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BBS Callers Digest

**Andy Keeves, Founder
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The Executive Network Information System

A Business Service for Business Needs

IT WAS ABOUT 3:30 AM when John cried out, "what are we doing wrong? Why isn't this system up yet?" While many of us can relate to this simple, rhetorical question, the installation of a Local Area Network brings shudders to seasoned veterans at times. What is the mystery? Why the complexity? And where do you go to find the answers at 3:30 AM when you finally decide you are really stuck?

A Business Approach

Bulletin boards have been a popular resource of information exchange for a number of years to various computer hobbyists but traditionally business users were turning to support organizations for their answers and at a fairly high cost at that. We felt the time has come to offer something to the business users, such as ourselves. We have been involved in Local Area Network

design and installation for a number of years and have been through the above scenario numerous times.

The Executive Network Information System was founded with Local Area Networking in mind and opened the first public access networks conference (at least to our knowledge) catering to users of Novell operating systems. What made the system different was the simple fact that it managed to attract serious business users almost from day one along with the traditional computer hobbyists.

The system evolved over the last few years considerably, adding numerous discussion forums, file areas and some 20 telephone lines to the lineup, a far cry from the original 2 discussion forums and 2 phone lines! We have witnessed a number of "success stories" of people finding their answers quicker here than they received them from the

manufacturer's own technical support staff, of people finding the "flaw" in a proposed system before spending the money on the purchase or the answer to the 3:30 AM question in form of information or a patch required to complete that installation. All in all, it has been rather gratifying.

Innovation

Admittedly, we place a fair amount of importance on the progress of the system. According to our users one of the key characteristics of the Executive Network that sets it apart from the "crowd" is innovation.

We do not like to stand still for very long. The fact that we are an Alpha test site for Clark Development Co., the authors of our software, makes it a bit easier, of course. But we do not stop there. We work with numerous software authors to

Notable Quotes

- o The Executive Network is "... one of the finest available to the microcomputer industry today. As an independent source of information regarding networking it is unparalleled!" according to Tom Matthews of Novell, Inc..
- o "I have learned quite a bit from productive exchanges with other users in the various conferences which you sponsor. Undoubtedly, some of the information gathered here has been extremely useful to me.." noted Daniel P. Moore, Director of MIS for Arvin North American Automotive of Columbus, Indiana.
- o "The Executive Network is an excellent source of information & solutions on a wide range of problems that a user of PC's have dreamed of. With conferences ranging from Technical, to LAN [Local Area Networking], to general questions that we all have... the Executive Network helps us all!" commented Robert G. Wilkerson, Jr., Vice President for Sentry Circuit Products.
- o According to Gregory Borchert, Director, Industrial Division of Cook Associates, Inc. the "Executive Network and the PC-LAN conference is a serious, business user's BBS. While BBS's dedicated to games, etc. are fun, it is necessary to have a comprehensive business BBS where answers to LAN questions and the appropriate bulletins can be found. In my experience to date, [the] Executive Network is tops in this area!"
- o "An excellent, concise source of accurate and timely information" according to John C. Bacas, Vice President, Securities Information Service with Merrill Lynch Capital Markets.

services. This service, along with a number of new features, will be undergoing a significant enhancement during the first quarter of 1991.

The bottom line, however, remains how we are viewed by the users of on-line information systems. The reviews have been kind to us, thus far. In 1990 we have been voted to be the best system in New York state and second best in the US by these users. We have received write-ups and favorable mentions in various industry publications, including PC Week, Byte Magazine and Business Week to mention only a few.

Our social orientation offers truly international exchanges in various conversation forums through the ILink(sm) mail network. And where else but on the Executive Network could you have witnessed a true, on-line (yes, over the modem!) wedding? This one made all the TV news and some 140 news publications! Our technical areas are likely as attractive to others ranging from vendor support forums to shareware to general technical information on specific topics. When asked about the Executive Network our own users called it "an indispensable tool and ready source of technical information!"

All I can tell you about the future is that you can be certain we'll be introducing new features, new services and new ideas as we go along. We're even willing to bet on several of them being unique and available for the first time without going to the expensive large service providers.

You can't gauge the scope of the Executive Network simply by reading about it. In fact, most of our callers need some time before they come to realize the many things it now offers, not to mention some of the items scheduled for early 1991. The only answer is to call and see for yourself!

introduce new features and services to our callers and write a fair amount of software ourselves.

