

MIS NEWSLETTER

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Volume 2, Number 1 February 1992



Greetings once again from the world of LDS Information Systems. This month we discuss some changes being made to enhance MIS services to you our users.

The most significant of these is the installation of a new IBM mainframe to replace the obsolete, taxed to the max, IBM 4381. Bob Heaton tells why we had to upgrade and describes the new processor in his article on this page.

Passwords a nightmare? You're not alone. But they don't have to be. I have included some ideas and techniques to help in this dilemma in the article on page two, Computer Security Passwords.

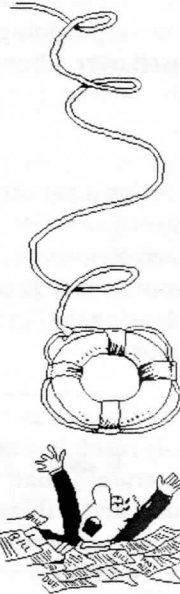
TQM comes to MIS! Dale Woodland describes the application of TQM in MIS beginning on page two. We initiated a program in January '92 to stimulate all MIS areas to provide the best user service at the lowest possible cost. Even though the program has been in operation only about six weeks, the benefits are already significant.

What do you do when you need MIS services? Shirley Buerge writes about the MIS Service Request and how it works. It is used to report problems or request support. You can check the status of your Service Request through the LDS Cost Monitoring System, on-line at your terminal.

And from our PC Support area, Dennis Hertzler gives us a status update on the Division-wide DOS 5.0 installation and some key comments on Microsoft's new Windows 3.0.

We welcome your suggestions for topics in future issues of the MIS Newsletter. Keep them coming.

-Dale Dennis



MIS INSTALLS NEW MAINFRAME COMPUTER

by Bob Heaton

MIS recently installed a new IBM ES/9000 computer replacing the IBM 4381 computer. The new ES/9000 computer uses IBM's new System/390 architecture and is twice as fast as the old IBM 4381 computer. Also, the monthly lease cost for the ES/9000 is slightly lower than the old IBM 4381 lease. This is a classic example of computer technology providing more performance for less money.

The old IBM 4381 computer was installed in 1986. At that time, there were about 150 terminal users processing 75,000 transactions per week. Today, the IBM system supports about 650 online users processing more than 410,000 transactions per week!

New business information systems developed during this period allowed LDS to significantly improve job performance while holding the line on headcount.

MIS Technical Support closely monitored this growth and made several software changes to improve throughput and response times. In July, 1990, the IBM 4381 system reached the saturation point where the workload demand exceeded the capacity of the computer. This resulted in poor online response times, cancelled processing and reduced access to the online business systems. It also meant that new business applications could not be developed on the IBM 4381 system.

In mid 1991, MIS approached Loral Corporation with a proposal to replace the computer in MIS. We had the full support of V.P. Finance, Dick Dobbyn, and President, Joe Keller. After reviewing our system usage statistics and new development plan, Loral Corporation approved the new computer.

The IBM ES/9000 computer supports all business application systems for LDS. New applications in the development plan include:

- * CSSR Reporting
- * Extended download capabilities for Personal Computers
- * Co-operative processing between the IBM mainframe and Personal Computers
- * File access from Engineering workstations using TCP/IP

The new computer is performing very well. Many users see an improvement in online response times and much quicker results from the Batch Reporting System. The improvements in nightly processing allow the IBM system to be available 22 hours/day, 7 days/week (2 hours each night are needed for contingency back-ups).

Our new IBM ES/9000 system can be upgraded as needed to provide a capacity up to 10 times the current capacity. This computer will satisfy our Information Systems requirements for at least the next five years!



COMPUTER SECURITY PASSWORDS

by Dale Dennis

"Oh ____, I forgot my password!!" A most distressing, but not uncommon discovery for someone pressured with a tight deadline on a crucial computer task.

All is not lost! By presenting yourself and your employee badge to the MIS Security Administrator, your IBM password can be quickly reset to a temporary password. This allows you access to select a new password. The first time you sign on using your temporary password, be sure you select your new password. The temporary password expires at the end of the day. Your VAX password can be similarly reset by presenting yourself to the CSG Security Administrator.

Creating a new password is not difficult, but questions like the following are common:

"How am I supposed to continue creating new passwords and remember what the latest one is after I haven't used it for some time?!"

"How can I keep track of multiple passwords. I need one for the IBM system, one for the VAX, one for Compuserve, etc.?"

