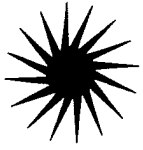


Press Information



REDIFFUSION
Computers

A Member of the Rediffusion Group of Companies

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Practising what they preach

Selling office technology may sometimes resemble the propagation of an evangelical cause — in fact some organisations appear to claim divine rights. However many companies argue that there is no better sales pitch than the living demonstration of the system in their own business. Not all go as far as Mike Aldrich on this page but other companies who practise what they preach appear on following pages.

continue doing. He actually has 'offices' in three places, as he has one in London to go with Colgate and Crawley. He needs facilities in each of the three places and a communications system to link them.

At any office he needs to be able to process all incoming communications, examine and, if necessary, update his diary, send messages and collect up-to-date business information.

The software system he now uses on the Teleputer is called ADVISOR.

Besides the functions already mentioned, the system has document handling (find a document by various keys and so on), jotter, multiple files (pending in/out), a run-your-own computer program facility, an electronic waste paper basket and data communications connections to many computers, including the PRESTEL service. There is also local computing, floppy disks and a printer. 'Everything on the screen is in glorious colour and it's a joy to use,' he says.

There really will come a time, Aldrich now believes, when people won't have to go to work any more other than for social reasons. The work will come to them through systems like ADVISOR. The 9 to 5 working day and the five-day working week will vanish.

The advent of cable, moreover, much in the news for its impact on the traditional broadcasting structure represented by the BBC and ITV, will be much more important for its impact on services. 'The real social impact of broadband cable will come because it will be cable that will provide the means of delivering a host of new services into the home,' he says.

INSTANT Circle No. **56**
INFO

Teleworking is a family lifestyle

COLGATE, a tiny West Sussex village not far from Pease Pottage, is an unlikely haven to be nurturing a 1990s office life-style. It's early days, but the Aldrich family is putting into practice some of Mike Aldrich's preaching on teleworking where an office is no longer a fixed space, confined between four walls. It is where you want it to be. It almost walks around with you.

Mike Aldrich, as regular readers of *BED* will know, is chief executive of Rediffusion Computers. He has been described as a 'missionary for Videotex' — he's written a book on the subject; he combined with two other members of the Prime Minister's Information Technology Advisory Panel to write the report that led, through Lord Hunt's committee, to the recent White Paper on Cable Systems and Services; and he brought the 'Teleputer' and 'Telecentres' to market. In short, he knows a mite or two about communications and the future office and, as he believes that 'teleworking' heralds a social revolution and will be commonplace in the '90s, he feels he should find out what it's like.



Mike Aldrich, chief executive of Rediffusion Computers.

Teleputers in his Crawley office and his Colgate home enable Sue to organise the business side and Sandy the social diary so that there is no unnecessary conflict.

Aldrich's basic problem is that he has acquired a number of 'jobs' in private, public and professional life, all of which he enjoys and wants to

Rediffusion's Viewdata fails

By Caroline Berman
Rediffusion's attempts to sell its viewdata systems in the US have been a failure.

Nine months ago Rediffusion Computers began an arrangement with a US dealer called Blodgett to distribute its viewdata systems in the US, but no sales have been made.

Mike Aldrich, chief executive of Rediffusion Computers, said: 'The arrangement

has not worked out well. The US is not ready for viewdata yet. We are cooling it until we see some interest develop.'

Aldrich said that the US was only interested in trial applications. He said that officially the dealer arrangement with Blodgett was still on.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is now backing a viewdata push in the US, although Rediffusion is

not involved in this.

A company called World System Videotext, sponsored by the DTI, has been set up in New York to promote British viewdata standards.

At present the World System Videotext office contains a receptionist, and is otherwise manned on a 'shuttle basis', according to John Barnes, project manager at the Videotext Industry Association (VIA). The VIA setup

the New York organisation on the Government's initiative.

However, the office has not yet appointed an executive and it will be six months before a telex is installed.

Barnes said that World System Videotext was doing everything in its power to assist UK companies such as Aregon and Rediffusion in promoting their goods but Aldrich said 'they haven't approached us'.



Rediffusion's Michael Aldrich: The US is not ready for viewdata.

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INTERNATIONAL PRESS
NOTTINGHAM BUREAU
Extract from:
GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE
Manchester-

- - JUN 1983

Important NCUF Conference Designed for Computer Users

4526

The National Computer Users Forum is following the successful and over-subscribed symposium held jointly with the IEE last year, with a two-day conference to be held at Nottingham University on the 12 & 13 July this year.

Entitled **Effective Computing in the '80s**, the NCUF conference is designed to help managers and senior dp staff to up-date their knowledge in key fields and examine the implications for their organisations.

Subjects will include an objective look at standards, communications, man/-machine interface, coping with change, expert systems and software engineering. The implications of cabling and Alvey will also be explored. Mike Watson, Technical Director of ICL will give a supplier's view of the future.

Other distinguished speakers will include NCC Director, David Fairbarin;

Philip Hughes, Chairman of Logica Holdings; Michael Aldrich, Chief Executive of Rediffusion Computers; John Leighfield, Managing Director of BL Systems; and Alex d'Agapeyeff of Consultants in Information Technology. A series of workshops on the second day will provide delegates with the opportunity to exchange ideas and express views on subjects of special interest.

Early Bird reservations (by 1 June 1983) save £20 per delegate at £130 + VAT for delegates belonging to NCUF affiliated user organisations and £150 + VAT for non-affiliated delegates.

For further information contact: Stuart Gould, The University of Nottingham, Cripps Computing Centre, University Park, Nottingham NG7 2RD. Telephone: Nottingham (0602) 56101, Ext. 3335.

