

IMMEDIATE

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ASHTON-TATE INTRODUCES NEW TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOCUS;  
OFFERS FREE, UNLIMITED TECHNICAL SUPPORT

TORRANCE, Calif., January 3, 1990 -- Ashton-Tate Corporation (NASDAQ:TATE) today announced four significant enhancements to its U.S. technical support operation, including free and unlimited telephone technical support; the Ashton-Tate ASSIST Program of enhanced support plans; toll-free access to the Ashton-Tate Bulletin Board System (BBS); and "Auto-Tate," a toll-free automated attendant answering commonly-asked technical support questions.

The new plans and policies cover Ashton-Tate's entire product line with the exception of advanced and connectivity products such as SQL Server and the dBASE DIRECT Series.

"We are sending a strong message by completely overhauling our customer support operation," said Edward M. Esber, Jr., Ashton-Tate's chairman, president and chief executive officer. "We have developed a combination of the policies, plans and technologies tailored to the type of support our customers want."

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Effective immediately, current Ashton-Tate customers, including those covered under existing support plans, are eligible for free, unlimited telephone support from Ashton-Tate's technical support staff. The only cost to the customer will be the toll call to the company's technical support lines for database, decision support and Macintosh products, (213) 329-0086; and MultiMate, Byline and graphics products, (408) 268-1711.

This replaces Ashton-Tate's previous policy of 90-days free support after which a user was required to subscribe to a pay-for-support program for further assistance from the company.

#### **Enhanced Fee-Based Plans**

Ashton-Tate has also replaced its current fee-based support plans with an improved and simplified set of offerings under the new Ashton-Tate ASSIST Program. Support under the ASSIST Program packages will cover all current Ashton-Tate software products a customer owns except advanced and connectivity products.

"Many of our corporate customers and advanced users look for fee-based support plans offering priority access and a more comprehensive set of support options for personal and business needs," said Mike Semegran, Director of Technical Support Services for Ashton-Tate. "The three-tiered Ashton-Tate ASSIST Program is specially designed to fill this need."

According to Semegran, the base support package, called ASSIST, provides the user with a toll-free "800" telephone number, an express support queue (reducing wait times), up to 20

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calls per year, a comprehensive user guide, a technical tips bulletin and a subscription to CompuServe, for \$150 per year.

Pro ASSIST, the next level package, includes the ASSIST package services with 30 calls per year, a senior support technician to handle support calls and a subscription to *TechNotes*, Ashton-Tate's family of four technical newsletters covering dBASE IV, Framework III, word publishing and graphics. Pro ASSIST is available for a yearly fee of \$295.

Corporate ASSIST offers two designated technical contacts in an organization all the PRO ASSIST services with no limit on calls. The package also offers a Norton-Lambert utility called CLOSE-UP, which allows an Ashton-Tate support technician to operate a DOS software product remotely via modem. The yearly fee for Corporate ASSIST is \$595.

Semegran added that Ashton-Tate customers participating in Ashton-Tate's previous fee-based support plans will be given various levels of toll-free, priority support (depending on the level of their current plan) under guidelines detailed in individual program conversion packets currently being mailed to all Custom Support Plan customers.

#### **More New Services**

Ashton-Tate is also introducing toll-free access to its existing support bulletin board system. Using local access numbers to the CompuServe telecommunications network, customers from almost anywhere in the U.S. will now have convenient access to the Ashton-Tate BBS, which offers product technical tips, news

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and information.

Another new service called "Auto-Tate" is a toll-free (800-7-ASHTON) automated attendant providing answers to commonly asked technical support questions. Customers can access the system via keystrokes on a touch-tone telephone. MultiMate Advantage II users will be the first to benefit from this service, although Ashton-Tate plans to expand "Auto-Tate" to offer automated support for MultiMate version 4.0 and other products as information is developed.

"This is a very exciting new direction for Ashton-Tate technical support," said Semegran. "We believe we have developed a program of policies, plans and technologies that will allow us to best meet our customers' demands for quality and timely technical support."

However, he cautioned Ashton-Tate customers to expect a period of transition while the company expands its operation to meet the demands of the new technical support programs.

"Although we have been and will continue to hire qualified support technicians as quickly as possible, our customers may temporarily experience difficulty in accessing our support lines," said Semegran. "We are asking for patience while we continue to build the organization to manage our new support focus."

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The technical support operation will benefit, according to Semegran, from the expansion and upgrading of the company's state-of-the-art telecommunications system with help from Aspect Telecommunications of San Jose, California. The expansion, which includes the integration of Ashton-Tate's customer service and technical support functions, gives Ashton-Tate the control and capacity it will need to efficiently field and manage incoming support calls. Also, Ashton-Tate has enhanced its current on-line information and reference system to improve the speed and efficiency with which the technical support staff can answer questions and solve customer problems.

"We have the technology in place to equip an expanding technical support operation. Now our challenge is to increase our team of technicians as quickly as possible," Semegran added.

Users of Ashton-Tate's recently-shipped MultiMate version 4.0 are among the many customers expected to benefit from the company's new support focus. Also, Ashton-Tate will continue its strategic commitment to Macintosh software products by devoting additional support resources to FullWrite Professional, Full Impact, FullPaint and dBASE Mac.

Headquartered in Torrance, California, Ashton-Tate develops and markets microcomputer business applications software for the DOS, OS/2 and Macintosh operating systems. The company offers products in five major categories: database management systems, word processing, integrated decision support software, spreadsheets and graphics. Ashton-Tate also markets a

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

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