

Ante Up People, It's Time!

by Pamela G. McIntyre

For the first time in MTA history, the annual conference was held in conjunction with another event—Database and Client/Server World. While it was hoped this would boost attendance, the numbers were disappointingly low and yet another year slipped by with dwindling interest and dropping revenues.

We suffer, I fear, from terminal apathy. Everyone wants someone else to do the work, to take the responsibility. It's the old 80/20 rule. Twenty percent of the members do all the work and 80% either do nothing or complain about what a poor job the other 20% did. Some of you have the nerve to do both!

Because M has such a specific niche market, it is important that we all attend the conference. Together, our collective experience holds the key to new ideas, new products, new markets, and a new life for M. Joining with Database and Client/Server World gives us the opportunity to market M to other communities and in turn learn about other competitive technological areas.

The operative word here is marketing. But marketing must be active. So many of you subscribe to what I call "passive marketing." That's where you put your product out on a shelf with a sign and then stand back and hope someone walks up to the sign, reads it, understands the message, and then decides to buy. If you believe that will work, I have some property I'd like to sell you.

Of course, there's always the Internet—the obvious cure-all. Wrong again! Why? It's passive! Only in this case the shelf and the sign are electronic.

We've all heard the expression "There's no such thing as a free lunch." In M's case, it couldn't be truer. We have 20 years of passive marketing to make up for. I believe it can be done but only if we pull together. If you do not attend the conference because you believe it has little to offer, I would ask you first, where else you intend to find such expertise and second, when was the last time you made a contribution to the M community?

It's not hard to do. It happens everyday on comp.lang.mumps. Every time someone asks a question and every time someone provides an answer, there is an opportunity to interface M with some of the more mainstream technologies. If you take this knowledge and keep it to yourself or provide only limited distribution, you do a great disservice to the M community. Why not offer to do a technical session at the conference, or at least submit a paper? Where there is one person with a question, there are others.

MTA and the Board of Directors have made a move in the right direction. They have given you access to as many as 20,000 additional individuals with whom you may exchange information. They have done their job, made their contribution. Isn't it time each of you made yours? **M**

Welcome to Viewpoint. The opinions expressed in this column are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of MTA. The purpose of Viewpoint is to express just that—a point of view. Guest writers and responses to columns are welcome and will be printed at the discretion of the MTA. Email: MTA1994@aol.com

Pamela G. McIntyre received a B.S. degree in biology from the University of Wisconsin and a master's degree in business and information systems from the University of Maryland. She has spent over 13 years in the field of information management and is currently a freelance writer, editor, graphic artist, and the managing editor of *M Computing*. Email: 71321.2635@compuserve.com