BBS
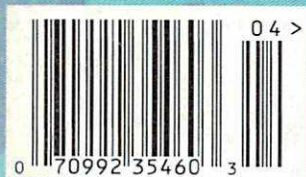
Church of Sciento

Netlaw:
Gagging the Net

Modem Showdown

Shareware

Verified BBS List
page 62

bbs.notebook:
Addison DOS Haus,
BB's BBS,
The Hour Glass BBS,
The Town Square BBS

5ive
that
thrive

Successful
Boards
& how they got that way

ExecNet

THEN

ONLINE: 1986
GOAL OF THE BOARD: Info exchange among network pros.
EQUIPMENT: One 60MB hard drive system.
LINES: Two lines connected to 2400 baud modems.

NOW

EQUIPMENT: Several Novell servers and Unix systems with 15+ gigabytes of storage, not including CD-ROM drives. Three T1s provide full Internet connectivity, including telnet, ftp, gopher and SLIP.
SUBSCRIBERS: 5,000
LINES: 40 nodes.

(997 min left) ExecNet Node 9
PCBoard (R) v15.21/M 250 (Bet...

Andy Keeves started ExecNet in 1986 (then called "The Executive Network") simply as a means for exchanging information between LAN professionals — Keeves' business.

"Although we were running on a Novell Netware server even at that time, our nodes were 8088 machines," said Keeves, who places his background "heavily in computers" — all the way back to the '70s, with mainframes, minis and micros.

"Everyone currently involved with ExecNet has been involved in the computer field either on the hardware or software side for well over a decade. As a Novell Gold system integrator, our focus was on local and wide area networking mostly. The system was nothing more than an extension of this in the late '80s," said Keeves.

> "After all, as a business, we must cater to our customers. And yes, our callers are indeed our customers and no longer 'guests' — as older BBS ideology used to dictate."
>
> —Andy Keeves, ExecNet

The years have brought many changes to ExecNet — subtle ones in the early days, not so subtle of late. "But growth became natural due to competitiveness, I suppose," he said.

"We were working with PCBoard software from Clark Development and eventually became an alpha site for the software," he said. "We began incorporating some of our own ideas into the system by developing third-party add-on software for it and, over the first few years, ExecNet had become known as the system where you were likely to find new features."
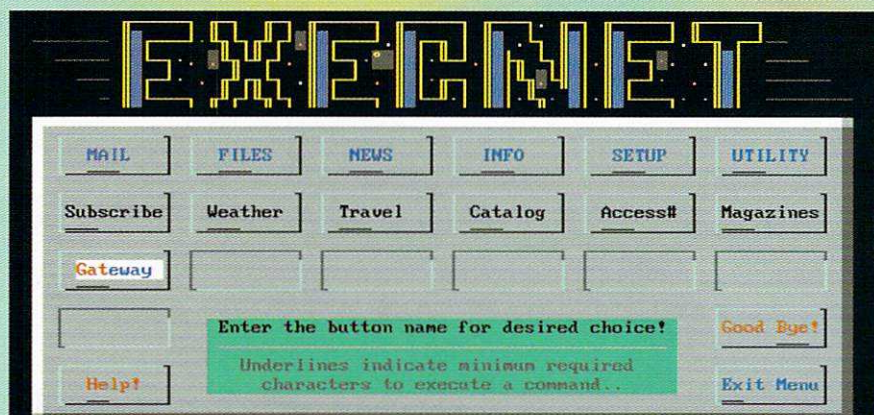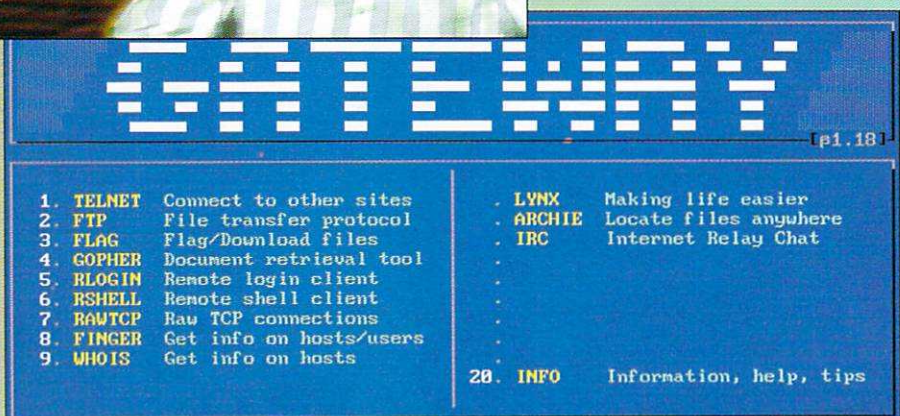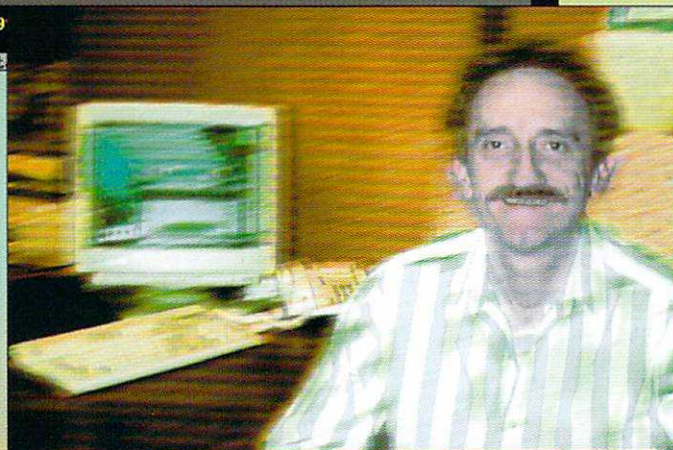
Keeves said the board's core business has changed a great deal, along with the PC industry overall. This called for growth in system resources, along with the associated costs.

