Software and Services Add To Employee Efficiency

By Jay Goldberg, Chairman, Assn. of Data Processing Service Organizations; Chairman, Money Management Systems, Inc., New York, N.Y.

Virtually every office environment is making increased use of information technology to improve operations. However, relatively few organizations take the time or invest their resources to plan an information strategy that will assure maximum results. Clearly, it is critical to coordinate telecommunications, data storage and retrieval, libraries and information management to avoid duplication and gain maximum benefits from computer technology.

In the past year, much has been written on how computer technology has failed to increase productivity to the level that was promised. Some people have blamed this for the slump in computer sales. I agree, but also believe that people are looking for information solutions rather than simply buying more computers. This underlines the need for a set of clear plans to achieve the anticipated return on information systems expenditures.

For example, people frequently say it is too costly to hire a professional services company to perform an assessment that would help office management determine the best possible computer system for their particular needs. Yet these same people purchase technology that does not solve the buyer's problem and won't meet the long or short-term needs of the particular office environment. A good consultant or professional services firm is not inexpensive but is less costly than purchasing the wrong equipment or software. An investment in professional assistance is better than premature replacement of all or part of an information system.

The computer software and services

"People are looking for information solutions rather than simply buying more computers. This underlines the need for a clear set of plans to achieve the anticipated return on expenditures."

industry has many options for those exploring new capabilities in information technology. From a delivery mechanism standpoint, professional service companies can provide consulting services, development of an information technology plan, custom programing to integrate various systems, specific custom computer software applications, and education and training. Processing service companies offer access to virtually limitless computer power, a library of software, telecommunications networks and user support. Mainframe, mini and microcomputer software products firms market packaged solutions and offer after sale enhancements and support to the customer. Network-based information services companies provide computers, software and technical support, a telecommunications network and ac-

cess to detailed databases of information a client can use to make decisions or enhance his operations. Value-added re-marketers of computer systems offer computers, peripheral equipment, software and support as a one-stop shopping option.

But the technical delivery mechanism is not as important as the options computer software and services offer to improve an organization's productivity. As examples, decision support systems can improve cash management and increase investment income; detailed accounting applications allow a company to reduce the average length of receivables; word processing and text-editing capabilities allow administrative support staff to provide better communication; publishing systems can save in printing costs; and electronic mail systems can assist in faster communications in companies that operate on a regional or worldwide basis.

Astute office management recognizes that the appropriate use of information technology can further company goals and provide a distinct competitive advantage. It is also clear that developing and updating detailed information management plans are critical to success. The computer software and services industry provides a multitude of opportunities for enhanced productivity, but care is needed to ensure that only the best solutions to specific needs are purchased. **TO**

A Word of Thanks
The editors wish to express their gratitude for the contributions of industry associations that have contributed to this, the 52nd Annual Forum issue of THE OFFICE. In sharing their views with our readers, these organizations and their chief executives have helped to enlighten and inform us all.