Rediffusion Executive appointments

The Board of Rediffusion plc has made four new appointments to the Executive Staff of the Company.

Mr. Michael Aldrich, Managing Director of Rediffusion Computers and Chief Executive of Rediffusion Business Electronics. Mr. Aldrich is 42 and joined the Group in 1971.

Mr. A. C. ("Chip") Chipperfield, Managing Director of Rediffusion Radio Systems. Mr. Chipperfield, who is 59, joined the Group in 1952.

Mr. Richard Hurst, aged 31, recently appointed Secretary of Rediffusion plc. Mr. Hurst joined the Group in 1968.

Mr. Tony Wortley, aged 45, Group Chief Accountant since October 1982. Mr. Wortley joined Rediffusion in 1969.

Extract from
BET Newsletter
July 8, 1983

The cliché description of viewdata as 'a solution looking for a problem' was coined back in the mid-1970s when Prestel launched its mass marketing campaign. At that time, the great expectation was that the public would find irresistible instant access via a 'user-friendly medium' to a variety of different databases.

In fact, the public found it very resistible. The information available through Prestel, while interesting to a greater or lesser degree, was the sort of stuff that the average householder could live without.

When the great viewdata boom failed to materialise in the public sphere, potential suppliers of viewdata, including Prestel, rethought their marketing strategies. They realised that viewdata was an ideal system for collecting and distributing information that would be directly relevant to the operation of an organisation. Because it was 'non-threatening' to people without computer experience, it had more appeal than computer terminals for applications involving non-DP staff.

Once this simple concept had been grasped, the shotgun approach to a mass market gave way to a selective, intensive campaign aimed at vertical markets.

Rediffusion was among the first companies to research viewdata. According to managing director Mike Aldrich, the company has little or no interest at present in the public market. Its attention is entirely taken up with an industry by industry approach to viewdata applications. "The business market is booming. My guess is that it is running at twice the level that it was last year," Aldrich commented.

The major growth areas for viewdata at the moment, he said, are the pharmaceuticals, insurance and motor industries. "Increasingly in the last year or so we have found that instead of the viewdata industry having to sell its ideas to businesses, people are coming to us with at least the broad outlines of what they want to do. The educational phase in viewdata is over."

Even so, the number of projects which have gone ahead is small. Though companies are reluctant to give figures, systems can be counted in tens rather than hundreds.

To run a viewdata application can be an expensive business. It has to serve a very definite need in order to justify its costs. Rediffusion considers itself to be unique in the market in supplying everything from the host computer to the software, including the viewdata terminals. A 'typical' Rediffusion system, although no one in the industry admits to the existence of a typical system, can cost around £75,000, and that does not include the development price of specialist applications software, tailored *pro forma* viewdata screens and so on.

As an alternative to buying a system outright, some companies use one of a number of different bureau-type services to run a pilot scheme. The two different approaches seem to co-exist quite comfortably. Aldrich reckons that unlike the traditional DP environment, where the mainframe or minicomputer manufacturer would try to take business away from the bureau, Rediffusion doesn't expect to win

many contracts away from bureaux.

"It is not like the old days of the bureau. Companies who go down that route instead of buying their own equipment tend to do so because they like the convenience of not having to manage their own systems. There is not much movement one way or the other," he said.

Applied Data Processing considers viewdata to be one of its growth areas — another new departure from traditional bureau activities. Nick Rose is the marketing manager in charge of the service. In the main, he agrees with Rediffusion on which industries can benefit from viewdata.

"Viewdata went through a raw stage where people tried to concentrate on both the public and private markets. Now, aside from the traditional Prestel and Ceefax type services, the industry is concentrating on vertical markets," he said.

Like Rediffusion, ADP has found the pharmaceuticals industry a ready buyer of its services. Rose explained that the standard application in the industry was to use specially designed screens as a means for sales staff to

Vertical take off in sight

Suppliers have set their sights on vertical markets for viewdata, writes Tony Harrington.

input the results of calls into their central offices. "The viewdata system also has a message facility which makes it easy for the central office to brief staff out in the field and to keep them up to date with product bulletins, stock availability and suchlike," he said.

At least one pilot study in the industry involves using viewdata terminals placed in doctors' surgeries as a way of gathering information on the clinical trials of particular drugs. "The quality of doctors' handwriting has become a legend. The pharmaceuticals companies reckon that by having simple validation procedures built into the system, and by designing clear input screens for doctors, they can save themselves months of effort gathering, validating and interpreting doctors' reports on new products," said Rose.

Another scheme involving the breweries industries has used the familiarity of the viewdata set to get publicans to input the results of their weekly take into the brewery. In both cases it is the user friendliness of the medium that has made it possible to get people without DP skills to use the viewdata set as a terminal for data capture.

One business that has come into being through the new medium is Datafreight, a system which matches lorries and loads for British Road Services. According to Datafreight's Stan Ward, although ADP provided the equipment and software, the idea and the specifications were worked out by his company.

"We have a link via BT's Gateway to Prestel and at the moment there are more than 150 transport companies involved in the scheme throughout the UK," he commented. The viewdata set is placed in the fleet manager's office and it provides him with access to a database of lorries and loads within the UK.

The link with Gateway, he added, makes it possible for Datafreight to reach a wider audience than its existing set of user companies.

But despite Ward's optimism, the viewdata companies remain convinced that the future of viewdata lies in seducing industry after industry into this brightly coloured, easy to operate, and expensive medium. □



Rediffusion MD Mike Aldrich: "The business market is booming"