1989 ALTOGETHER ALTOGETHER **ALTOGETHER** March ALTOGETHER ALTOGETHER ALTOGETHER 3 ALTOGETHER ALTOGETHER ALTOGETHER ALTOGETHER M ALTOGETHER 9 ALTOGETHER ALTOGETHER ALTOGETHER ALTOGETHER ALTOGETHER

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ASK DR. ALBE

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I replaced my 686 CPU board with 512K with a CPU that has one megabyte of memory. When I put in the new board, my system won't boot; but when I put the old board back - no problem, I am running under CDOS.

Make sure that you have a good CPU, obviously, But, also, you are required to have CDOS version 4.12So or higher of the operating system.

I am trying to install a 12.5 MHZ CPU in my old 1086. I'm having a problem with CPU EXTERNAL TESTS FAILING on power up. What should I look for?

Two things. Memory bds must be REV G or higher. Memory bds part #615-15146-xxx must be removed. Also, the SIO Bds must have at least FIRM-WARE PN 162-17048-006 or higher. They're up to -009.

Can I install a 380 megabyte ESDI hard disk on my 3086? It has ESDI with a 170 megabyte hard disk as my main drive.

Yes. A 380 megabyte hard disk can be installed as a second or third drive only. It does require XENIX 3.4bs5 upgrade. This also applies to 1086's

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

This month I have decided to write about the always popular subject "How NOT to provide support from the factory". To be as fair as possible, I am going to utilize an actual example that we were recently involved in with Altos.

The end-user in this case is very non-computer in nature. He functions only from the menus in AOM and does only spreadsheets and the calendar program. Since his office is very active and involved in a great many activities, he has a very busy calendar. After several months use of the calendar program, he approached us with some areas that were lacking in functionality. Specifically, he wanted the ability to produce a listing of every time he had met with certain people or when he had met about particular subjects.

Since we are familiar with the calendar manager. we told him that it did not include these features, but he could put a program on one of the office PC's that did. His response was to ask us to call Altos and see if they would add the features for him. I confess to a slight white lie in telling him that I checked with Altos, and they felt that rewriting the obsolete package for a single user would not be practical. I only did this because I didn't want to use up our overpriced support contract for a stupid question.

Apparently, this user is used to getting his way, because he called Altos to demand that the features be added. Their first response was to inform the user that we were liars, and, in spite of the fact that he had no support contract, they would be happy to solve his problem. They surely aren't this responsive to everyone that phones in, including those of us that do pay for the support contract. Maybe it was the opportunity to call me a liar that they couldn't resist.

As a result of the end-user call, they mailed him a disk with a shell program to perform something along the lines of what he wanted. The shell program is listed below:

clear

echo "\n\nThis program allows you to take out entries for a specific"

echo "company. You must have first used the following options in the"

echo "Calendar Manager to receive the correct information:" echo "\n"

echo " Transfer, Daily "

echo "\n\n"

echo "\n\nEnter the name of the file generated by the Transfer/Daily: \n"

To abort the program, hit the "break/del" key\n\n" read file1

echo "\n\nYour report will now be in a file called \$file1.out .. \n\n"

more \$file1 | egrep 'Altos | 1989' > \$file1.out echo "\n\n'

Amongst the many problems that this situation creates are the following:

- The file permissions were set so that only root had write permission, and we prefer that end users work at a lower privilege.
- To produce a report it requires that the user be able to unload the calendar data files and edit the script file, making changes to the script every time he wants a report. This assumes some knowledge of an editor, file locations, and other skills that this user doesn't have.

Continued on page 2...

So You Want to be a Salesman . . .

One of the neat things about editorial license is that you can write about anything you want. (It's possible that no one will read it - but you still get to write it.) This time I think pricing or value added is the topic. A question that pops up every now and then is, "What is the list on that?" or "What should that sell for?". Recently, while working on product documentation and the best way of doing the work, I arrived at some conclusions that may be useful in answering these questions.

If we take one of our products, a storage module, for example, we can attempt to define the value that is added by the dealer. Some treat it as a "quick and dirty" sale and wind up at a pretty low margin. Done right, it isn't very quick, but it can be much more profitable.

