

THOSE SUPPORT *People*

Volume 7, Issue 4

Summer, 2001

WE DON'T DO EVERYTHING, BUT...

Support is Not All We Do!

By Rob Gentry

In the beginning, the Support Group was formed to help manufacturing companies use MANMAN™ on the HP3000. A lot has changed since then. The HP3000 is now the HP e3000. The Internet has emerged as a major business tool. Companies have grown, changed, or merged. Our challenge has been to focus and expand at the same time. tSGi has responded to these changes by changing itself.

As noted in an earlier newsletter, we have reorganized. the Support Group, inc. is now the MAN-MAN™ unit of Blanket Enterprises, which also includes ENTSGO (focusing on conversions to IFS) and asp4edi.com (our EDI service provider). tSGi is exclusively focused on MANMAN™ as always. Our aim is to provide the best services and products available to enhance and extend your investment in MANMAN™.

We do provide user support for the HP and VMS versions of all releases of the MANMAN™ product. But that is not all we do. We provide programming, education and training, needs analysis, and HP performance reviews. Third party software options are also on our list of offerings. These include a Windows-like front end and other packages from Quantum Software, additional commands that extend the practical functionality of the system from

(See *Support's Not All*, page 4)

Will You Forget Our Product Offerings If We Stop Telling You?

By Chuck Combs

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself; my name is Chuck Combs and I am the new Business Development and Marketing Manager for the Support Group, inc. I would like to share with you some of the new enhancements we are making at tSGi to inform you, our customers and partners, of our product offerings and how we can assist you with a total solution.

Over the years you have known the Support Group, inc. as one of the premier MANMAN™ and HP

Trusted Advisor

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Exceeding Expectations?

Why have other companies failed to exceed their expectations when implementing new ERP systems? Even some IFS implementations must be imperfect. Why do I ask about that? Because I continue to read results of user surveys with dissatisfaction indexes that are troublesome. Because I read glowing "articles," called case studies in IT or manufacturing "News" magazines, which talk up the positive aspects and ignore the negative while advertising dollars for articles on the facing page flow in incredible numbers. Because I "listen in on", participate in, and merely observe many conversational dialogs on the Internet. Things are not always wonderful out there in user land. There are many islands of success, but, in this final article of our seventh year, I'll return to a favorite and familiar topic: data quality.

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Brought to you by the subsidiaries of Blanket Enterprises: tSGi, ENTSGO and asp4edi.com.

From Shaggy's Desk

In this issue, I want to address issues for companies wanting to keep their MANMAN™ system and improve it. Whether you are looking to extend the life of your investment in MANMAN™ or improve performance, we have the resources and products to help you. Training is one of the best services we offer and it is often overlooked. Tom Ducharme of Flow Products says a key focus of their relationship with tSGi is training and education. "Our real worry is that when a core person, particularly a key manager, leaves or assumes other responsibilities, it creates a very big hole in the MANMAN™ knowledge base. We use tSGi's outstanding training and education capabilities to fill this gap."

Susan Kiezel, one of our training and education consultants, talks about how important it is for a company to have a Power User Team. Sue says education and training play a huge role in the success of an MRP II or ERP application such as MANMAN™. Education supplies users with the knowledge they need to perform specific functions. It provides management with the knowledge they need to provide leadership and use MRP II as a management tool. Company-wide education gives users the understanding they need to be involved in the process and make meaningful contributions, removing the obstacle of resistance to change. Broad-based education also puts everyone on the same page. With a common understanding of the concepts and objectives of MRP II comes confidence that the formal system works. People believe the numbers and priorities, nurturing an environment marked by open communication and teamwork.

Many companies have made the mistake of focusing too much energy on their computer system, since it seems to account for the lion's share of total cost, and too little on their people, since IT payroll may be a relatively small expense. In fact, the opposite will provide the greatest return on investment, since it is people that will drive the MRP II system to produce the bottom line results desired in terms of lower inventory, increased productivity, enhanced customer service and decreased purchase costs.

Managing the MANMAN™ MRP II application to best support the operating environment requires an in-depth knowledge of the many components and modules of MANMAN™ along with expertise in the basics of enterprise management. In today's complex environment, the formation of a "Power User" team of key organization members can provide the best possible support for this MRP II system. The Power User team should be trained and knowledgeable in the company's strategy, methods, systems and procedures, with the defined mission of managing the MANMAN™ application. Training for the team should include comprehensive training in MANMAN™, MRP II, Strategic Planning, project management, etc.

