

THOSE SUPPORT *People*

Volume 8, Issue 2

Winter, 2002

When Manufacturing Experience Matters

by Chuck Combs

When evaluating a new manufacturing application, you want to be sure you have the best possible information available to make your decision. Many companies have made decisions based on name recognition alone and have ended up paying thousands of dollars more than was originally budgeted. In some cases, the conversion has then been abandoned with nothing (but cruel experience) to show for it. When evaluating ERP applications, turn to experts who have the knowledge and experience in ERP applications and manufacturing, and who will give you the facts you need to make an informed decision.

the Support Group, inc. began as a service organization providing technical consulting and support to the MANMAN™ community. Over time, we expanded our expertise and manufacturing offerings to include several software applications. Our strategic partnerships allow us to offer our customers a broad range of solutions designed to meet their unique business requirements. We understand that no two companies are exactly alike, and we tailor solutions to fit each of our customer's needs.

Whether you have 20 users or 2000, we have the right solution. Our product offerings take advantage of tried and proven

(See *Manufacturing Experience*, page 4)



Disaster Planning

by Rob Gentry

O'Leary's corollary to Murphy's Law points out that "Murphy was an optimist." After the last six months, we must all think positive and know that it will be a good year. But—there is always a but—we are also responsible to CYA (Control Your Accountability) to minimize the effects of challenges to the system as much as we can.

September brought into sharp focus the ever-present issue of what to do should a disaster strike our systems. Are you prepared? Do you have an alternative means of providing system access to your user community? Or, at the very least, can you recover what you have already done?

(See *Disaster Planning*, page 5)

Trusted Advisor

What Has Really Changed?

You should be aware by now that Hewlett Packard has announced the end of support for their HPe3000 platform at the end of 2006. Although HP has provided a good plan and seems to be focusing on migration from the platform, there is, in our opinion, no reason to change any of your plans for the next 3 to 5 years.

If you planned to leave MANMAN™ in the next 3 years anyway, then the announcement has no impact at all. Otherwise, whether you planned to stay on MANMAN™ "forever" or just for "a few more years," the HP announcement does not necessarily force you to change your plans within the next 5 years.

Prior to November 14th, when HP made the "death of MPE" announcement, we
(See *Trusted Advisor*, page 4)

From Shaggy's Desk

What are your plans after the November 14th announcement about the sunset date for your HPe3000? What will your company do now?! Will you move off of MANMAN™, and if so to what new ERP system? It may take your company up to two years to choose, purchase, train and implement a new system; so the sooner you start to make your move, the better. For this reason, it will be very important for your company to send you to the CAMUS conference in Denver this May. Every MANMAN™ company attending the conference will be facing the same decision that your company is facing. There will be lots of discussion on what the best plans and options are for MANMAN™ users.

tSGi will have a booth at CAMUS, as always, and we want to schedule a meeting with your company representatives. Plan to spend an hour with us to discuss your future. Give us a chance to go over what we feel will be the best transition plan for your company. The time is now to book your slot for some frank discussions! We are not only MANMAN™ experts. Our general-purpose Manufacturing expertise is what tSGi was founded on. Call me at 1-800-798-9862 to schedule an appointment to sit down with our consultants who will share their knowledge and opinions about your options. We have spent years researching the alternatives for you because we all knew this day would come. Don't worry, we have options for both big and small companies.

Now that I've got that out of the way, I want to tell you that we have just seen a demo of a software product that can help your company achieve the best possible bottom-line results by helping your CEO, President or other upper management make decisions on how to measure the company's profit gap. We can make it work with MANMAN™ or any other ERP package. It's called Profit! The Enterprise Optimizer. Terry calls it "Beyond Effectiveness and Efficiency: Global Optimization on an Enterprise Scale."

You're probably asking, "What is Enterprise Optimization and why is it useful to the president of my company?" Profit!™ is a management decision support tool that allows your management team to reveal the hidden opportunities that exist in your business. Our greatest opportunities for profit improvement are hidden by complexities. To coordinate procurement, production, and sales activities for optimal overall results is a complex task—it requires us to do the right things in the right amounts at the right times. Enterprise management is a primary task at any size enterprise.

Dr. Eugene Bryan, founder of BestPossible, says, "Every day, thousands of companies fall short of their best possible business results. It's not because they're doing a poor job, but because the opportunities for the most dramatic improvement are hidden. They're hidden in the complexities of the business. Someone once said that managing an enterprise is like playing chess on a 3 dimensional board...blindfolded."

