts in March.

"Our stated strategy is to be an any-distance company," said the spokeswoman, Ruthlin Newell. "Customers want local service and long distance and wireless or mobility that includes Internet access, and that includes access to entertainment. It's what our customers have told us they would like from a single company."

CORPORATE STRATEGIES

American Eagle adds network computers to flight plan

CONTINUED FROM COVER 1

Network computers such as IBM's Network Station are different from diskless workstations and PCs because they harness all their processing power and applications from a server. They are simpler to maintain and support because there is little that can go wrong at an end user's desktop.

TESTED OUT

"When we first looked at this last year, we thought the technology was too bleeding edge. But by April of this year, we had the opportunity to do some real-world testing, and that's when we really went after it," said Duane Stanley, director of communications and information

technology at American Eagle.

Pilots already use IBM Network Stations, and American Eagle plans to use network computers in three areas of its business: 2,000 ticket counter users, more than 400 maintenance base users and 200 corporate administrative office users.

Through hardware acquisition savings, simpler support and maintenance and easy installation, American Eagle said it expects to spend about \$4.5 million less than if it adopted the diskless workstations or Pentium-based PCs used by sister companies such as American Airlines, Stanley said.

"The applications they are



American Eagle plans to use network computers for three areas of its business, including 2,000 ticket counters.

planning to run are a perfect fit for network computers," said Neil MacDonald, research director at Gartner Group, Inc. in Stamford, Conn. The tasks being done by users of reservations systems, order entry systems and data entry systems are singular in nature and ideally run from a central location, he said.

SUBSTANTIAL SAVINGS

The savings achieved by running a network computer instead of a PC can be substantial, MacDonald said. For example, a network computer such as a Network Station costs about \$6,300 per year to support, and a Pentium-based PC costs an average of more than \$11,000 per year to support, he said. Most of the savings can be attributed to reduced administrative, technical and maintenance costs, according to a Gartner study.

American Eagle is working to

fix some glitches that caused its printers to hang when the company tested some network computers in mock ticketing situations. It also has concerns about Microsoft Corp.'s continued support of the Winterm WinPro software that allows network computers to run from their server hosts.

"This system would be deeply embedded into the WinPro solution, and we want to make sure they're going to continue to support it," Stanley said.

American Eagle won't have to rewrite any applications. The firm's mainframe Transaction Processing Facility-based reservations systems application will run via terminal emulation.

The company also expects to be able to support its SAP AG-based human resources applications and its Microsoft Office-based applications, most of which are running in its corporate offices. □

After the departure of John Walter (pictured) as president, here's what some think AT&T needs:



- A younger CEO with technology vision
- Regulations for uniform national local telephone service
- A local service business partner
- A focus on fewer technology areas

Petta said he has worked with AT&T for two decades, but he added that he has noticed a marked decline in the experience and quality of its technicians who are called to fix network problems. "Service used to be a differentiator for AT&T, but not any longer," Petta said. "It takes a two- to threefold increase in time to fix a problem" compared with the AT&T of old.

DEPENDABLE ATM

Tony Dattola, an engineer and designer at Perot Systems, Inc. in Dallas, said some end users at Perot have complained about AT&T billing systems, but he noted that AT&T has provided dependable Asynchronous Transfer Mode and Integrated Services Digital Network service that rivals couldn't provide, given Perot's configuration.

Some observers see AT&T in the same quagmire as other large telecommunications companies, struggling to deal with sudden explosions in technology and many more players. "What ails AT&T is similar to other large service providers," said Christine Heckart, a vice president at TeleChoice, Inc. in Verona, N.J.

In the next CEO, some observers said, they want more technology vision, which doesn't favor AT&T Vice Chairman and General Counsel John Zeglis, 50, who was put in charge of operations after Walter left. It might help that Zeglis is a lawyer versed in telecommunications regulations, but the next CEO needs keen understanding of both technology and business, analysts and customers said. □



JIM CHAMPY

BILL GATES' NEXT EXCELLENT VENTURE



Dear Bill, Alexander the Great, they say, cried when he had no more worlds to conquer. So how will a Master of the Universe, such as yourself, keep occupied in the next century?

