

Customized Training Helps Ensure A Successful Implementation

By Peter Molchan

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Those of you who read our first *Compilations* installment (March/April 1995) will remember that one of the “Keys to a Successful Workstation Implementation” was to educate developers with classroom training and reference materials. This aspect of the rollout

process is so critical, it merits careful attention in the Micro Focus Project Plan (*Compilations* May/June 1995) and expanded coverage in this episode of strategies for success from Micro Focus Consulting Services.

In his book, *Using Workbench Development Tools*, Jon Sayles, a Micro Focus Senior Technical Consultant, emphasizes three points for consultants to champion the efforts of Micro Focus Workstation design and system integration:

“Make sure that:

- What you design and implement works;
- Developers don’t turn and flee from the imposing newness of it all; and
- What you design and implement has enough observable benefits to lure developers.”

Note that only point one addresses the technological impact of rolling out a workstation development environment. Points two and three focus on how the all important “human factors” influence a successful workstation rollout. The importance of these human factors is particularly heightened during the initial phases of the workstation rollout when training and associated reference materials are typically delivered for the first time.

To once again quote Jon from *Using Workbench Development Tools*:

“Realize what is *new* in the workstation environment: new hardware, new operating system, new environment, new file types, new file organizations, new data handling issues (collating sequence, packed fields, hex codes), new file handling tools and procedures (upload/download, library management, version control), new database products, new development methodologies and workflows, new development tools (editor, debugger, analysis tools) — and these are just a few of the changes in store for mainframe developers. To dismiss or soft-

sell training requirements during this shift in the methodology for development and delivery of production systems is to expose a workstation implementation effort to risk.

Workstation tools are a powerful technology.

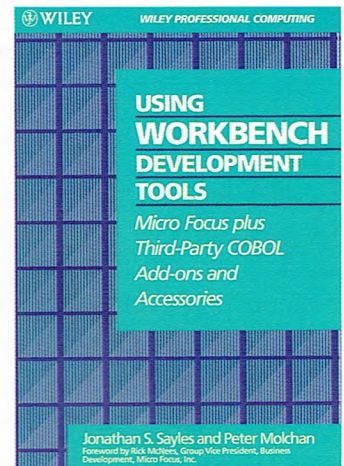
Powerful technologies carry

with them an associated learning curve that is best flattened by quality and thorough training. A minimalist approach to training (“Let’s just get them going on the Workbench, they can figure out the advanced topics on their own”) will produce minimally functional developers, with alarming dependence on help desk personnel and almost no ability to extract productivity gains from the product set.

Successful training will enable developers functionally while generating enthusiasm for the Workstation as a concept.”

Recognizing the need to transition a developer to a new environment with thorough training, the Micro Focus consultant prepares a custom training plan targeting the goals, curriculum and course time frames. A well constructed/executed training plan will level the anxiety curve and reveal the immediate benefits to developers as they apply their newly acquired knowledge to everyday tasks. Micro Focus consultants employ a three tiered approach in mobilizing the workforce:

Reference materials — Prior to the delivery of any formal education, a workstation handbook is prepared by the Micro Focus consultant to address the particulars of the workstation environment. This desk reference is available during classroom training. Additionally or alternatively, on-line reference tools, critical during the early stages of a rollout, can be integrated into the workstation platform



“Using Workbench Development Tools” can be ordered from Micro Focus Publishing.

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Micro Focus Products for UNIXWare 2

Micro Focus will offer several products for Novell®'s UNIXWare™ 2, including version 3.2 of Micro Focus COBOL for UNIX, Toolbox, Dialog System for UNIX and Micro Focus Operating Systems Extensions for UNIX. The combination of UNIXWare and those Micro Focus programmer productivity tools will provide COBOL programmers with a complete, cross-platform UNIX programming environment optimized for the development of commercial client/server and open system applications.

"UNIXWare's easy integration with NetWare and support for industry-standard hardware is well-suited for enterprise applications," said Peter Katz, vice president of Marketing at Micro Focus. "Our cus-

tomers are steadily increasing the deployment of UNIXWare servers. By offering our COBOL tools on UNIXWare 2, we are enabling them to develop new COBOL applications and rehost existing applications to exploit the multi-processing performance and scalability of this business-critical application server."

"The Micro Focus COBOL products offer the perfect solution for MIS as the momentum to rehost mainframe applications continues to grow," commented Don McGovern, vice president of Novell's UNIX Systems Group. "The Micro Focus COBOL products are the obvious choice for the multitude of COBOL programmers moving mainframe applications into client/server environments."

