

Info-systems investments will pay off

BY STEPHEN FORCE

Do you remember the comic-book hero Dick Tracy? Do you remember his high-tech communications device of the future that he wore on his wrist? At the time, his two-way radio-TV transceiver was beyond the limits of electronic reality. Back then, it was thing of the future — but this "future" is rapidly approaching.

Your information needs may not be on a par with this "super crime-fighter" of yesterday, but the need for them to be effective and convenient, if not transparent and portable, are the same.

We see the future now in the latest offerings of computers, computer-connectivity technologies, and software-systems design.

Computers have shrunk to the point where one can almost fit on your wrist. Wireless (radio) local

OTHER VOICES



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and wide area network (LAN and WAN) technologies can provide companies bi-directional access to corporate computers from anywhere in the United States and some international locations.

Ardis, a joint venture between IBM and Motorola, currently pro-

vides several customers (IBM, Avis, etc.) almost nationwide host-computer access via handheld wireless data terminals. Ardis is one of several companies which provide wireless services.

As more people become aware of interactive services such as Prodigy, CompuServe, RadioMail, MCI Mail and the Internet, the more they are apt to subscribe to and use them. All of these offer electronic-mail services, and a subscriber to one can send E-Mail to another. Cable TV companies are also getting involved. Perhaps soon, users will read and send E-mail from their television.

Companies today exchange information via Electronic Data Interchange (EDI). Received facsimiles and documents can be read anywhere if stored as an electronic document image.

Is it productive to attend a

meeting and not have what is needed immediately available? Why should someone spend time preparing for a meeting or presentation when the data can be accessed dynamically?

Your corporate information-systems staff should be prepared to exploit new technologies — their main purpose is to provide timely information solutions.

We must all save money by cost containment and budget cutting. Information-systems budgets are particularly attractive since MIS "tangible" benefits are sometimes hard to identify. Resist the impulse to eliminate "technology" or new system-development projects. However, make sure that these projects are well-thought-out, fit the whole corporate scheme and encompass the "open system," "client/server," "wireless LAN" and "user empowerment" philosophies.

The expenditure does not need to be that great — the benefits will far exceed the cost.

Information systems must be fully integrated into the corporate culture. There should no longer be a "glass house" mentality. Computer awareness is pervasive throughout an organization — this is wonderful and should be encouraged. Computer knowledge and experience are tremendous corporate assets.

Information-system technologies work — if the infrastructure understands, embraces and exploits them.

In today's thinking, Dick Tracy would be wearing on his wrist a "client" connected to his headquarters "server." We all will soon be able to be able to do this, and much more.

Are your information systems ready for the 21st century? **CDB**

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