Forming a Power User team, consisting of key users representing all functional areas trained to manage the MANMAN™ system, can help to alleviate many of the issues and problems facing organizations today. A Power User team can extend the enterprise's MIS resources, promote user ownership of the system, and give your company a forum for making informed system changes and improvements. This group should fill the role of the System Steering Committee and be empowered to review and approve proposed system enhancements and modifications. They should be responsible for the testing and evaluation of packaged solutions that interface and improve MANMAN™, and make recommendations based on their reviews. The group would be responsible for managing the review and maintenance of procedures that impact the MANMAN™ system and the development/deployment of a user-training program. Think about the value that training your people would add to your company.

In the same vein of using what you've already got to greater advantage, we also offer a Needs and Usage Assessment service. Many MANMAN™ sites have had a lot of turnover since they installed their software ten or fifteen years ago and could use a refresher. The reasons for an evaluation of your effectiveness are numerous. Many of our clients have changed the processes used in their companies since they implemented MANMAN™. Others have undergone organizational changes or have started new businesses or product lines. Still others are exploring their Internet and e-commerce options. The overall attitude at many compa-



nies using MANMAN™ is that it is an old system with nothing new to deliver. Such ideas are counter-productive to effective utilization and must be addressed. If a new system is really needed, we'll tell you. If not, we'll tell you how MANMAN™ can satisfy your users' requests for functionality and your managers' information access requirements.

The three-day assessment methodology consists of a series of interviews with key users and their managers. Typically, the first half-day is spent taking a plant/office tour and talking to IS/IT people to get an overview of the company and resources. A kick-off meeting with all available key users and managers after lunch sets the stage for the next two days of meetings. The goal is often to do more with fewer people. We expect to be able to pull together the issues you already know you have, along with some fresh insights, into a succinct set of specific recommendations.

Only our very best consultants are assigned to your MANMAN™ usage analysis project. The report developed at the end of the assessment is treated very confidentially. We refuse to use prior examples as a selling tool because of the nature of the problems being measured and documented. We provide references of our clients who may discuss our abilities; we never show your reports to anyone outside of our companies.

Now let me tell you about some exciting developments in the software that we sell. I have told you about XactMan™ and what a great product either the Client Server or Web version is for the future of MANMAN™. Quantum Software is doing so much R&D on this product that it's hard to keep up with all the new enhancements. I really think it is worth your time to order a new demo and see just how this product will work for you at your company. I will continue to quote Tom Ducharme from Flow Products from an earlier interview in which he talked about how using XactMan™ Client Server software made MANMAN™ much easier to use. With this application, Flow Products is able to work around the difficulties presented by the order entry screen in release 10. Tom stated, "By installing XactMan/CS™, the people who do order entry can input an order in half the time it takes with the MANMAN™ green screen. This software has resulted in a 50 percent increase in productivity and has eliminated the need for additional personnel." The first time a branch employee worked with XactMan™ software, she was able to input and transmit an order over a 56K line in one-third the time it had previously taken. "I was amazed at the speed with which she picked up the process. And I found it incredible that a MANMAN™ product could be as fast from a remote location as it is at headquarters where the line has twice the speed." This enhanced order entry speed frees up the customer service representatives who handle the orders. The increase in productivity and the decrease in resource requirements translate into significant cost savings and greater customer satisfaction. Tom continues, "No one tells you when you're doing well, but the number of complaints has gone down significantly. I think we have happier customers now. We're pleased with that". I can't stress enough how great a product QSC has developed, so please call and get more information from us.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, look for the ad on a new product from McConnell Chase Software Works called Forecasting for Demand (FD) 6.0. I'm very excited because their forecasting product is now Web based. I have very good references from companies that purchased (FD) 5.0 and are very happy with the results it gave them, but the new Forecasting and Planning for Sales and Operations is even better. So read about it and let me schedule a demo for you.

I also want to follow up on the article about our new partner, SupplyPoint, which ran in the last issue. Their SCM suite is very useful for international or widely dispersed companies wanting to look up an order's status over the Web, enabling them, their partners and customers to do this in less than two minutes from anywhere in the world 24X7. More and more companies struggle with obtaining necessary visibility into current operations information in order to respond quickly to customer demand. Further, it often requires considerable effort and highly trained personnel (Power Users) to navigate these systems simply to determine the current status of a customer's order and whether there are issues that may impede its delivery schedule. With the SupplyPoint application, you can leverage your current investment in existing enterprise applications to meet the visibility demands required to optimize your Order-to-Ship environment. Further, SupplyPoint is for

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Support's Not All

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Summit Systems, and other options you can use to extend the life of your MANMAN™ applications.