Password protection is a critical line of defense for protecting computer data from unauthorized access. Passwords are typically the second layer of security, the first being your login name. Because login names are easy to guess, especially with the help of the phone directory, password security assumes greater importance.

For you to select a good password, you must first understand what makes a pass-

word secure (or one password more secure than others).

A secure password has two main characteristics: 1) it must be impossible to guess, and 2) it must be easy for you to remember. Don't use all 7's or all A's, for example! Further, security experts recommend the password be more than five characters in length. This recommendation assures that many possible passwords are available—well over a hundred million if we consider letters, numbers, and common symbols.

So, how do you design a password? Two methods of password selection that typically result in hard-to-guess but easy-to-remember passwords are: 1) combining two words, and 2) using the first letters of a multi-word phrase.

Combining two words such as "note" and "rain" will usually result in a non-dictionary word ("noterain") that has some meaning to the user and is therefore easy to remember. Of course, the words should not be common combinations such as "notebook." The password will be even harder to guess if you insert a number or symbol, such as "note*rain." The challenge here is to think of two unrelated words that are meaningful to you. Alternatively, an acronym of a multi-word phrase may be even easier for you to remember. For example, a phrase such as "is it quitting time yet" would convert into "iiqty," maybe with a question mark thrown in for good measure "iiqty?"

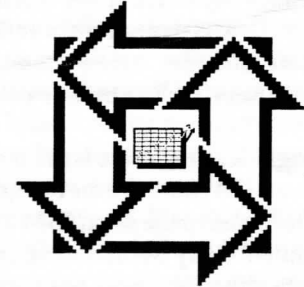
Once you've designed a secure password, it's good practice to set all systems to your new password immediately. This ends having to remember which system uses which password. If one system uses a shorter password than another, design the longest password required and use a shortened version of it for the shorter password. There is a warning for this: if someone discovers your password, all your systems are vulnerable.

Remember, if password protection is to be taken seriously as a barrier to unauthorized entry, you must select passwords that are difficult or impossible to discover. However, they also must be easy to

remember so you will not have to write them down.

As a last resort, if you feel you cannot select a good password, use a computer. Password Coach, a network security software package designed by Charles Wood, can detect simple and dangerously easy passwords and suggest alternatives.

Good passwording!!



TQM IN MIS

by Dale Woodland

The MIS department has implemented a Total Quality Management (TQM) initiative throughout its organization. MIS is a service organization whose customers are the MIS Information System users. Our TQM goal in serving our customers is continuous improvement and the elimination of waste. MIS' customers are the same as Loral's customers; they want a quality product (service) delivered on time (when the customer needs it). A guiding TQM principle is to keep it simple.

TQM is process oriented; we identify weaknesses in our processes (policies, procedures, and practices) which adversely affect our performance and improve it. TQM does not deal with personal or personnel issues.

The basic tool employed to achieve our goals is a Process Action Team (PAT); the name came from our manufacturing PATs. The PAT consists of all employees in a given work area. Participation is mandatory. PATs meet once a week for an hour to report on old action items, review performance, and discuss problems. We identify problems, propose solutions and assign new action items to team members.

Two key ingredients to a successful PAT are 1) accurate and timely performance measurement data and 2) the authority to propose and make changes. Detail performance data is limited to prior week activities. Responsibility for a decision is given to whoever will be affected by that decision.

Our first goal was to set up a baseline for Customer Satisfaction; our customers are you, the MIS Information system user. We identified performance measurements that reflect our quality, cost, and schedule performance. Those measurements are:

- Online Abends: terminal transactions that did not end normally.
- Batch Abends: batch programs (e.g., MRP and Accounts Payable) that do not end normally.
- Transactions Exceeding 5 seconds: terminal transactions whose elapsed response time exceeds 5 seconds.
- Number of New Unplanned Activities: typically program and user problems.

We use a Problem Management System (PMS) to document and track all unplanned activities.

Implementing TQM is a challenge because it requires change. Although we are still in the early stages, we have already experienced several successes. For example, our PAT has:

- Identified and corrected a software error that would have caused problems with calendar and fiscal year end financial reporting.

- Implemented productivity improvements in our online test system.
- Strengthened our batch processing procedures.
- Selected a complex reporting system for re-engineering.
- Identified and eliminated a nightly processing job that was temporarily suspended a few years ago. The job ran each night but the report was never printed. The requestor had since retired.

The philosophy, objectives, and principles of TQM may be applied to marketing, design engineering, shipping or any department at LDS. It is our hope that this type of approach will expand in a continuing effort to improve LDS's overall performance.