These complex opportunities involve tradeoffs and ripple effects of many interacting variables that cannot be properly balanced without the use of optimization technology. You can tell that I didn't write that sentence, but we can all understand the role that math and statistics can play in decision-making. Profit!™ is the essential technology for enterprise optimization. It enables refined planning, coordination, and control of all business functions using all that data you have in MANMAN™. It puts departmental decisions into company-wide context so that all managers can work together for best possible bottom-line results.

Profit!™ can assist you in achieving the best possible results by giving you a road map to maximize your profits. Measurable profit improvement will start accruing during the first few months of system use through:

- ♦Improved coordination of company-wide activities
- ♦Increased revenue through optional utilization of market opportunities
- ♦Improved use of manufacturing capabilities and procurement options
- ♦Reduced manufacturing costs through optimal use of machines and work crews



- ♦Increased productivity through optimum use of production capabilities
- ♦Optimal product mixes with timely adjustments based on changing market opportunities
- ♦Quantitative assessments and adjustments of profit-limiting constraints

Maximized profit comes from the best-possible balance between added value and associated costs. The system can be used to weigh all profit-sensitive factors as it works to identify strategies, production choices and sales emphases that will add to company profits. Profit!™ offers a number of other benefits:

- ♦Improved use of capital through fully objective, comprehensive evaluations of investment options supported by pro forma profits projections
- ♦Better strategic planning through convenient examination of many alternatives
- ♦Improved internal and external communications
- ♦Improved annual planning and budgeting based on optimum use of production facilities and pursuit of market opportunities
- ♦Improved use of available financing and debt options
- ♦Congruence between strategic, tactical, and operational planning

The exciting part is that whatever is “best possible” for your company this year will improve by pushing toward the “better possible” of the future. Changing the playing field while still in forward motion is a complicated endeavor. Your managers need guidance.

We want you to come by our booth at CAMUS so we can discuss this exciting product and let you meet the father of the concept, Eugene L. Bryan, who will teach you, “The perpetual goal of ongoing change management should be enterprise optimization—meaning best possible results.”

On a personal note, my Dance with Cancer update is that I'm in remission and only have to take a pill once a day. NO MORE CHEMOTHERAPY! I'm so very lucky, but of course you can't keep a good girl down! Bye y'all, see you next issue.

Make Sure Your Cost Accountants Get a Copy of This Information

Does your cost accountant think MANMAN™ costing updates are a pain? Now you can come to their rescue with the help of Summit Systems' new Cost Rollup System. MANMAN™ users have been waiting a long time for these simplifications and improvements to its costing functionality. Thanks to Summit Systems the wait is over!

While we might all agree that the MANMAN™ costing system is sound, few would say it is simple to use. With sufficient utilities for cost maintenance and a reasonably well-defined audit trail, changes to the standard costs on an active part in MANMAN™ require the user to run a minimum of three commands with even more time needed for the lower level components and subassembly commands.

In contrast, Summit Systems' Cost Rollup System gives you a single command to update the component cost, automatically roll the cost up at each level of the bill of material and write the adjusting entries to the transaction log. In addition, this Summit Systems enhancement allows you to archive existing standard and current costs before updating or changing costs. The archived costs are maintained in a separate database with an audit log of changes to costs which includes the date of the change, the name of the user who performed the change and both the before and after costs.

(see Cost Accounting, next page)



Trusted Advisor

(continued from page 1)

had many companies interested in upgrading from their older HP3000 to one of the new "A" Class or "N" Class machines. Most of those companies have now put those decisions on hold while they re-evaluate their options.

The realities of migration are painful and involve a lot of work in detailed planning and execution. To think that there is only one way to implement and that it's the same for every company and every situation is naïve. Every conversion from one system to another is different; there is no standard method that always works. Any company that buys into the "we've done this many times before" promise is going to be disappointed to learn how much they have lost and how much it really did cost to migrate. So please don't use the HP announcement as an excuse to leave MANMAN™. There may be good reasons for your company to move from MANMAN™, but the end of MPE in 2006 is not one of them.

