

MIS NEWSLETTER

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Volume 1, Number 1 June 1989



NEW BEGINNINGS

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the MIS Newsletter. This newsletter will be published monthly by the Management Information Services (MIS) organization. Its purpose is to keep FWISI-DSD (or future Loral) employees informed of the Information Systems facilities that are available or under development, and to provide instructions and tips on the usage of these Systems. It will address business information systems available through the IBM mainframe and your terminal or PC.

The MIS Newsletter will help familiarize and train users of our business systems, a role filled in much larger installations by a training staff. Since our MIS goal is to maximize profitability, we consider a training staff for a small installation to be an expensive luxury. After much discussion on methods to keep our employees informed, this newsletter has been chosen as the tool for that process.

Each month, one major MIS System will be highlighted in a 'System of the Month' article. Included will be a brief description of the system and its purpose, the principles of operation, some tips for ease of use, and an indication of the users it was designed to support. This month's system is the on-line Purchase Requisition System, the most widely used system in the plant.

There will also be articles on current MIS projects in development, systems recently implemented, user problems and solutions, mainframe queries, personal computer support, etc. There will be a subsection on Tech Tips which will feature PC tips, data communications notes, software upgrade announcements, hardware enhancements, etc. ■

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The major project currently in development in MIS is the Program Management System. It will provide fully integrated information sub-systems for project management of customer programs.

These sub-systems range from business opportunity tracking after initial customer contact, through time-phased cost proposal preparation, contract award and order entry, resource management for manpower planning, time-phased loading of budgets to cost/schedule monitoring, capture and time-phased display of actual charges vs. budget, earned value, and performance measurement. The system will download data from the mainframe to PC type workstations for graphic displays of project schedules, progress, current status, and network diagrams.

The current status of the Program Management System is as follows:

The Work Breakdown Structure sub-system is operational. The on-line Cost Proposal Estimating and Basis of Estimate sub-system is in evaluation and is planned for implementation at the end of June. The Resource Management and Manpower Planning sub-system is yet to be defined. The cost proposal transfer to the time-phased budget of Cost/Schedule

Monitoring is operational. The time-phased Cost/Schedule Monitoring with actuals vs. budget is in user evaluation with implementation TBD. The workstation configuration, PM software, and reporting specifications remain to be fully defined. ■



PC SUPPORT

Were you aware that MIS now has a person dedicated to PC support? In the past we have had people giving support, but we have not had someone doing this full time. A new position called PC Support Analyst has now been established, to better service the needs of the PC users in the plant. From now on one person will be responsible for helping you get better use of your PCs.

Here are some of the things that PC support can help you with: We can make recommendations to help you select the computer and software for your needs. We will supply pricing and availability information from our vendors. We can show you what can be done to expand and improve the system you have now. When you do get a new system or additions to your present system, we will help you set them up. If you have problems operating your computer or software, or need training, you now have a person to go to. If something seems to be broken, call us to

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FOCUS SYSTEM OF THE MONTH

PURCHASE REQUISITION SYSTEM

The on-line Purchase Requisition System was developed to replace an outdated, costly, and often misused manual system utilizing multipart, carbon paper forms. Requisitions often got lost or failed to follow the required signature sign-off routing. Frequently, individuals spent much time in determining the status or location of a requisition.

The new system standardizes and simplifies the requisition process, utilizes an on-line signature sign-off facility, and provides a query capability for quickly determining the status of any requisition. The "notes" facility allows entering the justification with the requisition, thereby eliminating a separate document. In addition, requisition history is retained in the computer for reference and auditing purposes.

A recent analysis revealed the Division is averaging over 6,000 on-line purchase requisitions per year. With a conservative estimate of \$20 savings per requisition in paper and labor costs vs. the old system, the new on-line Purchase Requisition System is saving over \$120,000 per year. In addition, numerous intangible benefits are being derived from standardization and record keeping.

