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Nov 94

VISUALise

The newsletter for the Vendor Independent Software Users' Association

A Vision Of VISUAL

Dr Martin Wynn, Head Of IT, H P Bulmer, takes the opportunity afforded by VISUAL's second newsletter to convey a message as to why he thinks involvement with VISUAL could be a useful opportunity for your organisation - and why he hopes you will take advantage of it.

As IT Managers, we all face challenges which I'm sure you don't need me to elaborate on. We all try to meet these challenges in the best way we can, according to the individual circumstances of our organisation. However, we all also have certain needs in common and I believe that VISUAL can help with some of them. Here is how and why.

We are all involved to some extent in open systems. Whether we are a proponent of the general philosophy or not, we need the flexibility and connectivity that the open systems movement aims to provide.

We all have to contend with increasingly diverse systems from increasingly diverse sources and a greater range of potential choices than ever before. Somehow, from within all this, without undue expenditure of time, we have to extract the optimal solutions for our business.

I believe that an essential ingredient in doing that is knowledge of the experience of other users. Whenever we venture into new territory, of whatever sort, it can be very useful to know if someone has done something similar (or tried to) before and what their experience has been. VISUAL forums capture that experience and make it available to all.

Other user groups, of course, do the same thing. However, useful as they may be, they do it on a basis of the products supplied by the vendor to which the user group is tied. VISUAL does it on a vendor-neutral basis, focusing on the business solution delivered rather than the specific hardware or software used to deliver it.

That aligns better with what is being required of us, as IT Managers, and helps to identify the (relatively) safe ground from the more risky areas which are the breeding ground of many of the recent IT failures, big and small, of which we are all aware. At the same time, VISUAL gives the opportunity to explore many aspects of the vendor-user relationship, where I believe there is considerable scope for improvement. Such dialogues should benefit us, the customers, and also provide new ideas and perspectives that I trust will be of value and pertinence to our key industry suppliers.

In the ten months since its first event (30th November 1993), VISUAL has already attracted over 150 companies of significant size, most of them "household names", into its membership. This is despite the fact that, as a not-for-profit venture, it has no substantial budget for publicising itself.

The reason I have written this open message is to encourage you to join in what I believe to be a worthwhile venture. I hope you will do so, at least as a member who attends forums of interest. I would also like to encourage some of you, who represent the IT interests of your organisation as a whole, to consider joining the User Board. The implications are not onerous; primarily to direct the group into useful avenues for exploration of experience, by availability over the phone or at infrequent meetings during the year.

I hope that, in the future, we will be able to share experience to mutual advantage through the auspices of VISUAL.

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