

FOREWORD

In this issue, as usual, we present a wide range of papers that should be of interest to IT managers and technical personnel. Together they once more indicate the wide scope of modern technology and the deep impact that it has on all aspects of modern business culture.

One may feel that the arts would be one area that would be exempt from the effects of information technology. After all, intuition plays a very central role in artistic production and many artists and artisans still are working using centuries-old techniques. This is all true, but one needs to also consider the great effect technology has had on many areas of the arts and also the fact that a number of modern art forms and media exist solely because of technical innovation. At the very least, even the most traditional of artists is apt to manage his or her career using computers; it is odd, but not inappropriate, to see traditional crafts being marketed on the Internet.

Yeo Chai Kiat, Lau Chiew Tong, Chia Liang Tien, and Lee Bu Sung explore one area of computerized artistic management in their article on the use of a web-based system for scheduling and booking performing artists, particularly those working in the broadcasting industry. The flexibility of the system and the easy access it gives to necessary information can do much to make artists' lives easier and more organized, thereby freeing them to engage in their primary creative pursuits.

From the often ethereal world of the arts, we then move to examining Richard Oladele Abiola's interest in managing the generally much heavier world of manufacturing equipment. Using managers and others in Nigeria as his population, the author statistically explored many aspects of the process of purchasing equipment in order to understand the nature of decision-making in this area. The data he uncovered is invaluable to anyone seeking to capture this decision-making process in a model and to use that model to increase the efficiency of the process through automation.

An IT systems-approach is useful not only to bring new efficiency to traditional industries, but also can be applied to the very process of developing computer software, a process that is in its own way even more insubstantial as artistic production and as much a creative endeavor. Ho Leung Tsoi looks at some of the complexity of developing software and provides a framework for managing these complexities.

Ping-Hung Liu and Chiu-Chi Wei's article looks at decision-making from a larger organizational perspective. In an increasingly competitive world where the effective performance of organizations is critical to their survival it is important to obtain objective evaluations of that performance. Each member of the organization, however, has his or her own interests, biases, and limitations of available information so none can be expected to be able to make a fully useful appraisal of the organization. The authors of this article present a method for moving towards objectivity in appraisal by working with a group of varied experts from within the organization and illustrate their method with reference to the industrial engineering departments of Taiwanese colleges.

The last article, by M. Y. Mashor, is the most abstract and technical and considers a method of training RBF networks that can be expected to have application to a variety of situations. This method overcomes problems of clustering and initial positions to which other methods have been subject and thus it is a significant advance over those alternatives.

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