MONITORING
THE
FIELD

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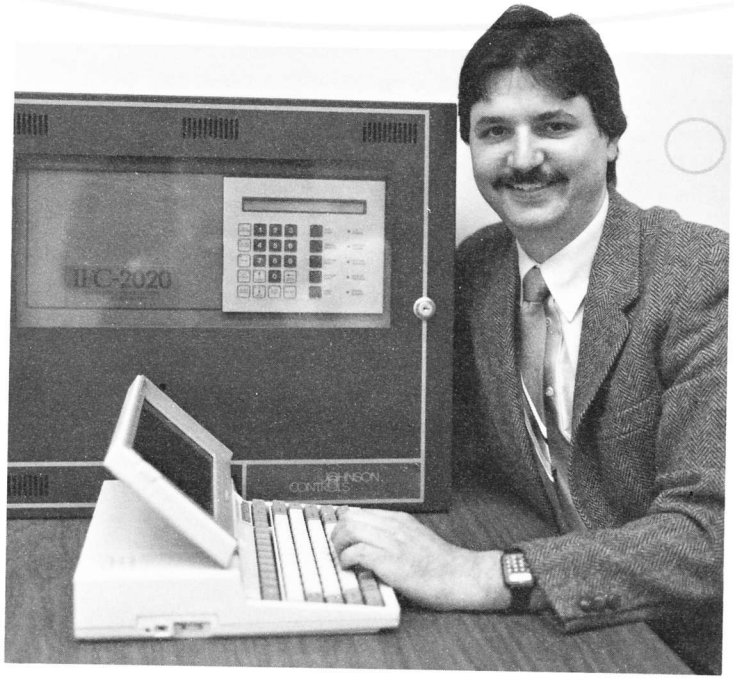
How to Turn an Idea into Reality

"It's just like they say—one percent inspiration and ninety–nine percent perspiration," confirms Milwaukee systems representative Tim Redmond. A few months ago, Tim thought of a way to save time and trouble while working with the IFC–2020 Intelligent Fire Controller system. Now he's getting ready to see his idea released to the field as a packaged product, complete with technical literature, user manuals, and a catchy name—Firepro. Says Tim, "I found out that developing a product that's useful for 147 branches is far more complicated than pounding out on LOTUS what I'd use for myself. It's definitely been an adventure!" MTF tracked this adventure for those of you who may have an idea or two of your own.



▲ *Tim Redmond with the IFC–2020. His Firepro will save time and trouble on the system by:*

- *Allowing offsite database loading with a P.C. interface*
- *Saving databases on disks in case of system failure*
- *Recording system activity for troubleshooting*
- *Providing automated programming*
- *Accommodating location database programming*

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1. Pinpoint a Need

From the wheel to the light bulb to the pet rock, it all starts the same way: a need is identified. For Tim, it started after attending JCI's Fire Systems Application School. "Working with the IFC–2020, you couldn't save or record data, or load databases away from the job site. I thought there had to be a better way to interface with the equipment to make it more convenient to use." It bothered Tim enough that he started working on this interface on his own time. "After a few weeks, I got a basic interface to work," he remembers. "Then some possibilities for some additional features surfaced."

2. Seek Support

After Tim developed the interface, he talked with Account Executive Roger Suckow—the Milwaukee branch's main fire systems salesperson—about how it could be applied on the job. "Roger was very excited about its potential," says Tim. "He opened up communications with technical and product groups at Controls Group headquarters—that really paved the way for new product development." The company agreed that Tim had a good idea. He was reimbursed for the time he spent developing the idea, and was hired on a contract basis to finish it off. "The support and cooperation that headquarters extended was essential. They provided the financing, personnel, equipment, and expertise necessary to get the product out."

SPD Fire and Security Product Manager Mike Lynch became the product manager for Firepro. Says Mike, "Tim made it easy for us. He had more than an idea. He had a product that was partially working—95 percent of the job was already done."

3. Develop, Test, and Refine

For the next three months, Tim worked on the other five percent—making his idea work in the real world. The first question to address: how user-friendly is Firepro? To get the answer, thirteen application engineers in Milwaukee for fire systems training participated in usability testing for Firepro. The engineers were presented with a hypothetical job situation, and their reactions were observed as they toiled with the system. From the feedback during this experiment, "help" screens were added to Firepro's program and technical documentation was simplified to make Firepro easier to use.

Next, how is Firepro on the job? Firepro was put to the test outside the laboratory, and installed with the IFC–2020 at a new construction job in Milwaukee. Tim says this resulted in the greatest number of changes to the prototype. "Field testing helped us discover loopholes and determine what features needed to be added or modified. Once we got the bugs out, I was happy to see that Firepro really could be a labor-saving tool in the field."

