THE INFORMATION CENTRE IN AETNA LIFE & CASUALTY
(Australia)

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ROLE AND ORGANISATION OF THE
INFORMATION CENTRE

Role

The role of the Centre is to provide direction and on-going support to Aetna personnel in the introduction and operation of end-user computer technology, that conforms to Aetna's strategic data processing development plan.

Organisation

The Centre is part of the Information Services Department of the Corporate Services Division of the company and the Information Centre Manager reports to the Information Services Manager.

The Organisation of the Centre is:

* A Manager,
* An Agency Support Group of four staff,
* A Marketing Manager Agency Computer Systems, and
* A Corporate Support Group of two staff.

User Profile

Agent Users:

* 70 "ASSURE" sites with IBM PC XT's.
* 350 "SPEARS" users with TI 700 terminal.

Corporate Users:

* 500 staff in Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong using a network of 120 3270 terminals on-line real time.
* 30 IBM PC XT's in departments and branches, principally using LOTUS 1-2-3.
* 100 Corporate "SPEARS" users.

The mainframe is an Amdahl 470/VS running at 5.5 mips.

"ASSURE" is a software package developed in house by the Company for use by agents on IBM PC XT's. It provides a client/policy database with a report generator, letter writer and general ledger facility.

"SPEARS" is a dial up presentation program system which enables an agent to produce a client presentation via a portable telex type terminal/printer.

Microcomputer Configuration

The standard corporate PC configuration is:

* IBM PC XT with 640k RAM.
* Internal Tallgrass 25mb hard disk & 20mb tape backup unit.
* Taxan Vision IV colour/graphics monitor.
* IRMA 3270 communication board
* AST Rampage 1mb memory expansion board.

User Support

The Centre supports all mainframe software packages and all PC hardware and software. Training courses at intro and advanced level are conducted for all PC software packages and DOS.

Purchase of equipment is co-ordinated through the Centre.

SUPPORTING THE SAS SYSTEM
ON THE MAINFRAME

Introduction of the SAS System to Aetna.

For a number of years, Aetna personnel have been producing reports using the Data Analyzer (DA) Software System, which has a very limited file access and report writing ability.

DA is still used, particularly in our state branches where our insurance services personnel are located, as they have not yet been exposed to the SAS System. Within Head Office, where the majority of people using the SAS System had previously been writing programs using DA, DA has been proven to be inefficient compared to the SAS System.
Base SAS software was introduced to the end-users at AEtna in October 1985. At first, it did not take off as quickly as expected, due to the fact that the average end-user preferred to stay with the system they knew, ineffective as it was.

Classroom courses on base SAS software were organised by the Information Centre. As the end-user realised the capabilities of base SAS software, such as merging several files and producing one comprehensive report, the interest grew.

During the following six to eight months, the Information Centre trained approximately 100 staff, the majority of which were non DP personnel. Today there are about 60 regular base SAS software users.

SAS/GRAPH was installed in December 1985 and at this stage has been used purely for presentation purposes, for example overhead foils, and simple bar charts for promotional brochures.

SAS/FSP was introduced in December 1985 and SAS/AF followed in April 1986. These two packages have been very useful in setting up permanent data sets and running a menu-driven application utilising these data sets to produce reports with the minimum of involvement from the user. This setup will be useful for our branch personnel who need, and want, to produce reports with the minimum of knowledge about the system.

Training

These days, the computer is being used more and more by non-DP personnel, with an escalating demand for resources. These end-users, with little or no computer programming experience, require training that is targeted towards their special needs and applications. Too often the end-user receives training that is DP orientated and designed.

We found at AEtna that the end-user’s approach to the computer is usually problem-orientated, such as wanting to produce a New Business Report for each month of the year.

When end-users need or want training on a particular software package, they are usually driven by the problem they are trying to solve.

At AEtna, the training is designed for end-users in a problem orientated format. In this way the end-user can begin to apply the tools of the language in building solutions to their own particular problems.

We offer classroom training, one-to-one and computer based training.

The training consists of performance related objectives where a certain level of understanding must be attained before continuing, and the learning material is presented through sample problems based on typical report requests. We found that the average end-users only wanted to learn enough report writing techniques to solve their own particular problem. The courses allow ample opportunity for hands-on computer practice and incorporates user-orientated language.

Specialised Uses of SAS/FSP and SAS/AF

One particular department in AEtna have used the SAS System to produce their accounting reports. Initially the systems were written solely using SAS/FSP. After installing SAS/AF the systems were modified to incorporate this new package.

The Accounts Department built their entire Casualty System utilising SAS/FSP. The system handles premiums, claims, calculation of reserves, reinsurance and other necessary information needed for underwriting and accounting for the company.

Their next project was to design a management system for AEtna’s Deer Farm in New Zealand. This system includes stock tracking of deer and angora goats and records the births, deaths and valuation of livestock.