The Novell technical database was made available almost immediately upon release to our network users. This database alone is comprised of some 40 mega bytes of technical information relating to Novell's Netware and can be searched on-line for any topic within seconds. On-

line information, such as Newsbytes, was offered probably for the first time here as part of an automated service process through the popular QMail system. Our on-line FAX gateway allows callers to transmit text information through our system from anywhere and has been acknowledged to be a pioneer in the field by numerous publications, offering features commonly found only on MCI, AT&T and like large



THE EXECUTIVE NETWORK INFORMATION SYSTEM

SYSTEM INFORMATION AND BACKGROUND

PHONE NUMBERS:	(914) 667-4567	This access number offers 1200 and 2400 BPS connect rates for subscribing members, new caller registrations and membership subscriptions and renewals. Non-subscribing users cannot access the system from here for purposes other than subscriptions. All new callers are verified by mail.
	(914) 667-4066	This access number offers 9600 BPS access only for subscribing members, new caller registrations and membership subscriptions and renewals. Non-subscribing users cannot access the system from here for purposes other than subscriptions. All new callers are verified by mail.
	(914) 667-4684	This line is the free, public system. It is available to all registered callers, however, free access is limited to a 21 day evaluation period. After the evaluation free access is limited to 20 minutes a day, e-mail only. There are only a limited number of features available to non-subscribing callers.
	(914) 667-2150	This is a voice line for technical support services available to all subscribing members during business hours (NY time).
	(914) 667-4817	The Executive Network's FAX line, available 24 hrs a day for inquiries, requests or orders. Subscribing members only.

BAUD RATES: The system operates at speeds up to 38,400 bps supporting all Hayes compatible modems (up to 2400 bps). MNP service levels 1 through 5 are available on all nodes, as well as V.42 error correction and V.42 bis data compression. V.32 connections are available on the 9600 bps lines in addition to the above.

HOURS: The system is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, except for normal maintenance.

HARDWARE: Operating on a local area network, the system is made up of multiple AT class computers. The file server operates under Novell's SFT Netware v2.15, using 8 MB of memory and more than 2.2 GB of hard disk storage. It is backed up by un-interruptable power supplies, and is equipped with a 2.2 GB tape unit performing daily backups.

Work stations are mostly 80286 based computers operating at 12 MHz, equipped with US Robotics Courier HST and V.32 Dual Standard modems.



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THE EXECUTIVE NETWORK INFORMATION SYSTEM

Telephone patch panels are used to allow re-configurations in case of equipment failure among the 20+ nodes. System development and maintenance is performed on separate 80386 based computers to avoid downtime.

SOFTWARE: PCBoard multi-user software (up to 99 nodes) of the latest release or more recent.

LANGUAGES: Multi-lingual operation, supporting English, French, Spanish and Norwegian.

SPECIALTIES: The Executive Network is a large system that caters to all types of callers, from corporate to hobbyist. The system comprises more than 150 conference areas dedicated to various topics, ranging from computer discussions, to product support to chit chat. The Executive Network is supported by both, national vendors, such as Hayes Microcomputer Products, AT&T and others, as well as numerous well known shareware authors. Whether you need to speak to a Novell or AT&T tech support person or the author of QModem SST, you can reach them all on the Executive Network!

This is the international host system of the ILink^(sm) mail network, serving as a gateway among North American, European and Asian systems. You can correspond with people from most parts of the US, Canada, United Kingdom, France, Norway, Australia, etc. by leaving mail here. It is also an alpha test site for Clark Development Co., the authors of PCBoard software, thus it often runs software versions not available elsewhere.

As authorized distribution site for numerous software vendors, callers can acquire not only information, but product updates as well. Some of the shareware packages available here first include QModem SST, QMail Deluxe, EZ-reader, Flushtot, Novell utilities and patches, just to mention a few.

There are numerous on-line utilities, games, tutorials and off-line mail sub-systems available, in addition to the standard features of found at on-line information systems. The system continues to attract support from the corporate world and is looked upon by many as a serious alternative to Compuserv. Among some of the features planned for 1990/1991 are a full featured FAX gateway reachable via modem, on-line computer shopping featuring 10,000+ products, electronic news publications, financial and investment related databases.

CALLERS: Popular with both business and personal callers, the system experiences very heavy usage during the daytime hours of 07:00 to 10:30, afternoon hours of 16:00 to 17:30 and evening usage after 20:00 hrs. Other times usage is moderate to light.

FILES: There are some 25,000 to 35,000 files on the main system listed in 40+ directories at any given time. Additional files are located in topic specific conference areas, such as local area networking. All programs, documentation and associated files are compressed with PKZIP (v1.10 or more recent) to reduce transmission time requirements. Files are routinely tested for both integrity and possible virus infections before made available to callers.



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