You're in your 40s now, married and a father. So far, you've had nothing but success. Your competitors can only splutter in impotent outrage. And if you pull off your ambitions in the media industry, Internet and corporate computing worlds, you'll make the robber barons of the 19th century look like underachievers. You must be wondering, "What next?"

I'd like to offer some transition plans to mull over as you move from owning the PC software market to controlling the networked technology infrastructures of whole industries. Don't keep plodding along as you have been. Lift your ambitions higher. Higher, that is, in the realm of leadership. Like it or not, the world is thrusting this opportunity at you. You can either accept this mantle or avoid it.

The time is ripe. Whether you know it or not, the technology Microsoft is developing already plays a role in re-establishing links in a human condition that feels increasingly rushed, fragmented, isolated and desperate. The rise of so-called "electronic communities" is occurring as people are becoming more burdened.

Today, despite a growing economy and full employment, it takes two family members to achieve the economic gains it once took only one person to earn. Yet, there's no security.

Also, people face ever-increasing personal responsibility in critical life decisions about everything from careers and financial planning to health care, insurance, education and retirement planning. Technology can help individuals sort out such crucial choices. There has to be more to the convergence of TV and the Internet than just new forms of entertainment.

Meanwhile, the world's economy is shifting almost as fast as technology. A global market is emerging out of the crazy quilt of protected economies that are bordered by social and trade barriers and largely rooted in government/military-controlled models.

The heads of industries driving the innovations around the shift to a world economy won't become just important technical and business leaders, but important figures in reshaping public and social policy. That will happen either in a de facto manner or consciously. As you know, market economies are more efficient than government/military economies. The dark side of technology and re-engineered business process designs is that fewer people can do much more work. We need to be careful not to disenfranchise world populations from the benefits of business efficiency. We need to make sure that social, educational and economic gaps become smaller, not bigger.

In the absence of strong political leaders,

people like you must play a role in reshaping public and trade policy and set the new principles and social norms of the electronic global marketplace. If business figures duck this responsibility, we shouldn't be surprised if the pain of free economies creates vacuums that will be filled by neo-Luddites and totalitarian regimes.

The task worthy of your talents is no longer to debate Larry Ellison on "fat clients" vs. network clients, or Scott McNealy on NT vs. Java. Your higher destiny — should you choose to accept it — is to help establish the guidelines for how advances in technology will help improve society, deliver better health care, improve education, help provide financial security for today's worried workers, increase the global standard of living and preserve the environment.

Other tycoons of history have made the leap: Andrew Carnegie quit amassing his fortune early and made lasting contributions as a philanthropist, and Alfred Nobel made amends for his arms business. But we have mixed examples in John D. Rockefeller and Henry Ford. Do you realize you're now in their category? Your \$200 million gift of technology to the nation's libraries is a start, but how will your grandchildren perceive Microsoft's contribution to humanity?

That's your greatest challenge: to move into a role as a global ambassador of what technology can enable. And as you grow into this job, I urge you to be compassionate, not capitalistic; to be caring, not triumphant; to be a social visionary, not merely a software publisher; to be a role model for people other than business leaders; and to constantly elevate the debate as to "how technologies can improve our global society." That's a role that will adequately challenge your demonstrated boldness and vision. I hope you decide to take it on. □

Champy is chairman of consulting at Perot Systems Corp. in Cambridge, Mass. His Internet address is JimChampy@ps.net. His newspaper columns are syndicated by Tribune Media Services.

RESOURCES: IS MANAGER'S BOOKSHELF

The Digital Organization (AlliedSignal's Success With Business Technology)

By James D. Best
John Wiley & Sons, New York;
\$29.95, 224 pages (hardcover)

Best, who merged the communications and networking systems of Bendix Corp., Garrett Corp. and Allied Chemical into one (the company later became AlliedSignal, Inc.), knows change and

how to implement it. In this book, he offers information systems managers detailed advice on creating a business strategy that will transform their companies into successful digital organizations. And he uses AlliedSignal, the technology and manufacturing company in Morris Township, N.J., as an example.