Our menu of services includes the complete line of HP hardware, software, and peripherals. The new A-Class and N-Class HP e3000's are providing power and integration capabilities never before available. To expand your ability to administer any HP environment, we have a wide variety of utilities and systems software from top-quality vendors. These products will increase your system's efficiency.

Other changes at tSGi include improvements to our website (www.supgrp.com) making it more informative and navigable. The new Web page will have surveys, new product announcements, vendor specials, and much more. There will also be information about EDI and Industrial and Financial Systems (IFS) products and opportunities.

All of this is brought to you by the synergy and focus of the Support Group, inc., a technical support company aimed at providing MANMAN™ users, both HP and VMS, with the best support, services, and products available. We are here to extend the life of your mission critical application; to make your company more productive and efficient in its use of MANMAN™ and Client/Server applications that relate to MANMAN™ running your business.

Please feel free to drop me, or any member of our staff, an email with your questions or comments about tSGi services and products. ♦

Our Products

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e3000 support companies in North America. Our goal has always been, and will continue to be, to provide our customers with the highest quality support, products, training, and consulting. We are not changing how we do business, but improving the way we deliver our offerings, and the way we deliver that message to our customers.

Rob Gentry, General Manager of tSGi, has written an article about change and how we at tSGi have reorganized and are thinking outside the box (see "Support is Not All We Do" in this issue). Our new focus reflects our vision and strategy for adding value for our customers.

Did you know the Support Group, inc. can provide you with HP hardware (HP e3000s, HP 9000s, Netervers, PC's, printers, scanners, and supplies), software and much more. Soon you will be able to order these products over the Web. This will allow us at tSGi to serve you in a new and exciting way (stay tuned for more information). Speaking of the Web page, you will be seeing some changes taking place on our Web site, www.supgrp.com, within the coming months designed to give our customers more information on new products, hardware, software, special hardware and software promotions, white papers, training etc. These are just some of the enhancements we are making at tSGi to communicate our message.

We at tSGi want to be your "**trusted advisor**" and provide you with a total solution. You can be assured you will continue to receive the highest quality service and support you have been accustomed to from tSGi.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to call me at 1-800-798-9862. ♦

Win a Palm Pilot™ or Blackberry™ From ROC Software

tSGi is pleased to announce a strengthening of our affiliation with ROC Software, the world's leading Data Center Management Solutions provider. We have developed a relationship with ROC Software because we understand the environment and challenges that face manufacturing organizations. We want to offer solutions to respond to those challenges.

Please contact the Support Group, inc. at 1-800-798-9862 so that we can discuss how ROC products can protect your investment in MANMAN™ and your HP e3000 by:

- Ensuring successful on-time processing
- Managing your output
- Protecting your data integrity
- Ensuring smoother operations
- Saving you money

The first 100 respondents will get a ROC T-shirt and be entered in a drawing for a Palm Pilot™ or Blackberry™ (your choice). The drawing will be held on December 2, 2001.

Is your EDI project eating up your budget?

by John Simonich

It has become evident to those who are moving forward with EDI projects, especially in today's economy, that the up-front costs of implementing EDI are impeding their ability to tackle other critical priorities. the Support Group, inc. has developed an alternative approach to help with such budgetary constraints. It's our turnkey EDI solution—asp4edi.com. asp4edi.com provides a full time staff that is dedicated to implementing, monitoring, and managing your EDI system remotely. If your IT staff is bouncing back and forth between EDI and other priorities, their ability to make the needed daily adjustments is compromised by being spread too thin. With asp4edi.com, not only can you offload the difficulties associated with EDI projects, but you can also distribute the costs over time. the Support Group inc. provides a variety of custom EDI solutions to fit the needs of your company, and best of all *asp4edi.com can help the bottom line right now.* This can make all the difference in the world when times are tough. If you are faced with the prospect of an EDI project or are spending too much time with your current system, call me at 1-800-798-9862 and I'll be happy to provide you with more information about our EDI solutions.

Shaggy's Desk

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both the casual and Power User, relies only on current and backlog order data, and therefore provides the view of only what is real business today as opposed to "crystal ball" trending. SupplyPoint has "Webinars" every Thursday and Friday at 11:00 Pacific Time. Let me know if you are interested and I'll get you signed up.