Just to make our plans very clear: tSGi intends to support MANMAN™ and MPE after 2006. We think that there will still be companies running MANMAN™ on the HPe3000 into the next decade. How many of your companies stay on MANMAN™ is the only question we have, not whether any of you will take that path. We will be here working on MANMAN™ until there is no longer a need for our services.

tSGi will continue to provide our Level III and Level IV support agreements and we think many of you will choose to save your money and stay on MANMAN™ with our help. Just to refresh your memories: Level III makes us your IT staff and Level IV moves your HPe3000 to our facilities. If one of the big reasons you think you should leave MANMAN™ is that it will be difficult to find people who know FORTRAN and MPE, we have the solution: our Level III support. If another reason is that it will be difficult to support your "obsolete" hardware platform, we also have a solution for that: Level IV support. For more reasons to outsource your MANMAN™ IT needs, see the related article on Outsourcing on page 6 in this issue.

So, if you like MANMAN™ and want to stay on MANMAN™, HP's announcement should make no difference to your plans. Five years is forever in this business. Don't feel like you are being forced into a migration you do not want. If you planned to buy a new "A" or "N" Class HPe3000, go ahead with that agenda. A community of MPE fanatics is still out there and they (we) will be around for at least another 10 years. Nothing has really changed. ❖



Manufacturing Experience

(Continued from page 1)

technologies, our personnel have years of industry and application experience providing consulting services to the Manufacturing Industry, and our team can deliver results quickly and efficiently providing cost effective solutions. We have the capacity to plan and execute large-scale complex projects. We believe our success depends upon the success of our customers, so we strive to build long-term relationships with our clients, working closely with them to leverage their investment in technology.

If you are looking into migrating from MANMAN™, let us help you study your options. Our team has a strong foundation with expertise in manufacturing applications, and we can provide custom application design, implementation and data migration. For more details, please contact us at **1-800-798-9862** or email me at ccombs@supgrp.com. ❖

Cost Accounting

(continued from previous page)

The database also includes two new cost sets, "Proposed" and "Temporary", as well as the utilities to manage the cost sets and move the costs to the item master record.

Bravo, Summit Systems!

Please call us **1-800-798-9862** for a free 60-day trial of this exciting new enhancement from Summit Systems or reply to scarey@supgrp.com for more information. ❖

Plan now to attend the CAMUS Conference in De



Disaster Planning

(Continued from page 1)

Recently, we were asked to assist in the recovery of a system that had an out-of-balance G/L. During our analysis of the system we discovered that backups were on a two-week revolving cycle, with no end-of-month or end-of-year archiving policy. So there was no way to go back. Oops. The issue was resolved, but it took quite a bit of time on the part of the client and our staff. The implementation and use of proper backup policies and procedures would have had the issue resolved in less than an hour.

This is an extreme example, but it makes a point about how to handle archived files. How far back can your user community recover information? If you must restore the entire system this afternoon from the latest backup, can the users re-enter what they did? Is the entire system, including source and executable code, available? If that specific tape is bad and cannot be read, can the users recover two days worth of input?

A related issue is which end-of-month tape to archive: the one before EOM begins, the one after it ends, or both? Does accounting make adjustments to the G/L after everything else is closed, delaying the G/L closing for a period, meaning that the real EOM files are not archived? Could they recover the information if a restore was necessary from the EOM archive tape?

How do you archive the end-of-year files? Do you take into consideration the information necessary for federal reporting requirements should you need to go back to a specific period? Again, does the closing of the year wait until adjustments are completed that happen after the new year has already begun? Are you storing important copies off-site?

These are only a few of the points that should be standard procedure, only the "tip of the iceberg" to get you to start thinking about your situation. A complete disaster recovery plan involves hardware issues, communications and interface issues, network alternatives and temporary sites for operating the system during a rebuilding process. Call us at **1-800-798-9862** and we will be happy to discuss the options available to you for this critical matter.

Better not put it off until it's too late. ♦

It's Not the End of the World

By Donnie Poston

Well, we've had time for the dust to settle from Hewlett Packard's announcement about the end of life-cycle for the HPe3000. From our perspective, we see customers taking a serious look at the prospect of having the best e3000 for as long as it is available. The year 2006 is a long way off in real life, but very close in the world of migration. We feel this is the perfect time frame. It allows you to enhance the performance of your current environment while giving you ample time to decide on the future of your operations. Third party support is also available, allowing you to continue using the HPe3000 beyond 2006, if you so desire.