The on-line Purchase Requisition System is truly providing a significant contribution to the profitability of the Division. ■

PURCHASE REQUISITION TIPS

The on-line Purchase Requisition System cuts the cost of Requisition processing, provides Requisition visibility, and makes

initiating, approving, tracking, and placing Requisitions a simple and paperless task. With Purchase Requisitions on-line, the user knows who needs to sign the Requisition, the status of the Requisition, when and with which vendor the Purchase Order was placed, the expected delivery date of the items, and, upon receipt, the actual delivery date. This visibility is extremely valuable in Systems and Operations planning.

Here are a few tips that will help you in using the Purchase Requisition System more effectively:

1) Option 'J' - REQUISITION CATALOG FOR USER

-You can enter a starting requisition number. This allows you to limit your viewing to recent requisitions. This also speeds preparation of the catalog.

- You can sort the requisitions in the catalog by any field -just enter the letter above that column into the SORT COLUMN (A-J) field. This is useful when looking for a specific requisition and you are not sure of the requisition number.

- Press <PF5> if you wish to see the first line of the HEADER DESCRIPTION or PURCHASE ORDER number. You may sort by these also.

-You can view all requisitions of a particular status by entering 'I' INCOMPLETE, 'O' OPEN/BEING SIGNED, 'S' SIGNED, 'R' REJECTED, 'P' PLACED, or 'C' CLOSED/RECEIVED, into the STATUS field.

2) When adding a requisition you may need to duplicate lines. An example of this is a yearly lease agreement where the only difference on each line is the required date.

- You may enter up to 99 duplicate lines when adding a line by typing the number

of duplicates you want into the NBR OF DUPLICATE LINES field. Once you have entered the line, if you did not key into the duplicate line field it will not be effective on that line. However, you can use it on the next line.

3)By default, the ability to CHANGE, DELETE, or OPEN a requisition is given only to the person entering the requisition. This ability may, however, be extended to another employee if desired.

- If you wish to give this maintenance access to someone else, enter their employee number into the ORIGINATOR field. This makes you the ENTERED BY and them the ORIGINATOR. Now you both have equal access for maintenance. This is very useful when you know you will be out of the plant and someone needs to keep track of your requisitions.

4) The requisition approval sign-off list is automatically established by the Expenditure Signature Level Requirements table. However, additional signature approvals may be entered for a requisition.

-You may route requisitions originated by you or requiring your sign-off, to additional individuals for sign-off by using option 'T' ADDITIONAL SIGNATURE ASSIGNMENT. Just follow the instructions on the screen.

5) A requisition in OPEN status cannot be altered nor changed. If it is necessary to change it for any reason, it must be RESET.

-If changes are required in an OPEN requisition or a requisition has been REJECTED, it must be RESET by using option 'R' RESET REQUISITION SIGNATURES. This changes the status back to 'I' INCOMPLETE and erases all signatures. The requisition may then be changed and re-OPENed.

-This process may be repeated as often as required until all signatures have been obtained and a buyer is assigned. If necessary to change a requisition after a buyer has been assigned, the buyer must RESET it.

6) There are 4 types of requisition notes:

-HEADER NOTES are entered on the requisition header screen by the originator or a sign-off authority by using the <PF3> key. These notes do not print on the hardcopy Purchase Order but are visible to the buyer. These notes are typically used for justification.

-LINE ITEM NOTES are entered on the line item screen by the originator or the buyer with the <PF3> key. These notes can be printed on the hardcopy Purchase Order by keying a 'Y' into the PRINT Y/N? field to the right of the note line. These notes are typically used to further describe the line item or to send a note to the buyer.

-HEADER REJECT NOTES are entered when a sign-off authority rejects the requisition. These can be viewed by keying <PF4> when on the HEADER display screen.

-LINE ITEM REJECT NOTES are entered when a buyer rejects a line item. These can be viewed by keying <PF4> when on the LINE ITEM display screen.

7) If you are new at entering or signing requisitions, on-line help is available by keying <PA2> while viewing any screen in the Requisition System. MIS also has a System Manual available for sign-out which describes the system in detail. ■



FOR PC USERS - WHAT IS IN A PROMPT?