I will be viewing a demo of a new CRM product for MANMAN™ called Sales Maker from Software Innovations in the morning, so I'll have a new exciting product to write about next time. Until then, Bye Y'all, see you next issue. I'm dancing on.

Shaggy Carey

HARDWARE NEWS

✓ As you know by now, the HP e3000 A-Class and N-Class computer systems are out in the real world. All reports are excellent. Besides the increased performance of the new CPU's, the other big news is the new PCI I/O interface. The old NIO architecture only supports up to 32MB/second disk-to-computer transfer speed while the new PCI architecture supports data transfers up to 440MB/second. There are no known problems running MANMAN™ on MPE/iX 7.0. We were part of the testing last December in Cupertino of the early phases on the new e3000's.

✓ Do you want to order HP products via the Web and still be able to turn to the Support Group, inc. for services, consultation, and support? Now you can—through the HP Web Associate Program. This program allows you to order HP products and services, easily and at your convenience, from a Web site maintained by HP and the Support Group, inc. You get the peace of mind of ordering directly from HP while continuing to benefit from our existing business relationship.

✓ The program couldn't be easier. Once registered, you simply place orders on our Web site, which is co-branded with HP. If you prefer, you can also place your orders with a live telesales representative, or we can order on your behalf. You'll get the same competitive prices we have always offered. Currently, through the HP Web Associate Program, you can order most HP commercial products and services, including HP Netervers, HP desktop PCs, HP Omnibook notebook PCs, HP Jornada handheld PCs, HP printing and imaging, storage, and networking products, and HP Supportpacks.

✓ Just register as a "Business Account" at www.bstore.hp.com/web/associate/supgrp.

Fill out the information and you are ready to order online. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call the Support Group, inc. for further information at 1-800-798-9862.

✓ A few reminders:

- 9x7 support ends in April 2002
- MPE/iX Release 7.0 will not run on 9x7's
- 9x7 Trade-ins will end October 31, 2001
- 9x8, 9x9ks, and 99x support ends in 2006

Thank you, Donnie Poston

Forecasting for Demand (FD) 6.0

Forecasting and Planning for Sales and Operations

General Benefits

Within any kind of business, sales forecasting *drives* planning, budgeting, and control with respect to products, marketing, sales, production resources, inventory, human capital, and financial expectations. Because sales forecasting has such leverage, improvements in accuracy mean cost savings across many functions as well as increased sales.

Characteristics

Industrial strength
Comprehensive
Integrated
General purpose—implemented by companies in wide variety of industries

Forecasting functionality

Supports multiple hierarchies
Automatically fits and applies optimal statistical models
Supports and manages input from sales personnel in the field
Supports marketing judgment forecasting
Provides notes, conditions, and reasons tracking for management forecast adjustments.
Automatically detects and reports forecast errors and over-achievements
Robust set of reports for performance evaluation and planning by units, revenue, cost, margin, and resource quantities
Complete capability to view forecast by different criteria
Sales and operations planning

Inventory management functionality

Optimizes safety stocks
Evaluates carrying costs for ranges of customer service policies, lead-time changes, and forecast accuracy improvements
Provides service parts inventory management
Supports distributed requirements planning

Technical aspects

Windows or Linux based multiple-tier software architecture
Works with any ERP system or database, including those running Oracle, Sybase, Informix, DB2, Microsoft SQL-Server, or Interbase running on a non-windows platform

McConnell Chase Software Works
360 East Randolph Street (312) 540-1508
Suite 1603 fax (312) 540-1597
Chicago, IL 60601 jkm@mcconnellchase.com



GET 40% OFF COGNOS® POWERHOUSE®!

This is a fantastic opportunity for you to upgrade your HP e3000 and take advantage of the Cognos special savings. As a reseller through our partner, Client Systems, we can quote Cognos upgrades.

However, if you want to explore all of your options, there is an alternative called DataNow!

If you are considering leaving Cognos, call us at 1-800-798-9862 about this option.

Data Quality

(Continued from page 1)

From where I sit, observing mass volumes of input on the subject, the Number One problem with new applications software implementation is the same problem you are having with your current system: lack of superior data quality based on ownership by highly motivated and well trained employees.

Simply put: if you don't have enough thoroughly trained, caring, creative users, you can't succeed, much less exceed your expectations.

Examine the differences in the quality of data in different fields/elements in your own Item Master, for example. The accounting data tends to be fairly accurate, but other fields are almost arbitrary (description), seemingly random to most users (class code 3), or merely defaulted (the same in every record, like actual cost). Why is the accounting data more accurate? Maybe it has something to do with the person responsible for its maintenance.