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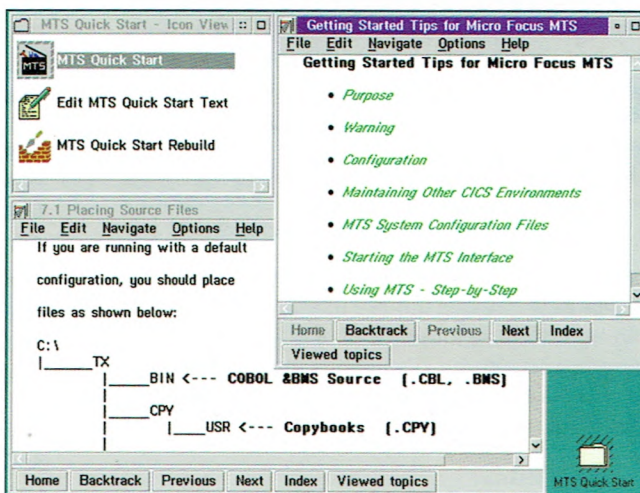
giving developers point-and-click access to critical information.

Classroom training — Classroom training should teach a blend of conceptual topics and items particular to the designed workstation environment, such as subdirectory structures, source control, procedures, software upgrade methodologies, etc., and should be nearly concurrent with the workstation rollout. Micro Focus Training offers a wide spectrum of comprehensive education services from introductory to advanced levels, covering the Workbench and a plethora of add-on topics. The Micro Focus consultant and Micro Focus trainer coordinate the incorporation of custom material into the Micro Focus curriculum to ensure a smooth, cohesive delivery.

Mentoring — The presence of an individual responsible for shepherding the constituents of the workforce through the technology transition is scheduled by the consultant. Mentors must be readily available to respond to questions that arise immediately after training and during the initial stages of the rollout. The Micro Focus consultant often continues on assignment during these early rollout phases both mentoring and transferring knowledge and administrative responsibility to those developers who have championed the technology and will carry on the leadership roles.

On-line Reference Tools

While managing a rollout project, the Consulting Services Division can optionally package two types of customized on-line reference tools:



Quick Start On-line Reference for Micro Focus Transaction System.

The on-line workstation handbook — This guide, called Workbench Standards and Procedures, can be modified to include site-specific details. While working, the developer can easily access the on-line handbook to reference file locations, procedures and guidelines for day-to-day activities. The modifiable shell for this reference tool is in OS/2 hypertext format and requires the OS/2 Developers Toolkit to recompile modifications.

Quick Start on-line help files — These files are typically used as a reference for add-on products and include step-by-step instructions to guide the developer through the experience of getting their first session 'up and running' with their own pro-

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of them has written a system to deliver payroll, or a general ledger, or a core business process."

Today, First Image conducts its rapidly expanding business on fifteen Sun SPARC 20 and SPARC 1000 computers running the Solaris 2.3 operating system on a TCP/IP inter-site wide-area network. New development is carried out with a combination of tools on PC and UNIX platforms. For example, they are currently using Oracle and PowerBuilder to build a relational order entry system, "simply because that made the best sense for this particular application," Altman says.

"The trick is using the right tool for each project," he adds. "When we need a batch process to convert images from machine-readable to human readable

form, we use Micro Focus COBOL. Our developers are striving to achieve a high degree of reusability, so we don't have to rewrite the code each time for each customer. We have begun to implement better inventory management and code management practices, and we are considering Object COBOL™ for upcoming tasks."

Some companies take an all-or-nothing approach to downsizing and client/server, Altman concludes: they want to adopt brand new tools and throw away their old ones. "But don't throw away your hammer just because you think you have a good screwdriver," he says. "For us, sticking with COBOL was a wise decision. It remains one of our core competencies."

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The new MPG has been divided into the following sections:

- Introduction and Support
- Using Workbench Development Tools
- Integration and Compatibility Issues
- Appendices

There are other various improvements that have been requested by customers. For instance, the tables of compatible directives now include all the compiler options available with the most frequently emulated mainframe compilers (OS/VS COBOL and VS COBOL II), with their PC equivalent if appropriate, or with an indication there is no equivalent if that is so.

Also, the documentation on downsizing (rehosting) applications, which was previously part of the Compatibility Guide, is now in the MPG.

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grams. The shell for this reference is in Micro Focus HYHELP format and can be run in either HYHELP or on-line format under DOS, Windows or OS/2 and in Presentation Manager™ format under OS/2.

If you would like a copy of Workbench Standards and Procedures or a Quick Start disk for Micro Focus Transaction System, 370 Assembler or Advanced BMS Screens, that you can tailor to your workstation, please call Stephanie Mitchell at 610-992-3567. Stephanie can also help you with

general information about Micro Focus Consulting and Training Services.

Using Workbench Development Tools, by Jon Sayles and Peter Molchan, Wiley Press, 1993, can be ordered from Micro Focus Publishing, 415-856-4161.

Peter Molchan is the Consulting Services Resources Manager. You can reach him with your questions, comments or suggestions for future topics via fax, at 203-657-3776, or through the Internet at ptm@mfltd.co.uk.

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COBOL is a dynamic language in its own right, with an enormous user base and a future. It is very open and transferable as an application language.
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