(Article from Sanford Area PC Club, Sanford, NC)

The DOS prompt is A>, B>, or C> depending on the drive you are in, right? Not necessarily. You can customize the system prompt to display all kinds of information or messages. Try this. At the DOS prompt, type "prompt Now What?" (do not include the quotes), and press enter. "Now What?" will remain your prompt until you turn off your computer or until you enter "Prompt" (which takes you back to the default prompt).

You can put almost anything in a prompt, but certain characters have special meaning when preceded by a \$ sign:

t displays the time
n displays the current drive
v displays the DOS version
g displays >
h indicates a backspace
q displays an equal sign
s indicates a leading space
p displays the current path
d displays the date
\$ displays the \$ character
b displays the pipe symbol
e indicates escape
l displays <
_ indicates CR,LF

For instance to display the current time enter:

```
prompt $t $n$g
```

The prompt will look something like this:

```
11:52:28:73 A>
```

The time is displayed in the thousands of a second. To make the time more readable include some backspaces in the prompt.

Try this:

```
prompt $t$h$h$h$h$h$h$h $n$g.
```

The six \$h are back spaces and the prompt will now look like this:

```
11:52 A>
```

The time will be updated each time you press Enter. The \$_ is useful if you want the date and time with the drive letter under it.

Try entering:

```
prompt Date $d Time $t$h$h$h$h$h$h$h $n$g.
```

Your prompt will look like this:

```
Date Mon 9-12-88 Time 11:52  
A>
```

If there is a particular prompt that you like, put it in your AUTOEXEC.BAT file and it will be displayed each time you boot from that disk. And now for the ultimate in DOS prompts that puts you in the driver seat and your computer in its place try:

```
Prompt Yes Master? $_n$g. ■
```

PC SUPPORT

(Continued from page 1)

diagnose the problem and decide what needs to be done. In short, anything that has to do with a PC, you now have a source to turn to.

In the future we will set up training sessions on software packages and computer operations. We will have sessions to demonstrate new programs and systems, to show you where they might be useful to you. You can help with this by telling us what you need training on, or things you would like us to evaluate.

The PC support office is located next to the MIS mainframe computer room. Dennis Hertzler, X5378, is our new PC Analyst.

PC support is here to provide the help you need with your computer problems, so don't hesitate to give a call or stop by when you need assistance. ■

STANDARD KEY ASSIGNMENT

The MIS department has adopted a standard for the assignment and use of Program Function <PF> Keys. The standard applies to all new software implemented after 7/1/89 and will be incorporated in existing software as it is modified.

PF keys permit controlled entries by direct selection of labeled keys, rather than selecting an option or entering a command. The standard keys will provide a common user interface across PC's, intelligent workstations (IWS), and dumb terminals for applications developed locally or remote on multiple hardware platforms. Our adopted standard parallels an industry standard called Common User Access (CUA) which controls how the system, including applications, interacts with a person at an IWS or terminal. The keys are assigned as follows:

- PF1 - Help, Full Screen
- PF2 - Transfer to Text System
- PF3 - End (back up one screen)
- PF4 - Return (return to menu)
- PF5 - Process/Confirmation
- PF6 - Reserved for future use
- PF7 - Page Up
- PF8 - Page Down
- PF9 - Jump (pop up jump menu)
- PF10 - Left
- PF11 - Right
- PF12 - Reserved for future use
- PF13 - Help, Context Sensitive
- PF14 - Sticky
- PF15 - Application Specific
- PF16 - Application Specific
- PF17 - Application Specific
- PF18 - Application Specific
- PF19 - Scroll Up
- PF20 - Scroll Down
- PF21 - Export
- PF22 - Scroll Left
- PF23 - Scroll Right
- PF24 - Cancel / Escape ■

RECOMMENDATIONS?

The editors of the MIS Newsletter welcome your comments and suggestions.

Call:
Mike Rhodes X 5310

We're very excited about providing a newsletter that serves as your guide to usage of FWSI Business Systems and insight into MIS new developments.

If you are experiencing difficulty in using a particular system, or you feel an extension of an existing system would significantly benefit FWSI employees, please let us know.

Call:
Dale Dennis X5533

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