"We looked for ways to recover some of those costs," Keeves said. "Thus the system began to offer subscriber access in addition to the original free lines."

Eventually, without a significant promotion on our part, it had become a small cost center within the original company, though it was not 100 percent self-sufficient."

Keeves said the changes in his LAN business placed more importance on ExecNet as a possible business, thereby prompting an attempt at start-

1. TELNET	Connect to other sites	. LYNX	Making life easier
2. FTP	File transfer protocol	. ARCHIE	Locate files anywhere
3. FLAG	Flag/Download files	. IRC	Internet Relay Chat
4. GOPHER	Document retrieval tool		
5. RLOGIN	Remote login client		
6. RSHELL	Remote shell client		
7. RAWTCP	Raw TCP connections		
8. FINGER	Get info on hosts/users		
9. WHOIS	Get info on hosts	20. INFO	Information, help, tips

(997 min left) ExecNet Node 99: Gateway Command (enter=Exit)? ( )
PCBoard (R) v15.21/M 250 (Beta 01-26-95 17:52)   114K   18:15

ing an online service.

"No, not quite the scale of a CompuServe," he said, "but our budget wasn't the same either."

Since then, the system has undergone serious expansion in equipment as well as software. Today ExecNet consists of several Novell servers and Unix systems. It houses some 15+ gigabytes of storage, not including CD-ROM drives, and 40 nodes.

"Running a commercial online system was surely not our idea on day one," said Keeves, "but the transition was a natural one."

"We were one of the first systems to break the daily limitation barrier traditionally associated with BBSs," said Keeves, "by allowing callers to stay on as long as they wished, to upload and download as much as they wished at any given time — within the limitations of the membership they acquired."

Additionally, ExecNet has been offering Internet news and mail for many years, having started "when only a very few dared to venture in that direction." Today they offer full Internet connectivity, including telnet, ftp, gopher and SLIP.

"You are likely to find more than a half a million messages on ExecNet at any given time, not to mention the 15-25MB of new files being posted here daily," said Keeves, who pointed out a trend of callers making use of three T1 circuits by connecting via the Net.

ExecNet's near future includes more concentration on information, including news, business and general topics," said Keeves, acknowledging "much of this is a painful transition due to the cost of continued equipment upgrades necessary to support the desired features, and due to the cost of acquiring much of the available information. Some of the tasks not readily visible to the caller involve our transition from a DOS platform to OS/2 and upgrading routers and other connectivity equipment to support new features."

Keeves claims there is no single reason for ExecNet's success. At least "none that I can think of," he said.

"Most of the features one finds on the system are a by-product of listening to those who use the system and attempting to implement their ideas and wish lists. After all, as a business, we must cater to our customers. And yes, our callers are indeed our customers and no longer 'guests' — as older BBS ideology used to dictate."

And voice support and timely response are vital for most

businesses, Keeves says, suggesting BBSs are no exception to this rule.

But what about today's sysops? Is it easier now than it was for the "pioneers?"

"I am not real sure if starting a new BBS today is easier or more difficult than years ago," said Keeves. "While hardware costs have decreased, the expectations of the callers have increased significantly. If one is not prepared for serious work and investment (both time and financial) they likely will not be successful today.

"There is still room in the picture for niche-oriented systems, but they will become harder to find as the online industry continues to grow up. Connectivity will become an ever-more complex issue as information services mature. Competition is healthy."

And what's Keeves opinion of the competition put up by the Big Board commercial services?

"The large commercial services will be slowly pushed by BBSs, and the larger BBSs will be pushed to compete with them more as technology progresses. While the roots of systems such as ExecNet can be clearly traced to the original concepts of BBSing, they have come a long way from those days and comparison becomes more and more difficult.

"If one wants to start a BBS as a business today, they must, by necessity, treat it as any other business — plan it, implement it and sell it. BBSing is growing up."

ACCESS
VOICE: 914.667.2150
FAX: 914.667.4817
BBS: 914.667.4567
TELNET: gateway.execnet.com
VIA BBS DIRECT: /go execnet
FTP: ftp.execnet.com
WEB: coming soon
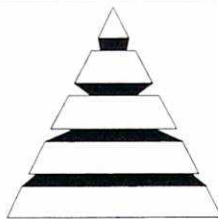**EMAIL:** execnet.support@execnet.com

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