

ROCC  
PRESS INFORMATION

M. J. ALDRICH

PRESS CUTTINGS

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**ROCC Computers Limited**

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INTERNATIONAL PRESS-CUTTING BUREAU  
224-236 Walworth Road,  
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Extract from  
Computer Weekly, London

## Mini manufacturer prepares to grow

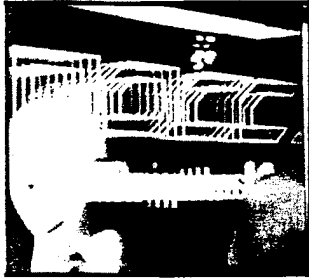
Three and a half years on from its traumatic management buy-out, Rocc Computers, one of the few independent UK mini computer manufacturers, is poised for expansion.

Earlier this month the man who masterminded the buy-out, chief executive Mike Aldrich, outlined Rocc's future strategic direction, revealing plans to grow from 450 to 800 staff, and boost turnover to £50m.

Rocc reported an annual turnover of £16m for 1987/88, with an estimated pre-tax profit of £1.8m. Aldrich says the company is cash rich and in shape to fund expansion from internal sources.

It was in November 1984 that Rediffusion Computers, as it was then called, was bought out by a management City consortium from parent British Electric Traction. This followed a £344,000 loss in the first six months of 1984 and involved a £14m write-off by BET.

It's a £16m turnover ranks Rocc as one of the UK's leading computer manufacturers. Aldrich says it is "possible that Rocc may become an oem in the future", but at the moment the Crawley, Sussex factory "can turn out machines cheaper than we can buy them".



ALDRICH...Cash rich.

Half of the company's turnover comes from services, including training, third-party maintenance and bespoke software, and "the intention is to maintain this balance", says Aldrich.

The company now boasts a base of 1,800 systems in the data capture, videotex and financial services market. It has done particularly well with videotex in the motor dealers market - all Ford and Nissan cars are now sold via Rocc terminals. Local government is also turning into a Rocc stronghold, and Aldrich sees great future prospects here.

Having developed these niche markets, Aldrich is turning to standards - both open and de facto - to ensure the company's future. Rocc's three minicomputer ranges are built around industry standard components, backed up by Unix.

■ Nuala Moran

In a business that continues to be dominated by US companies and events, it is interesting to

hear that, apart from the unfortunate recent demise of Whitechapel Workstations, all is not doom and gloom among smaller UK computer manufacturers.

One of the original UK Unix porters, Blessdale Computer Systems, appears to be making a comeback. It has secured financial backing from the British Computer Group, with the prospect of another £1m for future purchases of Motorola 68000 processors.

With a strong profile, but more modest sales, has been Rocc Computers, originated from Rediffusion's takeover in 1984. Rocc now employs 450 staff in Crawley, Sussex, and has a turnover of £16 million.

Like ITC before it, Rocc is now planning for the future by adding risc based minicomputers to the videotex and capture systems which it sells in respectable numbers to the local authority and financial markets.

John Abbott is a freelance journalist.

Extract from  
Computing, London

# UK mini-maker takes on risc

One of the UK's only remaining minicomputer makers has ambitious plans to double its size on the back of reduced instruction set computer hardware.

Originally part of the Rediffusion group and now an independent company, Crawley-based Rocc Computers is planning to flesh out the top end of its own WMS risc-based hardware by buying in a larger processor from another maker.

Mike Aldrich, chairman of Rocc Computers, said it was intending to enlarge the company from its existing 450 staff to around 800 in the 1990s.

Rocc Computers is expecting to turn in sales of over £16 million for the financial year ended April 1988, with profits of £1.8 million, but is bidding to increase the for-

mer to some £50 million in the next decade through internal funding.

Aldrich said that although Rocc Computers' sales appeared to be going up very slowly, this was because it was funding its own rental activities.

'We are one of the last survivors of the UK mini-makers but have not only survived but prospered. We are cash rich,' he added.

Rocc has net assets of £6 million and Aldrich is aiming to expand the company by matching the increases in product sales with those of services.

The company's sales force will be doubled to at least 150 people and its software services and third-party maintenance operations are also planned to be considerably expanded.



Aldrich: 'We are cash rich'

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ROCC Computers has unveiled the strategy it hopes will take it from today's £16m firm, to an organisation with £50m turnover by the 1990s. The core products are three 68000 and Risc-based minis, collectively known as Workstation Management Systems, and expansion of service businesses to keep pace with hardware sales.

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Extract from  
Data Link, London

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ROCC chairman Michael Aldrich

## ROCC rolls

Happiness is a cash-rich, employee-owned private company with big assets and no debts. One such is Sussex-based office and comms systems specialist ROCC Computers. ROCC has announced that it is aiming to expand its £16m annual sales to £50m and double its staff by the 1990s. In addition to marketing OSI hardware ROCC promises to expand its services, including third-party maintenance, bespoke software and tailored mail-order.

# A success story with a new plot

A LEADING computer firm has announced plans it says will almost double its staff and triple sales.

ROCC Computers employs 200 at its Kelvin Way, Crawley, base and 250 more around the country.

It believes plans for the 1990s will boost staff to 800 and see sales soar from £16 million to £50 million.

Chairman Michael Aldrich said: "ROCC's financial strength as a rich, employee-owned private company with large assets, no debt and healthy profits provides the base for planning the future with confidence."

