

# Listen, Understand, and Deliver

*by John F. Covin*



*John F. Covin*

**W**e have just completed the first year with our new name, logo, and image. As you recall, our intent in making the changes was to eradicate barriers threatening our world-class technology when we discovered that our image had not kept pace with the elegance of our technology. The name change alone would not attract others to our community, and we knew it.

My sense is that our image is a composite of perceptions from many viewpoints. The M Technology Association projects an image; our peers in the industry judge our technology and solutions; and our users/customers form an increasingly more influential opinion based on how well we meet and M meets their needs.

In addition to the technology itself and the image of our Association, our collective actions as professionals have a major impact on how we are (M is) perceived. If it is true, as some say, that around 90 percent of what we communicate is nonverbal, then we influence our future in very subtle ways. The choices we make as we ply

our craft to solve information-processing problems are important. Specifically, our choice of solutions as we integrate M Technology with other available and emerging technologies communicates a very powerful and clear nonverbal image of our suite of technologies.

We are progressing as a professional Association, as forward-looking developers of a suite of technologies, and in meeting marketplace needs with stellar technology (not because we say so, but because others do). And, even more users/customers will be attracted to our technology (translation: we will expand the market) because they want what we deliver.

---

*Specifically, our choice of solutions as we integrate M Technology with other available and emerging technologies communicates a very powerful and clear nonverbal image of our suite of technologies.*

---

Looking into 1994 and the years beyond, I believe our challenges will have much to do with our ability as information processors to keep pace with the ever-changing needs of our internal and external customers. Individually and collectively, our ability to listen, understand, and deliver in a timely fashion will do as much to attract others to M as any other thing. As with most things, people make the difference.

In the past couple of years, we have been immersed in the concepts of open systems, client/server platforms, and windows and other graphical user interfaces. Our users have been hit with a similar barrage of techno-speak that is both intriguing and perplexing. How do they sort out what is real and what is hype? What can and can't they do with the technological advances? What is compatible and what is incompatible with existing software systems? Who will support the old and new? We are presented today with yet another opportunity to deliver world-class solutions: integrating M's suite of technologies with other systems.

Our users are most likely serving customers whose needs are more dynamic than ever, and need to supply answers in a very short turn-around time. Consequently, they have less time to listen, understand, and request services from us. By the time we get the requests, the customer's original delivery time might well be only a heartbeat away. Users' expectations continue to climb to new heights. We are expected to deliver more sophisticated solutions more quickly than ever before.

---

*Our users have been hit with a similar barrage of techno-speak that is both intriguing and perplexing. . . . what is real and what is hype?*

---

So what does this portend for the future of M Technology? The proof will be in the pudding. While the technologies still explode onto the scene around us, our future depends on our abilities to listen, understand, and deliver. In this era, delivering to a much more sophisticated customer requires more diverse skills than were needed even a couple of years ago. Our users have already been afforded all of the rights of a paying customer, while we are just beginning to craft (sometimes on speculation?) solutions to their problems. What do they want? They insist that we deliver simple and powerfully flexible solutions that will require little support.

It is pertinent that Education and Training are the focus of this issue of *M Computing*. When have any of us ever had so much to learn *so fast*? Our users must learn more about the solutions we deliver as well as their customers' needs. We must learn more about more technology as well as our users' needs.

We are in the midst of an exciting time for technologies and M. But let's not lose sight: The end result or bottom line is all that really matters to our customers. They care not if it is cute, elegant technically, or requires herculean efforts. They just want our solutions to make their jobs easier *now*. They want us to listen, understand, and deliver. When all is said and done, this will be our best marketing plan to attract others to our technology. **M**

---

John F. Covin chairs the M Technology Association. He is the senior vice president for information and client services at SciCor, Inc., of Indianapolis.

---

## 1993-1994 M Technology Association Board of Directors

John F. Covin  
Chair  
SciCor, Inc.  
8211 SciCor Drive  
Indianapolis, IN 46214-2985  
Phone: 317-273-7946  
Fax: 317-273-4030

Thomas C. Salander  
Vice Chair  
Thomas Consulting  
3629 Kimble Road  
Baltimore, MD 21218-2027  
Phone: 410-889-0131

Elliot A. Shefrin  
Treasurer  
NIH/Gerontology Research Center  
4940 Eastern Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21224  
Phone: 410-558-8144  
Fax: 410-558-8321

Richard G. Davis, Ph.D.  
Immediate Past Chair  
Mformation SYStems, Inc.  
P.O. Box 505  
Boylston, MA 01505-0505  
Phone: 508-869-6976  
Fax: 508-869-6008

Michael A. Ginsburg  
Executive Director  
22 Fairview Road  
Canton, MA 02021  
Phone: 617-821-1486

John J. Althouse  
Member at Large  
J.J. Althouse & Associates  
645 Lexington Road  
Concord, MA 01742  
Phone: 508-369-6076  
Fax: 508-369-5623

David A. Holbrook  
Member at Large  
Digital Equipment Corporation  
2 Results Way  
Marlboro, MA 01752-9102  
Phone: 508-467-2356  
Fax: 508-467-1605

Greg Kreis  
Member at Large  
Paragon Training, Inc.  
3783 Upland Drive  
Marietta, GA 30066  
Phone: 404-975-9282  
Fax: 404-509-7329

Catherine N. Pfeil, Ph.D.  
Member at Large  
VAISC6-San Francisco  
301 Howard Street, Suite 600  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
Phone: 415-744-7520  
Fax: 415-744-7530

---

# CALENDAR

## March 21-25, 1994

UniForum 1994 Exhibition and Conference, Moscone Center, San Francisco, California. Phone 800-225-4698 for details.

## April 26-28, 1994

National Small Business Innovation Research Conference, Houston, Texas. Phone 407-791-0720 for location and details.

## May 23-27, 1994

COMDEX/Spring '94, World Congress Center, Atlanta, Georgia. Call Interface Group at 617-449-6600 for more information. For information on MTA participation, call 301-431-4070.

## June 13-17, 1994

MTA-NA 23rd Annual Meeting—Windows of Opportunity, Reno, Nevada.

To have your organization's meeting(s) listed in the *M Computing* Calendar, send details to *M Computing*, Managing Editor, M Technology Association, Suite 205, 1738 Elton Road, Silver Spring, Maryland 20903-1725. Materials must be received four months prior to the date of the event(s).