



## So You Want to Be a Salesman . . .

As we set out to become network experts, I think we need to decide what specific goal we have for the project. For our customers the network isn't the permanent solution, UNIX is. We want to ease the transition and protect their investment in DOS based systems.

Since most of what we are being asked for falls into the client-server category, we will spend our time on this approach. We have selected a networking approach consisting of a UNIX based server and DOS based clients because of cost efficiency and knowledge transference. The same hardware can be used for either a Novell network or a UNIX-hosted network, and I think the Netware-386 retail price of \$7,995 is a very big obstacle. Using less than a 386 version is too much of the DOS world's problem now, so we wouldn't consider doing so. A UNIX host should have a substantial price advantage, and the added attraction that we know our way around the environment.

The functions that a network normally provides are file server and print server, with some differences in the file server area. Print server is pretty much a "no brainer" for UNIX, partially because DOS print capabilities are so primitive. File serving tends to be pretty straight forward until you want to make a DOS application cooperate with more than one user when it doesn't want to. In most cases my dominant opinion is that multi-user tasks should be run on UNIX and single user work is OK for DOS. Altos has provided MS-NET compatibility for those DOS applications that are designed for sharing.

With the availability of increasing numbers of productivity packages, and the long time advantage that UNIX enjoys in relational database capability, there should be an eventual transition to UNIX based software. UNIX is extremely well suited to accounting so there is little reason to consider a DOS solution there. I can't think of many occasions that an essential package is only available under DOS.

In our sales approach, we try to teach that the network is the interim stop on the way from DOS to UNIX. If they are doing desktop publishing, it may be permanent, but there are few other reasons to maintain DOS systems long term.

Our first experiment this month involved a Series 2000 running DOS Server with PC Connection from Altos. We installed a 32 PC lab with four printers at a small college. In general, Altos deserves an A+ for this networking effort. Other than a small error in the documentation there were no bad spots in the process of putting the network up.

Our competition was an IBM RT/PC running AIX with a token ring network. We had a substantial price advantage because of the per card cost, and IBM still has been unable to provide a fully functional network. The network card cost is double, and there is a substantial software cost. Additional disadvantages include the need to keep the software with a particular workstation (a big problem on floppy based stations) and a network that offered a much slower (almost double) response time. The Altos solution won hands down.

About the only drawback to the Altos solution is the fact that they picked OSI protocols. In a couple of years, it may be a great choice, but right now you may feel a little isolated from existing networks.

We were quite happy with the price performance we were able to produce and the fact that we offered a solution from a single source. Our customers perceive that as an advantage because they have never tried to get assistance from Altos. Oops, I better quit now before sarcasm takes over again. Next month we will look at a similar package based upon SCO UNIX.

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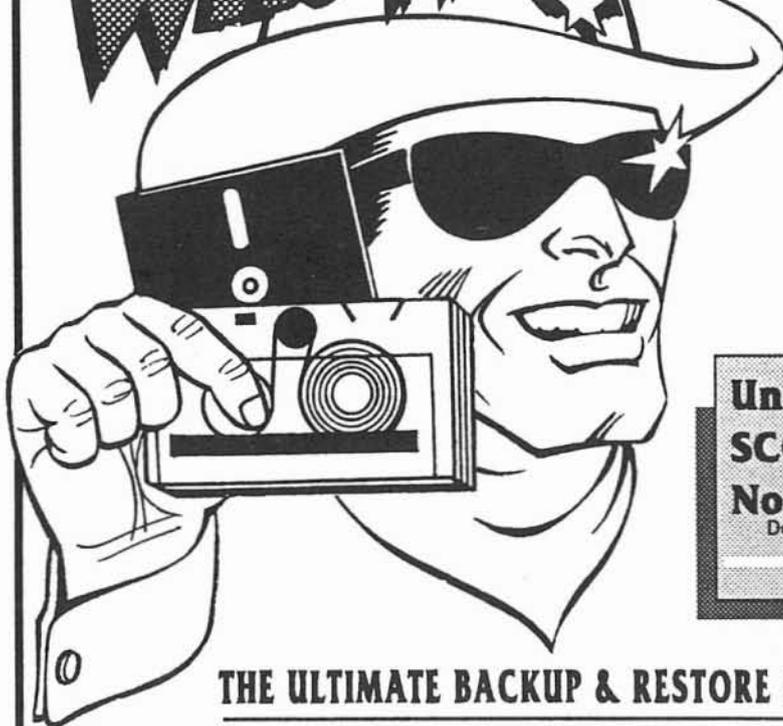


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