Why Buy National Brand Personal Computers?
A Position Statement
by
Information Technology
Fall 1997

Information Technology believes that the most cost effective solution to purchasing personal computers (PCs) for the College is to standardize on one national brand of PC and require all departments to purchase that brand. The brand recommended by Information Technology is Compaq.

In an effort to verify our position, two surveys were recently completed. In a random survey of Texas Community Colleges, five of the seven surveyed (71%) purchase only national brand PC's (Appendix A). A survey of members of the CIO (Chief Information Officer) Discussion Group sponsored by CAUSE revealed that 16 of the 21 respondents (76%) purchase national brand personal computers exclusively (Appendix B).

The reasons the respondents stated for purchasing national brand PC's include:

- Quality of the PC purchased and the quality of the components in the unit.
- Financial stability of the company and long term business presence.
- Three year on-site warranties.
- Reports from Gartner Group and other research firms confirming companies track records.
- The number of technical support staff needed decreased with the purchase of national brand PC's.
- Technical staff time is reduced on hardware issues.
- Technical support staff can spend more time on applications support.
- Technical support staff can spend more time consulting with client offices.
- Decreased cost in hardware, software and networking support issues.
- Major league customer support that can solve most of the few problems that occur.
- Single Point of Contact for trouble calls.
- Hardware standardization.
- Ease of training support personnel on the standard hardware/software configuration.
- National brand manufacturers use standard parts.
- Experience of fewer than average repairs and less down time.
- Compatibility and a consistent quality of components.

Information Technology agrees with the above stated reasons for purchasing national brand PC's. The critical factor is that it is cheaper to own a national brand PC. Over the entire life of the personal computer, the end-user will be able to use the equipment more of the time (less failure and technician intervention needed) and the I.T. staff will spend less time on issues surrounding the national brand PC.

Regardless of the brand, El Paso Community College will only buy computers that:

- Have a three year on-site warranty
- Are Novell Netware Certified
- Are Year 2000 Compliant
- have the option of on-site set-up and installation. This includes setting up the PC, copying software from the existing PC to the new PC and possibly connecting it to the College network.

We currently have bids and RFP's awarded or on the streets for Compaq equipment. All recent purchases of this equipment have been from El Paso companies. The service and support for this equipment comes from the same companies. If for some unforeseen reason the company ceases to
do business in El Paso, we will turn another local company for service and support. We would be unable to do this with a local clone manufacturer.

We have had numerous problems with our last local clone manufacturer's, WTC’s, equipment purchased in the last two or three years. These problems include:

- Units failing on a consistent basis and the errors are not resolved by the vendor. These problems cause frustrating amounts of down time for the end-user and waste large amounts of technical support time by Information Technology staff. A few of the clients that can attest to this fact are Martina Arriaga, Tim Nugent and Pamela Payne.

- Components vary from PC to PC and have little to no documentation. This causes large increases in technical support time per machine leading to longer delays with other clients. For example, different motherboards, hard drives, cd-rom drives and/or memory found in units that are suppose to be "the same".

- Interoperability of the components. Components are not tested to insure that the system will work with major software applications or on our Novell network.

- Lack of major technical support when problems arise.

Information Technology currently has a ratio of one PC Systems Specialist for every 430 PC's. These individuals install new PC's, contact the vendor for warranty repairs, repair PC’s out of warranty, install software including networking software and hardware, provide software support, install upgrades and other PC related support. There are five PC Systems Specialists in place throughout the District with one being hired for the additional load of Mission del Paso.

The Microcomputer Support Unit's mean time per call has increased with larger numbers of locally manufactured clones. This in turn increases our mean response time to a call and inversely affects our efforts to increase customer service to our clients. National Brand computers can be upgraded and use industry standard components. These features allow the College to lengthen the life of the computer after the warranty period and easily find the needed repair parts.

There are three ways to remedy this situation:

I. Create a larger support staff. With the recent method of purchasing any brand of personal computer, the number of problems multiply by the number of variables added to the equation. This large, broad support picture requires fewer numbers of PC's per technical support person. The ratio for the breadth of support our Specialists provide should be 200 to 1.

II. Outsource the support for some number of Personal Computers. We could issue an RFP for this support and localize it to a campus or center.

III. Standardize the Personal Computers purchased by El Paso Community College to one national brand. This will reduce the support required of Information Technology staff and increase the up-time for the end-user. This will only be evident after a majority of the PC’s are from one national manufacturer.

This issue is not a simple one. Many factions have made the selection of PC’s a "religious issue". This decision should be made on facts. The facts support the selection of one national manufacturer of PC’s.

Information Technology's goal is to provide the best customer service possible to our clients. One decision that could assist us in achieving this goal is to standardize the College's personal computer purchases.
## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

Standardization of PC's
at
Community Colleges in Texas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community College</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Have you standardized on a brand of PC?</th>
<th>What brand?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alamo</td>
<td>Dr. Charles Burmiester</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin</td>
<td>Lou Herman</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Dell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisco Junior College</td>
<td>Ms. Sandy Benefield</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Gateway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collin County</td>
<td>Mr. Jim Hysaw</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Tangent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McLennan</td>
<td>Mr. Bill Bane</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Harris</td>
<td>Mr. Ron Stauss</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>HP, Compaq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarrant County</td>
<td>Dr. Mary Rode</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Dell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community College</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Have you standardized on a brand of PC?</th>
<th>What brand?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUNY Alfred State College</td>
<td>Dr. Bruce Longo</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baylor University</td>
<td>Don Hardcastle</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Dell &amp; Mac's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concordia University</td>
<td>Hal Whelply Jr.</td>
<td>No (local vendor)</td>
<td>Microexpress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox Valley Technical College</td>
<td>Ken Schindler</td>
<td>No (local vendor)</td>
<td>Omni Tech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends University</td>
<td>Steve Dickerson</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Multiple Tier I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goshen College</td>
<td>Michael Sherer</td>
<td>No (local vendor)</td>
<td>One Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardin Simmons University</td>
<td>Terry Bratton</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Dell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Hawaii</td>
<td>David Lassner</td>
<td>No (local vendor)</td>
<td>Not Stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humber College of Applied Arts &amp; Technology</td>
<td>Ruth McLean</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not Stated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>