วารสารวิทยบริการ Academic Resources Journal

Volume 10
Number 2 *November 1988*

Article 11

11-1-1988

What Happens When The Microcomputer Arrives?

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ดังที่ทราบกันดีอยู่แล้วว่าการนำเทคโนโลยีไมโครคอมพิวเตอร์มาใช้ในหน่วยงาน จะทำให้เกิดการเปลี่ยนแปลงหลายอย่างหลายประการ บทความนี้ได้ให้ข้อคิดว่าหน่วยงานควรจะมีการเตรียมการอย่างไรบ้าง เพื่อให้การนำเอาระบบไมโครคอมพิวเตอร์มาปรับใช้ เป็นไปอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ ก่อนอื่นผู้เขียนได้เริ่มโดยการแนะนำอย่างสั้น ๆ ว่า "ไมโครคอมพิวเตอร์" คืออะไร ต่อจากนั้นจึงได้วิเคราะห์ถึงประเด็นของการเตรียมรับการใช้ไมโครคอมพิวเตอร์ นับแต่การศึกษาเกี่ยวกับปฏิกิริยาและความวิตกกังวลของเจ้าหน้าที่ในหน่วยงาน การชี้ให้เห็นถึงประโยชน์การใช้ระบบไมโครคอมพิวเตอร์ การเตรียมเจ้าหน้าที่ ตลอดจนถึงการอบรมเจ้าหน้าที่ในที่สุด

What Happens When The Microcomputer Arrives ?

Pimrumpai Premsmit[*]

As everyone knows the advent of microcomputer technology has brought about many changes. Managers should be prepared for staff reactions to the changes that will take place. By planning carefully, their successful adoption can be achieved.

What are microcomputers ?

"Microcomputer" is a generic term used for small computers such as home computers, personal computers, and desk top computers. Its capabilities range from one user performing one task, as a personal computer, to many users performing several functions, as in multi-user system. Basic components of the microcomputer are a keyboard, a screen that looks like television monitor, disk drives, and a printer. Functions of the microcomputer are controlled by a central processing unit, usually known as a CPU.

The use to which mirocomputers can be put are varied. They can be used for communications such as sending messages, for simple word-processing, for information storage and retrieval, or for sharing resources between organizations.

When considering the application of microcomputers, it is important to consider the following :

Staff Reactions

Some staff may eagerly accept the microcomputer, others may resist it, and some may ignore it. Pritcher offers three categories of reactors : enthusiasts who genuinely like technology, pragmatists who concerned with what the machine can do, and resisters who are afraid of technology in all its forms.

There is no doubt that the microcomputers can put pressure on employees. Many people find any change difficult to accept ; it disrupts their routines and their comfortable situations.

Staff Concerns

Even though everybody can be brought to understand that eventually microcomputers will help them, they worry at first about extra burdens that they will have to assume. Uncertainty about the future and their own abilities may cause resistance to change in some people. Some may feel intimidated for fear that their skills are inadequate and that they cannot learn. They may react negatively at the thought of being trained to use the microcomputers which "they may consider as unnatural technology, difficult to master and the learning is non-incremental". They may also fear that they will be evaluated by a new set of standards, and this can cause anxiety. Microcomputers may indeed bring new demands, and many of these may be threatening to employees.

Managers should be well aware of their staff reactions and try to overcome fears and resistance that may occur. Getting people involved with microcomputers is not an easy task. By demonstrating the benefits of the microcomputers, the managers can encourage the staff to integrate microcomputers in their work. The successful implementation of microcomputers, may thus, be enhanced.

Benefits

The way that the microcomputers are used in the organization depends mostly on the type of work needed to be done. Basic tasks effectively

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performed by the use of microcomputers are mostly administrative support systems. These tasks include word-processing, record and file keeping, and accounting and budgeting.

Among the other benefits that microcomputers can accomplish are : reducing redundant tasks, compiling statistics and updating files.

If the staff have been led to understand that the microcomputers will help them do their job more effectively, and increase their work performances, they should be willing to participate in the introduction and ongoing process of implementing the use of microcomputers.

Preparing the staff

When the microcomputer arrives, obviously a new system will be introduced. Computer literacy will be required at all levels of the staff. Librarians, for example will need more training than an M.L.S. or library experience can provide. They should be versed in library automation planning.

Staff preparation can be done even before the arrival of the microcomputer. Management should inform their staff of their reasons for putting the microcomputers in the workplace ; what the microcomputers can and cannot do. At the same time the management should encourage feedback from them. By informing the staff and receiving feedback, the managers will include the staff in their decision making. This is a good strategy which leads to more positive attitudes and acceptance of change.

Training

The next step that should be done is providing training to the staff to equip them to use the microcomputers. Due to differing staff backgrounds, ranging from the person who has never touched computers to the more experienced and knowledgeable personnel, the design and plan for training should be targeted to each group. A skill assessment should be done first. A system analyst or program designer can conduct interviews with the staff to evaluate their skills and the aptitudes together with level of computer knowledge.

Managers should of course pay attention to the training program and provide ongoing support, keeping in mind that the best learning takes place in a non threatening environment and may require repetition.

Training and continuing education for staff can be divided into three phases. The first one is how to operate the microcomputers. The second is how to integrate them into their tasks. And the third is how to anticipate needs. These phases should be planned thoroughly to avoid stress. The planning for training should be carefully done by providing a non threatening and positive atmosphere to help overcome resistance and anxieties. Enough time should be provided to assimilate new ideas and concepts. To keep staff self-motivated and productive, management should reassure them that the training will improve their skills and productivies and that skilled and well-equipped personnel will guide necessary change in a workplace.

To conclude, a successful introduction of microcomputers can best be achieved by thorough and careful planning. Staff reactions and concerns have to be considered. The effective transition depends of course on the cooperation and participation of staff members.

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