Interfacing of our General Ledger system was required to produce annual accounting reports. The Accounts Department designed a system to download the data from our master files into a SAS/FSP spreadsheet, performed final balance adjustments thereon, then uploaded the spreadsheet into the data set and processed the data set through batch to produce entire director’s reports and notes for various companies.

After investigating SAS/AF, it was decided that it could produce the desired interface needed for the above systems.

As a first project, a user friendly menu-driven application was created for the deer farm system such that any personnel may access the system with ease and the complex program was unable to be accidentally altered.

In April 1986, AEtna acquired a travel agency and recognised a need for a computerised receivables and trust accounting system.

Given the immediate requirement for such a system, it was determined that the SAS System would provide the best application.
Using a combination of SAS/AF and SAS/FSP, after 60 man-hours, a menu-driven application was developed which makes provision for invoicing, statements, debtors control, management reporting, and amounts owing to travel operators.

These are just a few of the specialized application programs designed by end-users.

AEtna is now no longer dependent on reports generated by DP application programs.

Results of End User Survey

In September 1986, the Information Centre conducted a survey on all end users in AEtna’s head office. We felt that after the SAS System had been installed at AEtna for almost 12 months, it was time to see what the end-user’s response was like to the SAS System.

The results showed that 40% of base SAS software users are managers. We found that after installing the SAS System, the majority of managers were keen to learn the system as it was a lot easier than our previous packages.

50% of users use base SAS software more than 20 hours per week, thus placing a fairly high demand on our computer resources.

70% of end-users have been totally converted to using the SAS System rather than the Data Analyzer package, and have rewritten all their DA’s using the SAS System.

When asked if the end-user would like to attend an in-house SAS System User Group, 45% showed interest. The main reasons being:

1) an opportunity to discuss with other end-users techniques, problems and solutions, and

2) to be kept up to date on the new SAS System packages installed and their capabilities.

The overall opinion of the end-user was that the SAS System is much faster and more efficient at producing results than the other packages installed at AEtna.

Future Developments

At present we have the PHOENIX CBT system installed for computerized training in base SAS software and JCL.

We are aiming towards designing our own CBT courses using SAS/AF. We have already started on the base SAS software CBT, modelling it on the PHOENIX system but adding personal touches to relate the course more to our files and the type of reports end-users would write. We hope that the use of CBT will reduce the face to face training load. We hope to eventually cover an advanced base SAS software course, and a basic introduction to SAS/FSP and SAS/GRAPH.

Creation of permanent data sets is one of our main objectives to relieve the demand placed on our master and on-line files. These data sets will prove most effective in the branches, where fast results are required, not timely delays as is the case now when waiting for a file to become available.

With the aid of SAS/AF, standard option menus will be set up as an interface to the most popular programs and the data sets they access.

**SAS/PC - The New LOTUS 1-2-3 ???**

Introduction

SAS/PC is not the new LOTUS 111. Not that the SAS Institute claims that it is but most importantly it does have a conversion procedure to and from LOTUS.

AEtna staff are extensive LOTUS users. The proc link between SAS/PC and LOTUS is very important to us and will enable our users to create a base SAS job on their PC, remote submit the job, generate a SAS System dataset on the mainframe, downline load the dataset into the PC, execute base SAS software procedures on that dataset and finally transfer the data into LOTUS 1-2-3.

Once the data is in LOTUS then all the facilities of LOTUS can be used to further refine the data, draw graphs, prepare management reports and carry out additional mathematical functions.

**Micro-to-Mainframe Link**

We initially had some difficulty with writing an RLINK file that would work but eventually succeeded. We have a 50% success rate at establishing the RLINK first go but once established remote submits and downline loading of datasets works well.
Installation and Training

SAS/PC is presently installed on six corporate PC's and use is increasing. We propose to run specific SAS/PC courses soon and see SAS/PC as a way of introducing new users to the SAS System in general.

SAS/PC takes up 4mb of hard disk and takes some time to install the 12 floppy disks of programs. This should be a one time exercise however.

Supporting Documentation

From a PC point of view the manuals are less than helpful. They appear to have been written down from the mainframe version rather than up from a PC perspective. There are presently three manuals: SAS Introductory Guide, SAS Procedures Guide and SAS Language Guide. This is confusing because of the split indexing.

There needs to be one manual, written from the PC perspective and printed and bound in the standard PC manual style in an open ended box container.

Conclusion

One of the main benefits of utilising the SAS System is that Aetna is no longer dependent on DP generated reports, such as management reporting from the General Ledger files. This is achieved entirely by the SAS System applications designed by end-users. This independence has allowed for flexibility and immediate adjustments made to the layout of the reports.

The SAS System does cause problems with mainframe capacity and we presently have to limit usage to Head Office only. The fact that the SAS System runs under TSO and not CICS causes some network control problems.

SAS/PC is very good because it is almost identical to the mainframe version and links to established PC software packages, however the manuals need to be rewritten.

A particular point in favour of using the SAS System for Australasian users is the fact that the Institute has a fully staffed office in Sydney providing excellent support to local users.

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