MIS SERVICE REQUEST

by Shirley Buerge

The MIS Service Request is a form used to request programming and special reports from the MIS Department. The Service Request forms are available in the MIS Information Center or you can

get them from your department secretary. If you do not have our latest revision, REVD-02/03/92, please pick one up.

When filling out the form you need to describe the problem or requirement. It is not necessary to try to specify a solution. The programmer assigned will analyze the problem and work with you to develop a solution. Please provide all the information requested on the form above the black line.

MIS assigns a project number to the request and loads it into the Cost Monitoring system. After it is logged into the system you will receive a copy of your request with the project number assigned to it. When your request is completed and accepted, you will be asked to sign the form in the USER ACCEPTED block. A copy with all signatures will be returned to you.

You can check the status of your request by accessing Cost Monitoring System via the Accounting, Engineering or Manufacturing options on the Master Menu Screen. When assigned for programming, the programmer's employee number will appear in the Task Manager's field and a scheduled completion date in the Target Date field. If you have any questions call me on ext. 5386.

Shoe





PC SUPPORT

by Dennis Hertzler

DOS 5.0

We have successfully completed the plant wide upgrade to Microsoft DOS 5.0. We have about 300 MS-DOS type computers, and all but a few have been upgraded. The upgrades were during October and November, 1991. If you have an MS-DOS based system, and it has not been upgraded, please contact PC Support, x5378.

There are user manuals for DOS 5.0 placed in key locations around the plant. Following is a list of the individuals or areas where they can be found. If you need to use the manuals and cannot find a copy, please contact PC Support, and we will find one for you.

MIS Info Center	Al Orr
Janet Cave	Bharat Patel
Frank Doran	Lisa Powers
Tim Gatton	Rob Ramey
Chris Lawson	Hal Roberts
Gary Mahaffey	Daniel Smith
Tom McCarthy	Debbie Sutor
Baba Marrero	Janet Taylor
Jim Massing	Patty Woolums
Jimmy Matthews	

MS-DOS 5.0 has many features and enhancements that made it attractive for us to upgrade:

- An improved text editor
- Ability to run DOS in high memory

- Built in memory management
- Easy installation
- An improved shell
- Online help for all commands
- Disk utilities like UNDELETE
- Larger than 33 MB hard disk support

These are just some of the improvements that DOS 5.0 has. To help you learn more about these enhancements and how to use them, PC Support will be offering an Introduction to DOS 5.0 information session soon. Watch the bulletin boards for the announcement of this session.

Windows 3.0

Today, there are two major systems we can use to work with our personal computers. There is the traditional DOS system, and the newer Microsoft Windows system. In this article I will explain the major differences between the two systems. I also will talk about why it might benefit you to change to Windows.

The major difference between the two systems is the way that you, the user, interfaces with them. In DOS, you have a DOS prompt at which you type a command to use a program. You must type this command exactly right or DOS will give you an error message in response. In Windows, your screen has little pictures called icons that represent your programs. To run a program you simply point an arrow at the picture with a mouse and click a button. There are no commands to memorize.

Each DOS program has a unique way of entering commands to the program. One will show you a menu on the screen. Another may use function keys for commands. In another you might have to use the control or alternate keys. There is no standard way of entering commands. This means that with a new program, you have to learn it's way of entering commands.

Windows, on the other hand, has a standard user interface that is used by all Windows programs. Once you have learned how to use this standard interface, you know the basics of all Windows programs. This makes it much easier to learn new software.

Another major advantage of Windows is that you can have several programs running at one time. While I'm typing this article, I also have several other programs available in the background. Someone might call me with a problem and I need to log that call in my support database. I suspend my word processor without having to save the document I'm working on and click on my database program. When I'm done logging the call, I click on the word processor and return to my document right where I left off. It takes less than a second to switch between programs. I also have an address book, a calculator, and my IBM main-frame connection programs available in the background.

One disadvantage of Windows is the computer power it takes to run it efficiently. An 80286 or an 8086/8088 based system, is not powerful enough to run Windows. The minimum recommended system for running Windows is an 80386SX with 3MB of RAM and an 80MB hard drive. You need to consider this in new computer purchases.

Windows is rapidly gaining support from the major software manufacturers. Aldus Page Maker, Word Perfect and Lotus 123 for Windows have been released, and other programs like Quattro Pro, Harvard Graphics, and dBase are on their way.

Overall, Windows is a fine product. I use it exclusively on my system now. I have had no major problems, and am more productive than I would be using DOS. It is a product well worth considering.

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