The bottom line: It's easy. But reading this book gives you clear insights into how to manage the aspects that together — can change an organization to meet the challenges of the Information Age. Best covers it all — from management strategy to managing execution, technology selection, pe-

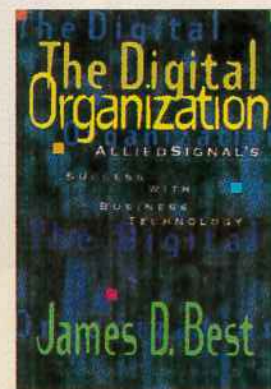
application development.

Among his insights are the following:

- The help desk is a "critical function" whose status should be elevated so technicians will consider it a promotion to be moved there.

- If you want

your company to move fast, "you need a culture that rewards recognizing bad decisions and taking quick corrective action.... Avoid collisions by constantly



reevaluating decisions and changing course when necessary."

- Be aware of resistance to change and, to help counter it, obtain leadership backing and public declarations of support.

- "... Explain why things need to change. People need to believe a rational business imperative drives an initiative, not empire building or ego gratification."

Best's last chapter, "Jungle Warfare," offers valuable advice for IS managers in dealing with outsourcers, consultants and contractors.

IS managers may find *The Digital Organization* valuable in helping their organizations become battle-ready in the Information Age. — Rick Saia

COMPUTERWORLD

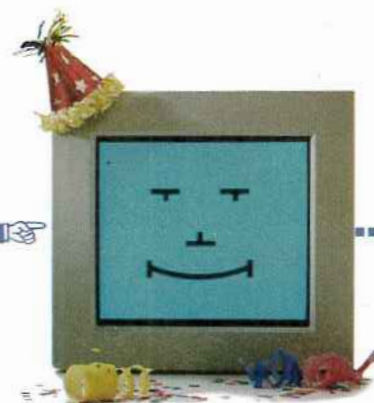
For a list of upcoming IT conferences and workshops, turn to our Events Calendar on our Web site at www.computerworld.com/toolbox/conferences.html.

A story
of leadership.



1992

SAP introduces R/3, client/server software destined to change the way businesses do business.



1992

By making R/3 Year 2000-compliant, SAP solves the biggest problem facing the computing world years before it's a problem.



1996

R/3 3.1 named "Technology of the Year" by *Industry Week* magazine.



1996

With the release of R/3 3.1 Internet, SAP changes the world of business. Again.



1996

SAP addresses the unique needs of emerging corporations with the introduction of the Certified Business Solutions (CBS) program.



1997

A record 750 customers go live in one month.



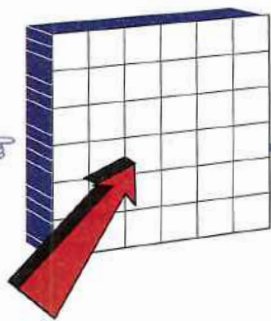
1997

25,000 Motorola employees go live with the R/3 HR and Payroll applications, establishing a foundation for managing employee information worldwide.



1997

Reebok adds SAP Retail to its manufacturing solution to create a truly streamlined, global supply chain.



1993

SAP gains momentum while the customer installation base grows to over 1,900.



1994

SAP makes headlines by implementing R/3 for The Seattle Times in 88 days.



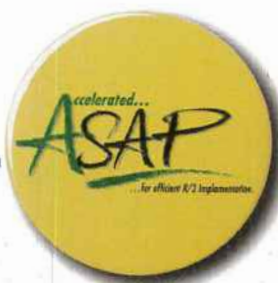
1995

SAP voted one of the Top 10 software vendors by *Software Magazine* 3 years in a row.



1996

SAP named the number one company of the *Manufacturing Systems Software Top 50*.



1996

AcceleratedSAP program introduced, making rapid implementation a reality.



1995

SAP opens the door for more companies worldwide to work their best with the release of R/3 industry solutions.



1997

Since the introduction of R/3, SAP's customer installation base has grown to over 10,000.



To be continued...



A Better Return On Information.™

To get the full story on how SAP can help your business, visit us at <http://www.sap.com> or call 1-800-283-1SAP.