The proper steps to install the module start with knowing the condition of the system when you begin the process. It takes about twenty minutes to run the system confidence tests, but if there is a problem uncovered, they can't blame your technician

Next you should know the condition of the file system on the drive(s). Both dump and tar will sometimes gloss over problems that can be very serious. Running fsck only takes a couple of minutes per drive, but it is excellent insurance against being blamed for a pre-existing "gliche".

Not too many technicians take the time to do this, but the next logical step is a system backup. This should be a tar format backup of the entire file system. There are occasions when a new module either creates a problem or uncovers an existing one when installed. Better safe than sorry.

The actual physical installation is quick and dirty and most technicians can waltz through it with little trouble. When completed, one then has to contend with putting the additional file space to use. This is definitely not automatic and may require a software technician to properly complete. As a rule, any backup scripts must also be updated to include the new information in the backup process. If they don't have a consistent backup process, this is definitely a good time to teach them.

What we have outlined here may take a couple of hours to accomplish, but it has raised the product to a much more professional level. The system and its data have been certified as being correct. The "state of the system" has been saved, and the new product has been integrated. Best of all, the key operator has been re-indoctrinated in the backup procedure, and you probably won't be back the next day working out problems.

Putting a price tag on professionalism isn't easy, but if you let the user know up front that this is the value you add (and then add it), price may turn out to be less important than you thought.

Editorial Comments, continued from page 1...

- 2. To produce a report, the program requires that the user be able to unload the calendar data files and edit the script file, making changes to the script every time he wants a report. This assumes some knowledge of an editor, file locations, and other skills that this user doesn't have.
- 3. The script as written does not work correctly. The more at the beginning causes the system to hang waiting for keyboard input.
- 4. When corrected to work, the end-user is expected to know how to get the output file to the printer, again something this user does not grasp. When printed, the information is useless because it does not include the date - a very important item to forget.
- 5. We were very surprised that Altos screwed around with our client without any contact with us at all. We attempt to create reasonable expectations, and, if the program won't do something, we have found that the best answer is the honest one.

Now we have an end-user that has been told that what he wants is easy, requiring only a "quick and dirty" shell program to produce anything he can think up. Obviously, this isn't true, but he can't believe us any more - the gods in San Jose have spoken. I surely do not want to invest a lot of time teaching this end-user the required skills to handle vi, grep, egrep, sort, awk, redirection of input, redirection of output; and, according to the letter sent by Altos, still be faced with probably having to teach him "C" programming to get what he wants. Just put the damn calendar on the PC.

Since I want to be fair (some would say for a change), I am sending a copy of the draft of this article to our regional support manager and to the tech at the factory that performed this support function. I will be happy to include any and all written responses that I receive and have reserved the space for the same. They will have a copy on February 21st and will have two weeks to respond.

ALTOS Response to March Editorial...



We found some dinosaurs in a warehouse that are a great deal for those with a long memory.*

If you know how to make use of them, these 580-20's and 580-40's with Esprit 3 terminals are a great deal. The price is so low, you



could use them as a parts source. The hard disk drive, floppy disk, power supply and most cables are the same as the 586.

Dealer Costs: 580-20 CPU w/Terminal \$500 580-40 CPU w/Terminal \$550

We pay UPS ground shipping and all units are guaranteed to be ready to run.

Special note for those with shorter memories:
The 580 was a desktop unit from Altos that used an an 8 bit Z-80 processor and ran MPM II or Oasis. It looks just like the 586 and 886 type of system and supported three or four users.



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WANTED: Used Altos equipment or excess inventory. Contact Ed Embree at (312) 860-5807.

PHARMACY SOFTWARE FOR ALTOS AND IBM/AT COMPATIBLES. Proven, sophisticated software for retail, nursing home and outpatient hospital pharmacies. Written for Altos and SCO XENIX and UNIX. Suggested retail \$5000. 50% discount for dealers. Demo Kits, \$100. VIP Computer Systems, (919) 933-9744.

FOR SALE: Altos 886T-80 with (6) Altos III Terminals, Okidata 293, Topaz 1200VA SPS, (2) Multitech 224E Modems, AOM, Complete Open System. Best offer, David Cairns, (313) 962-4999.

FOR SALE: Used 586's in varied condition. Also, good selection of used Altos terminals and 8-bit machines. Any reasonable offer accepted. Call Howard at Press Consulting, 309-764-2991.

FOR SALE: Altos 986 computer with 40 mb internal and 40 mb external. Has tape drive, Informix, and word processor - \$3000. Phone 216-331-3370.