If you are planning on migrating to a UNIX-based system, now is the time to purchase an A or N Class e3000. HP will convert any A or N Class e3000 to UNIX at no charge. This allows you to have the best e3000 for your current system with the comfort of knowing you will not have to turn around and budget for new hardware when you convert to a new UNIX platform.

Speaking of migration, we at tSGi have years of experience with MANMAN™ and the HPe3000, assisting our customers with their migration efforts. We realize that every company is different so providing several options is our way of doing business. Now is the time to start planning, and whether you are planning to stay with your HPe3000 and MANMAN™ or migrate, we are here to assist you.

If you are looking for the best performance, you'll be interested to know that Digidesign recently benchmarked their jobs on an A500 single processor. The timesavings alone were enough to convince Digidesign to move to the A500. For more information on this testing please contact me or talk to us at the CAMUS conference.

I also want to mention that ROC Software is offering great discounts and pricing through the Support Group, inc. I will be glad to provide the information, just give me a call at **1-800-798-9862** or email me at dposton@supgrp.com. Thank you. ♦

Denver, May 19-22, 2002! To register, go to www.camus.org



Outsourcing— Not just a Make vs. Buy Decision for Manufacturing

by Terry H. Floyd

Is your company's expertise applying IT to gain competitive advantage, or making a business case for IT projects, or understanding business processes and implementing systems to improve them? No. That's why you outsource some of your IT services.

How do you decide what services to outsource? Why not just outsource everything? The standard answer is that you want to focus on your "core competencies." But there are several other considerations and reasons to outsource:

- To reduce and control costs
- To gain capabilities/expertise
- To free up internal resources
- To free up capital funds
- To focus, focus, focus

Speaking of "core competency", try applying that phrase to your IT department instead of to your entire organization. Is your IT department's key role "support"? If so, your IT department may never be perceived as critical to your business. To be a critical part of your business, IT must *be* the business. In other words, rather than focusing on internal support you could be implementing new strategies for using the information that has become so vital to your company: information about your people, your products, your methods, and how to sell your company's benefits against your competitors. ♦

The first question at the Management Roundtable session at HPWorld last year was: "What is your definition of a Trusted Advisor?" HP's answer was, essentially, "understanding your business." Our answer is: Telling you about all of your options and truthfully discussing the weaknesses of the products and services we sell, as well as their strengths.

Is "peddling advice" a bad thing? Promising "instant answers" obviously is, so we want to avoid that. But in many ways, our company is involved with mentoring and advising, which could also be called peddling advice.



Overheard in the tSGi break room: "I'd hate MANMAN™ too if I had to work on that customer's computer." And when we try to tell their IT Manager that they really need a new computer, we hear: "It's not in our budget this year. We can't afford it." Yeah, right. But that company can afford to have 40 users sitting on their hands waiting for a prompt? Such waiting not only makes users lose concentration, get frustrated and complain about MANMAN™, but it hurts productivity, which affects the bottom line.



A friend called the other day and asked how our company was doing. When he heard that we still had about 20 employees, the same number we've had for the last 4 years, he was disappointed. He thinks we're not growing. Our answer to that is that we don't need more people because we have become so much more efficient.

Can 20 people do more than 200 people? Our answer is a resounding "Yes!" If they are the right people. Especially if they have lots of friends. And because we are more efficient, we are "cheaper".

Should the word "cheaper" always have a bad connotation? We think not. It's sometimes just a statement about price, not about quality. If you can go buy the same brand of product at less cost, it is obviously cheaper and, since it's exactly the same product, there is no value statement. But *our business is support*.

Shopping for software support is not as cut and dried because it's not the same product—quality becomes an intangible, a value judgement. We know that we are better, and we definitely cost less than your alternatives. That's why reference selling is so important to our business. We think we can prove to you through our references that we are as good as, if not better than any other organization at solving your problems with MANMAN™ and our mission is helping you to use your system more effectively. The quality of our service isn't cheap but our prices are.



Y'all Come Visit Our Lake View Office!



You'll know you're in the right place when you see our sign.



Maybe Terry will take you up on the roof for a great view of Lake Travis (on the other side of the Van Buren's house).



If you visit on Friday, you can share lunch. Sometimes Terry cooks hamburgers, hot dogs or fajitas on the grill. That's a sizable lobster on David's plate!



No tour is complete until you've seen the "Computer Garden" out back. Yes, it gets wet when it rains.



MPE
Forever!

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