It takes a lot of effort to maintain every field in MANMAN™'s IM in near "perfect" condition. How many hours per day would be required if there were 10,000 active part numbers? It would, in my opinion, surprise you to see that it would take dozens of people working 12-hour days.

So, what can be done about people power issues? There are only two alternatives: poor quality or automated mass updates. I think "12-hour days" is the answer in most small companies today. On the other end of the spectrum large companies suppos-

edly have armies of users with specific, limited, procedural processes to perform, some of them almost mindlessly. That leaves the majority in the middle, the standard company using MANMAN™. That's probably your company. Maybe you relate more strongly to the smaller company described above than the larger one. The point is that some people in your own organization are more "responsible" for their data than others.

What can be done to improve quality of data? You've read it in these pages before: assign ownership. Have consequences. It's called "discipline" because there's punishment involved, apparently a very politically incorrect concept in today's business context. There's nothing more important than the accurate maintenance of your company's most valuable asset: information about you customers, partners, employees, products, and processes. How can you plan if you don't know where you are?

Trust is all about what has become known as "the transparency of the process." Decisions are made in the open based on information freely accessible for all to see and use, making for understanding rather than mere compliance. If the employees of your company know how or why decisions and plans are made you'll nurture their trust. Although including people who do not have any part in the decision may seem irrelevant in the beginning, in the long run they'll learn that their input matters.

Feelings of involvement and support for abilities and personal growth, not forced compliance, are the way to motivate behavior that produces the quality levels needed to succeed with something as comprehensive as ERP. The users have to care if the data is correct because it is their data. Ownership gives individuals pride because they know their co-workers depend on them to do a good job. It's difficult to miss work when it's fun and you know you're needed. There's no bigger motivator. ♦

I note that the fifth largest ERP supplier, Invensys, is struggling after its purchase of Baan. As long as there are really huge fish whose purpose is to dispose of the sickly stragglers, the really healthy fish tend to remain smaller, quicker, more alert, and very focused. It's the fish that think they are bigger than they are who get sick by trying to swallow something too large in the first place.



PEACE ON
EARTH

tSGI Group, Inc.
Box 341270
Austin, TX
78734-0022



We Sell Our Partners' Products

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The Adapter/Manager for IMAGE/SQL
Databases
Model 1—Daily Maintenance
Model 2—The Full Power

ALDON—

Harmonizer—Source Code Comparitor
S/Compare

BLANKET SOLUTIONS—

EDIX/3000™—EDI Subsystem for MANMAN™
LSR—Labor Summary Report

FUTURION—

Forecasting Front End

HILLARY SOFTWARE—

SHEETMATE—Data Management tool
NIGHTWATCH—Fail-safe Event Notification
System
byREQUEST—Electronic Reports Distribution

HEWLETT PACKARD—

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HP9000
Net Servers

IFS:INDUSTRIAL AND FINANCIAL SYSTEMS—

A full line of Client/Server ERP solutions
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Maintenance and Assets Management
ERPApplications 2001™

McCONNELL CHASE SOFTWARE WORKS—

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FD 6.0—Web-enabled Forecasting

O'PIN SYSTEMS—

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Reveal/3000—Report Address &
Distribution Solution
Reveal/CS—Report Distribution Solution

QUANTUM SOFTWARE—

XactMan™—New Web or C/S Front End
RMS/3000—Routing Remarks and Process
Sheets
IDT/3000—Multi-Plant Transactions that
replace Dataport™ functions
ITS/3000—IMAGE to SQLConversion Utility

QUEST SOFTWARE—

Systems and Performance

ROBELLE—

Supertool—Database Handyman

ROC SOFTWARE—

BackPack™ and more

STR SOFTWARE—

FAX/3000—Application Faxing

SUMMIT SYSTEMS—

Vendor Performance Measurement System
Usage and Transaction Tracking System
Credit and Collection Manager for OMAR™
Multi-Level Component Availability
Production and Variance Report Writer
MRPPegging System
Streamlined Cash Receipts System
Transaction Log Toolbox
Routing Analysis System
Report Viewing System
And Much More!

SUPPLYPOINT—

SCM on the Web for MANMAN™

TELAMON—

Asynch/Bi-synch Connectivity Solutions for
the HPe3000

TRINARY—

EDI Windows™

VESOFT—

MPEX
Security/3000
VEAudit



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