The people cost of re-engineering

Roger T. Sobkowiak and Ronald E. LeBleu

The headline read, "Microsoft's Bill Gates and crew strategizing how to move IS professionals off Windows and onto the next platform based upon objects." The article began, "This new platform promises incredible leaps in technology capability and delivery. Fasten your seat belt for the next revolution." That may be all well and good, but the sad truth is that many IS professionals are still trying to move from mainframes to client/server systems, with all that it implies.

Almost every IS organization is asking the same two questions: How can we migrate our staff from the "old" systems to the new ones? Will everyone be able to make the shift?

The answer to the last question is a resounding "no." Don't even bother trying to save and re-engineer everyone. For a host of reasons, some rational and some irrational, many people don't want to adapt, change or reinvent themselves. The important thing is for the company and the employee to recognize this sooner rather than later. Sinking thousands of dollars into training that fails to pay off doesn't make sense.

For companies that have attempted "people

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retooling" initiatives, there is more bad news than good. Unfortunately, organizations are having a difficult time retooling legacy people. With unlimited time, resources and money, it is possible, but most companies do not have even one of these luxuries. They are generally confronted by a mandate to downsize machines and people. In a few instances when employees have no other options, they are often able to make incredible strides in developing and adopting new skills. But when employees think they have the option to continue what they have always done best, they will more often than not take the road of least resistance and opt not to change.

When a company insists that legacy people change their stripes, it must develop a set of tools to help employees cope. The most common one is a "safety net" that holds a job in reserve for an employee who is unable to master the new skills.

Another version is a contract that ensures

an employee's continued employment for a year or two if he does not successfully make the transition. If an abrupt transition is impossible — such as when an employee must keep working on a legacy system while mastering a new one — then the pay-for-skills-mastery seems to work. Under this plan, the employee is encouraged to master the technology in stages and is given bonuses or salary increases as this is accomplished.

LeBleu

Under these formulas, three critical factors seem to determine success: urgency, skills and self-motivation. The company has to build and communicate the case of urgency; the company must specify and provide the skills training; and the employee must find the motivation.

If we need any more proof that re-engineering of legacy staff is not working, look at the rising number of outsourcing contracts. One major motivation for outsourcing is obsolete or potentially obsolete staff. Companies are turning to "professionals" to manage the re-engineering, abdicating to the outsourcing company the difficult people-management issues.

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Windows 95 packs subtle punch

John Gantz

Windows 95 may ship late, but I'll bet you still won't be ready for it when it comes. Windows 95 is going to hit lots of IS shops and departmental training and support groups like a ton of bricks.

You think that because you've already been through the DOS-to-Windows 3.x migration, you've got it knocked; how hard could it be to go from one version of Windows to the next, particularly when the new one has a better user interface, automatic network connections and the much-heralded Plug and Play capability? What's to train? Hah.

The problem is twofold. First, Microsoft will drive Windows 95 into the market faster than the market can educate itself. Second, the applications that run under Windows 95 will be far more complex than those that ran under Windows 3.1 when it debuted four years ago.

When you went through your conversion from DOS to Windows, the average PC, according to International Data Corp. survey data, ran fewer than six applications. Now it runs 12, half Windows and half DOS. How many do you think a Pentium running Windows 95 will house? Besides, what did those earlier applications actually do? For the most part, they were productivity apps supporting personal work. Now they are likely to be networked applications supporting workgroup and enterprise computing. Lotus' Notes, electronic mail, database access, client/server business applications — put this stuff on a new operating system, add a little Internet connectivity here and multimedia there and you have a training and support disaster in the making.

Indeed, the flip side of this looming training and support crunch will be a nice bulge in revenue for companies that get paid to train and support information technology professionals and end users. IDC senior analyst Ellen Hersh, who follows the information technology education and training market, has pegged U.S. spending on Windows 95-related training — on the operating system and on Windows 95-based apps — at more than $130 million in 1995 alone. What's more, she says, the type of training needed will change with the arrival of new 32-bit applications and integrated office suites. It will be more customized and more related to the jobs performed with the software than to the features and functions of individual applications.

In short, for every dollar you spend on Win-

> *With Windows 95, new applications and networking needs mean a disaster in the making.*

dows 95 — especially when it comes "free" with your computer — you'll spend another 25 cents on outside training and 25 cents on outside support. You'll spend at least five times that on internal training and support.
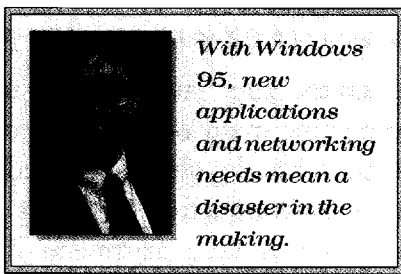
So if the training community and the support vendors are expecting a spike in demand for their services when Windows 95 hits the street, maybe *you* should expect a spike in demand for *your* services. If you haven't budgeted sizable increases in training for your migration to Windows 95, then you'd better expect to compensate with over-budget outlays for end-user support.

There is an alternative, and that's the status quo. But same-old, same-old training and support means your company will waste a lot of what you pay for in Windows 95, the new hardware it runs on and the new software you buy or develop. That's like buying a car and not buying collision insurance. Bad idea.

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