PROGRAMMING - Informix software development for all Informix products. We can modify our packages (AR, GL, INV, SO, etc.) to meet your needs. Phone 216-331-3370.

FOR SALE: Altos 886 (2 terminals, 2 printers and 2 bar code readers) slightly used. \$3500 or best offer. Video World, ask for Steve, (404) 923-2039.

DUKE'S SUICIDE HOT LINE: learn the latest state-of-the-art life shortening techniques. Call our 900 phone number (after all, someone else will have to pay for it). Ask about our express shipment of Chilean grapes, Algar treated apples, and MC DLT's. Our overseas warehouse also has a large selection of soft drinks containing genuine cyclamates. Although we expect an overwhelming response to this offer, we do not anticipate repeat business, so we are always looking for new customers. Call: (900) GOOD-BYE.

REQUEST FOR BIDS: county government wishes to dispose of the following excess equipment: Altos 8000-12 Computer, Televideo Terminal - 950 (2), Comrex 420 Printer, Diablo 630 Printer. Please submit bids for each item to County Clerk, P.O. Box 38, Dakota City, NE. Phone (402) 987-2125.

SPECIAL PRICING ANNOUNCEMENT

Due to changes in pricing and memory surcharges, all previously published memory board pricing is superseded by new pricing effective February 1, 1989. Please call for a correct quotation. Thanks.



COMPUTER SUPPORT OF SIOUX CITY, LTD.

701 Steuben St. • Sioux City, Iowa 51101 • 712-277-0095 FAX 712-277-2638 FOR SALE: Altos 486, 20 mb, \$1095. New Demo Unit. XE-NIX AND Qume 102 included. Call Malcolm, 805-656-3791.

FOR SALE: \$500 will buy Altos 486-20 used cautiously by two little old ladies doing data processing. No CPU intensive tasks. Altos 986 with almost new Computer Support 80 Mb disk. Runs good, but has been rode hard and put up wet a time or two. Priced to sell at \$1250. Both systems under maintenance contract. Call David Noll, Noll Computer Systems, (817) 457-0344 or (817) 457-8070.

TERM COMMUNICATIONS windowing-menu system. Written entirely in TERM script language, an excellent tutorial-by-example. Super safe and easy for all TERM Users to access ★.con and ★.cmd files, set parameters, etc. \$25 source code only, \$35 disk (includes source code and rapid start-up script). Data Base Management Services, 14411 Quivira Road, Alathe, KS 66062, (913) 897-2263.

MICROSOFT BASIC PROGRAM allows communication with Allen Bradley Programmable Controllers over Data Highway or Data Highway Plus. Can be called from nearly any language: BBx Basic sample programs provided. Call Craig at (419) 259-3687 for more information.

BUY AND SELL USED ALTOS EQUIPMENT. Complete systems or parts. Call Peter Marcus, Marcus & Associates, (617) 655-7788. 2/89.

PREFERRED BUSINESS SYSTEMS ANNOUNCES a new software module that will allow any PC/AT or 386 PC to access printers on an Altos computer. No modifications are necessary on the MS DOS machine, utilizing your current communications program and our menu driven software to select which printer to use. Available for any Altos 486, 586, 2086, or 2000 series computers. Only \$49.50 plus tax. Please call 214-241-5580 or 620-7019.

FOR SALE - Altos 486, 20 mb, \$850. Call Jim at (503) 591-5474.

NEED DISTRIBUTORS for proven software program. Over 100 installations coast to coast. UNIX, XENIX and PC DOS compatible. Large commissions. Send resume to G & L Computers, Inc., 400 N. Beach St. #230, Fort Worth, TX 76111.

automated ups manifest software: Autofest is a United Parcel Service approved shipping and manifest system which can automate the weighing, computing charges, labeling (including COD tags) and printing of the shipping manifest. AutoFest can be tied directly to RealWorld Order Entry software, providing a turnkey ordering and shipping system. Used alone it still can eliminate time consuming tasks of preparing UPS shipments and tracking COD payments. Available for DOS, Novell, UNIX and XENIX. Only \$495. Dealer pricing and Demos available. MBS, Inc. (402) 333-8801.

FOR SALE: Altos 580, 10 mg Hard Drive, Modem UDS/Motorola #212-A, Wyse WY-50 Terminal. Make an offer. Jim Winberry, (516) 368-8682.

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