



Update

The November News

November 7, 1997

Except for the filing cabinets, life is good.

ISS45's third quarter was another record high for the business, with the RETAIL *partners* coming through big-time. That makes 11 continuous quarters where every one set a record (not counting, of course, Q1-97 that couldn't possibly keep up with the huge Q4-96, but that mark got passed anyway the next quarter). This program just continues to go up and up and up, and that means the dealers are winning and making money. Life is good.

Especially if you get to Centurion Club. March. Hawaii. Then it's really good. No workshops, no order desk, no sales pitches, no food poisoning in foreign countries. Good.

And let's not forget the big price cuts in TeamPoS terminals and PCs. Put yourself in your competitor's shoes for a minute: your price is already 20% higher and the product doesn't work. Now this: an NT system that never goes down at the same price as DOS with every feature on the planet and now the hardware suddenly dropped by 10 or 15%... Don't bother calling home — they don't know who you are and don't care. It was bad enough last year when headquarters went after your service base, and now they're sending direct people to take away your sales accounts. Rumors are they'll cancel you anyway. Sorry, life is not good everywhere. (Hint: try the office fixtures business — see below.)

The Dealer/ICL/Wholesaler relationships continue to be critical to the business, and there's real progress there on several fronts. Similar to the rest of the business, we all will do about twice as much business through the key wholesalers than we did last year. More work to be done, but, like I said before, things are great except for the filing cabinets.

And everyone was scared to death about NT. Think back and remember that feeling, based on what's happening with every other NT PoS system out there. Widespread predictions of 7.4 blood all over the floor. Nope. Three months after the first 7.4 NT stores went in, and still **not one NT-related problem**. The thing is as reliable as a brick. One of our big chains is rolling out 8 ISS45 NT stores per week. No NT issues. Except everyone who's seen **V8** wants it right away. Great looking GUI, plus the Microsoft SQL database. Low-cost SMART *clients*. Ah... Life is good indeed.

And also on the product side, the Frequent Shopper **Roundhouse** host consolidator is coming along right on schedule, and we're close to shipping the release of Frequent Shopper Express Version 2.0 (*Streamliner*) and the FM and Shelf Label Wizards. These new versions can be installed over the old ones at no charge, and do away with the separate database and Electronic Price Book requirements. The Frequent Shopper Express is greatly enhanced, too, and runs with Advanced Promotions.

And don't blink because we're starting to crank up the code machine on ISS45 Version 7.5/8.5, and there will be some great sizzle there. And life will get even better, especially if I could just get these filing cabinets working...

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You see, I've got a lot of files and archives, and when we moved into our new building (it's really *nice* here now) the Properties Administrator told me I needed to get some new special filing cabinets to hold all that stuff. These are major cabinets: eight feet high, rotating on a central axis with a front-and-back set of files, and shelving, locking foot pedals — the works. They said you could cram the whole DTS archives into one of these things. So they were special-ordered four months in advance — *seven thousand bucks!* I couldn't believe the bill.

So we move to the new building and ... where are the new cabinets? Cheryl Schroder and I have 92 boxes of papers in the middle of the hall and nowhere to put them. Cheryl calls the vendor. He apologizes; no order on file. No P.O., no Sales Order, no nothing. What's going on? He says that the salesman who had been with him for 30 years and handled our account had called in sick one morning and died that afternoon. The order never made it into the system. The vendor promised to rush the job, and he does: they arrive in about two weeks, each one in a crate the size of a panel truck.

But they're in pieces. They have to be assembled. It's another week before someone shows up to put them together. But the vendor has sent his "most experienced guy." This would be Bob — eight years experience in the office fixtures assembly business... Bob appears around 10:30 and spends the rest of the day just unpacking these things, and the next day after a couple hours he says sorry, but a lot of the parts are missing and he can't do anything. Cheryl calls the vendor. He apologizes; he'll FedEx the missing parts and we'll have them in three days. Five days pass. Cheryl calls the vendor. He apologizes; he'll trace the parts. A week passes. Cheryl calls the vendor. He apologizes; the parts were unfortunately trucked from St. Louis by Yellow Freight via Glacier National Park and they must be *somewhere*. He'll keep on it.

Meanwhile, all my files, stationery, mailing lists and other stuff is still packed inside the 92 boxes stuck in the hall (in blatant disregard for local fire ordinances).

The missing parts finally arrive three weeks ago. Bob spreads the instructions out on the floor, and it is soon clear that whatever Bob has eight years of experience in, it has nothing whatsoever to do with filing cabinets. Bob is lost: "Install suspension slider 'C' using double 'Z'-bracket under left inner sidewall guard..." — that sort of thing. Bob leaves early to get a few beers. Two days later Bob comes back with a guy named Garcia. At the end of the day there is just a sealed bag of mysterious-looking screws and a small box of parts left over that didn't seem to fit anywhere. The cabinets are now installed against the wall, and they look like the monoliths from *2001*.

Cheryl and I go to work, and in a mere ten minutes, we figure out how to get cabinet "A" opened. We unpack box #1 of 92, full of notebooks, but discover that the shelves were installed two inches too short for notebooks. Just adjust them, right? I don't think so. Replacing the transmission in a transit bus would be easier. With these things, you have to take the entire Monolith apart and modify the shelving suspension hangers all the way down. I (briefly) consider calling Bernard for advice, but Bob-The-Expert-Installer appears a few days later with a toolbox of truly remarkable dimensions. I notice it includes a hammer, which he employs frequently during the day which he otherwise spends swearing at sheet metal screws and muttering to himself about procuring alternate employment. Garcia is nowhere to be seen.

Cut to this very morning, and the notebooks now fit perfectly and ... to make room, Bob has crammed the file drawers so closely on top of one other that they can only open and close if they're completely empty. We tried shutting one drawer, and the Monolith simply ripped all the manila tabs off the folders, and now I don't know *what's* in there anymore.

Cheryl calls the vendor. He apologizes. He says no, Bob hasn't quit yet, and will probably come back some day to make these things work. Maybe after the new year.

They say “What goes around comes around.” But enough already: remember when you got short-shipped on those scanner cables? ***It wasn't my fault!*** Bernard knows about this kind of thing and says that it's OK to call off the bad karma any time now. I'll let you know how it turns out, but in the meantime, good selling down the stretch and Happy Holidays as we finish out an (otherwise) great year.

To your success,

Tony

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