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ASHTON-TATE BEGINS BETA TESTING OF dBASE IV 1.1

TORRANCE, Calif., Oct. 17, 1989 -- Ashton-Tate Corporation (NASDAQ: TATE) today announced commencement of its formal Beta Testing Program for dBASE IV, Version 1.1. An extension of the company's internal testing program, Ashton-Tate's beta testing is a phased program of international scope designed to solicit input from a broad profile of developers, resellers and corporate customers.

"The goal of our Beta Testing Program is to ensure that dBASE IV, Version 1.1, conforms to customers' requirements in terms of quality and reliability prior to the formal release of the product," said Edward M. Esber Jr., chairman, chief executive officer and president of Ashton-Tate. "This extensive testing program is an important part of our overall dBASE quality program."

Before beginning the beta testing cycle, Ashton-Tate solicited feedback from a select group of advisors -- the dBASE Language Advisory Board (dLAB). This board consists of 16 members representing corporate, government and small business end-users, as well as independent software vendors and consultants. All members have

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extensive experience with the dBASE programming language. The group was influential in the company's decision to create the dBASE IV 1.1 Server Edition apart from the standard edition.

Besides dLAB members, more than forty people have been involved with testing the product since July 2nd, and the company has run 45,000 test suites against the program.

Today, the company shipped beta software to an initial group of key corporate accounts. As later beta versions are available, Ashton-Tate will distribute the software to a broader range of corporate customers, resellers and developers. Each subsequent version of the software will correct anomalies identified in previous phases. The goal of the final phase of the program is to have input from a large representative sample of users.

"Ashton-Tate has done a lot of listening since the shipment of dBASE IV, Version 1.0, last fall," Esber said. "First we conducted extensive one-on-one interviews with key developers and end-users of our dBASE products. Secondly, we incorporated several enhancements that improve programmer productivity, based on recommendations from dLAB. Then, we met with hundreds of additional dBASE product customers. Our Beta Testing Program is the final phase of our efforts to obtain customer feedback in the development of our next release of dBASE IV," he said.

Headquartered in Torrance, Calif., Ashton-Tate markets and develops microcomputer business applications software for DOS, OS/2 and Macintosh operating systems. Products are available in five major categories: database management systems, word processing, integrated decision support software, spreadsheets and graphics. Ashton-Tate

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also markets a comprehensive line of service and support programs for individuals, corporations and government agencies.

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DBASE IV VERSION 1.1 BETA TESTING PROGRAM
Q&A

What is the dBASE Quality Program?

It is a program that Ashton-Tate is instituting to ensure a highly functional, high quality release of dBASE IV, Version 1.1. It will include exposure to a broad range of users from corporations, government and independent application developers.

What type of Beta program is planned for dBASE IV 1.1?

We have organized a phased program, which we plan to bring to approximately 1000 sites for product evaluation and feedback. This program is specifically designed to make sure that information is properly utilized by our development teams and feedback is also given to the customer on what decisions are made based on their suggestions.

How will this beta program be supported? Do you have enough technical resources to do it right?

Superior technical support is critical to the success of this program and we have plans to offer extensive direct support, complemented by bulletin board and telephone support. The goal of the program is to solicit regular feedback from these beta users, so it is in our best interest to keep in close contact with them as they work with the product.

How does this differ from the beta testing program for dBASE 1V, 1.0?   How many beta sites did you have prior to shipping 1.0?

We worked on a long-term basis with a limited number of non-disclosure test and development sites with Version 1.0. These sites were highly experienced in developing applications in the dBASE language.

The program that we announced today will let us work with a greater number of customers who will use the product in diverse ways. We have also established a more formalized feedback system so that we can address beta user comments when developing subsequent versions of the software to be introduced in the various phases.

How many sites will receive the software in the first phase? What is the timing and number of sites for each phase? Can you give us names of beta test sites?

We are not releasing the specifics of the program. All of our sites are under non-disclosure so we are unable to release that information. When we ship the final version of the product, we plan to release the names of several beta users who will be willing to discuss their experiences at that time.

Who will participate in the beta program?

Developers, corporate customers, channel partners, and strategic alliances.

How long will dBASE IV Version 1.1 be in this beta program?   When will you ship a stable production version of the product?

Beta will continue until our customers find that Version 1.1 is ready to ship

What will be the parameters for the Server Edition beta testing program.   Will dLAB be involved?

The Server Edition Beta testing program will include SQL Server gold resellers as well as other key developers and corporate customers. As with our dBASE IV 1.1 Beta Testing program the key is to gain user feedback and respond to give customers a quality product that meets their needs. dLAB members interested in SQL Server will of course be included.