The firm's predecessor, Rediffusion Computers, owned by the giant BET

group, was bought by its management team, led by Mr Aldrich, at the end of 1984.

He admitted that at the time it seemed against all odds for the business to survive as an independent in the competitive computer world, never mind thrive.

## Growth

But in 1987-88 sales were £16 million, pre-tax profits were £1.8 million and assets £6 million.

Mr Aldrich said the firm's success was due to concentrating on what it did best.

A main growth area will be in minicomputers. Mr Aldrich said: "They are the new growth sector for the 90s."

14 MAY 1988

## ROCC COMPUTERS IS ALIVE AND WELL AND LIVING IN HOPES OF OPEN SYSTEMS

ROCC Computers Ltd yesterday broke what seems to have been a three-and-a-half-year silence by revealing bold plans that the company hopes will take it successfully into the 1990s. The company, formerly Rediffusion Computers, was formed back in November 1984 through a Charterhouse Development Capital-backed management buy-out, headed by managing director Mike Aldrich, from its parent company British Electric Traction Plc. Prospects for ROCC did not look too good at the time as BET took a £14.0m write-off in the transaction and it was labouring under an £884,000 first half loss. However the company now employs 450 people, mostly at its head-office in Crawley, West Sussex and has announced profits of £1.8m and a turnover of £16.0m for the financial year just ended - and is now 94% owned by its employees. It has concentrated on the business it knew best. data capture and viewdata systems in the local authority, sales/marketing and financial applications markets. Mike Aldrich said that the company's business plans call for an expansion from its present 450-person, £16.0m sales level to an 800-person, £50.0m sales level in the 1990s. The proposed expansion will be based around three processor ranges called the Tripos Workstation Management Systems - WMS - implementing Open Systems Interconnection standards. The basic WMS software system supports a variety of workstation terminals for multiuser real-time processing and can handle up to 96 concurrent users on ROCC's 28X5 series 32-bit processors, which take a RISC approach in what is believed to be a bit-slice processors that the company rates at 15 to 17 MIPS. The WMS/Videotex system is specifically designed to handle up to 1,000 viewdata terminals in typical usage. Running on the ROCC 28X6 processor, the system also includes an integrated database management system. Finally ROCC has introduced the WMS/Unix which provides an overall system interface manager for Unix, relational databases and the ROCC C-Check 11 fourth generation language. The system runs on the ROCC 28X8 VMEbus range of computers, based on Motorola 68000 family processors, which are due to be replaced by a RISC chip shortly.

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Extract from  
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73 MAY 1985

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Extract from  
Computergram International, London

Somnolent ears at the back pricked up when Mike Aldrich, managing director of the former Rediffusion Computers made mention at the company's presentation last week (CI No 923) of a rock group, and joy was unconfined when he followed up by announcing the "rock video"; it was soon back to sleep again when the timeservers among the hacks present woke up to the fact that he was only showing a routine promotional video for ROCC Computers Ltd.

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## Training board sets up new courses

The Engineering Industry Training Board (EITB) has helped set up 16 technical software engineering courses with an initial 300 places for non-graduate trainees.

Research by EITB and the Science Policy Research Unit at Sussex University has shown that most companies employ graduates as software engineers, whereas most of the work could be performed by properly trained non-graduates.

"Firms are assuming that because they employ graduates to do the work, the work is of graduate standard," says Patrick Nicholls, junior minister for employment. "Recruitment and training at a lower level can solve the shortage."

Companies interested in joining the scheme can help their local technical college design the syllabus for the courses, which include Higher National Certificates and Diplomas, in return for student sponsorship and vacation placements. Students successfully completing the courses will be expected to join their sponsoring company.

The EITB says the scheme is particularly suited to areas where specialist skills are rare among graduates, such as defence, with its shortage of Ada and Coral programmers. "Alternative graduates" require much less technical training on appointment and incur lower recruitment and



*VENDEVELDE... Companies not joining will suffer.*

sponsorship costs," says Bob Scott, managing director of MEL, Philips' aviation and defence specialists.

His view is endorsed by EITB project manager Marc Vendevelde: "Companies not joining this scheme will suffer. Those that look only to the higher education sector for technical software engineers will incur higher costs through high labour turnover and reli-

ance on long-term contract staff, which will be reflected in tenders."

Meanwhile operators and technicians working with ROCC computers could soon get a chance to gain recognised qualifications. ROCC managing director Mike Aldrich is setting up a scheme to give training and certification to lower-level employees under the umbrella of the newly set

up Data Flow Management Group, part of the ROCC user group.

"The idea is to establish standards of competence in work for people at technician level," says Aldrich. "We have perceived the need for formal training at levels that recognise people below the catchment of the British Computer Society professional grades."

■ Emma Haughton

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EXTRACT FROM:  
SURREY & HANTS TIMES

24 MAY 1989



Lindford resident Derek Jordan, customer services manager at the Aldershot branch of ROCC Computers, joined three colleagues, on a recent trip to the firm's Crawley

headquarters to receive a certificate for having served ten years with the company. Pictured left to right: Keith Banks — director of Itech services who made the presentations; Derek

Jordan, Flyn Harris, branch supervisor; John Ashton, customer engineer; Peter Simons, customer engineer; and Alan Page, divisional director UK operations.

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Extract from  
Brighton Evening Argus, East Sussex

**Long service**

Crawley-based ROCC computers gave long service awards to John Phillips, John Latour and George Coomber, who have been with the firm a total of 45 years.