The next challenge was making Firepro adaptable to IFC–2020 enhancements. To meet this challenge, Fire and Security Design Engineer Cliff Copass stepped in. He developed a routine to allow Firepro to retrieve databases from existing IFC–2020 systems.

4. Don't Forget the Details

At this point, Tim was raring to go. But more needed to be done before Firepro could be released to the field. First, marketing to make Firepro attractive to potential users through proper promotion and packaging. Also, technical documentation and user-manuals needed to be written. And finally, Firepro had to be patented, copyrighted, and licensed.

5. Tim's Advice

"Find the people who can help you, and make sure you can 'sell' your idea," he says. "And don't be discouraged by delays—all the steps are necessary. I'm actually very pleased that with all the support and cooperation, we're going to get Firepro out in a relatively short period of time."

Firepro will be released to the field this fall. ■

Letter to the Editor

Pro-environment Packaging

A television program I saw recently made me think about the way we pack our products. The program potrayed a company in search of an advertising vendor. This company would not consider hiring any vendors that used styrofoam products.

I work in the shipping and receiving department, and noticed that most of our controls are packed in white material or "peanuts," which are probably styrofoam. Should we pack our products in paper shredding instead? In the long run, it could be better for business and the environment.

Tom Navarro
Counterline Sales
Fargo, North Dakota

MTF has received several letters like this one during the past few months. To get some answers on the paper- versus plastic-packing question, we talked to JCI Environmental Engineer Mark Ishihara. We found out that the issue isn't as cut-and-dry as it may seem on the surface.

According to Mark, automatically putting paper ahead of plastics isn't always an accurate evalutation. He says there are many different factors to consider when deciding what's best to use for packing:

Your location.

Mark points out that different areas of the country dispose of waste in different ways. The most common way is landfill deposits. These landfills are usually low in both moisture and sunlight—two key ingredients for biodegration. Under these conditions it could take styrofoam five thousand years to degrade. But even paper products would take about three thousand years. Neither option appears clearly desirable.
On the other hand, if the product is littered and ends up on the street, paper would take only a few days to degrade. Plastics would still take centuries!

Other areas—particularly urban centers—incinerate waste. In these cases, Mark says plastics would actually be preferable to paper. Plastics tend to burn cleaner, producing fewer harmful emissions than burning paper products.
(You can find out how waste in your area is disposed by contacting your public works department or state environmental agency.)

The Production Method.

Mark says that how a product is made also impacts the environment. Take paper production. Producing the average paper bag uses considerably more energy than plastic. It also requires the destruction of trees. And it results in sulfur emissions, responsible for acid rain. In contrast, Mark says that plastic production is low in energy-use and harmful emissions, and doesn't deplete natural resources. But it's not without its problems. Plastics production involves oil products and organic compounds that may damage the ozone layer.

How The Product Is Used.

This is the key to solving this dilemma, says Mark. If you use a product once and throw it away, neither paper or plastic has a clear advantage. But if you re-use the product, either through recycling or by saving and using packing material you receive for your own packing, you will reduce waste sent to landfills, incinerators, or that escapes onto the streets. Also, less material will need to be produced. "Whether you use paper or plastic packaging, re-use is really the best solution for the environment," stresses Mark. "There are many people out there who will help you come up with options."

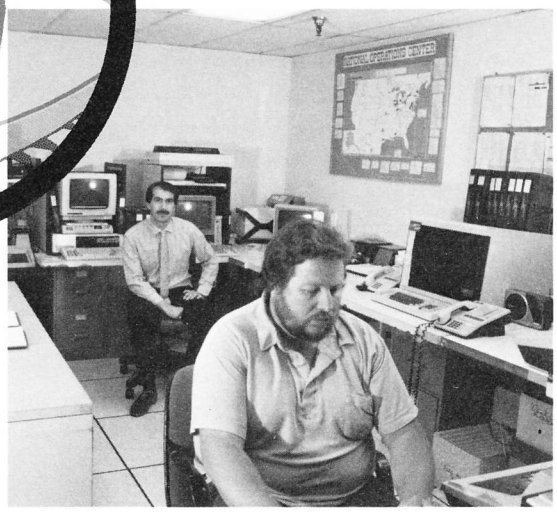
Mark recommends contacting recycling companies in your area for ideas on what you can do with paper and plastics in your branch. ■

Creative Consciousness

Michel Lecuyer of the Kingston, Ontario branch wrote MTF that he heard of one small company that replaced their plastic foam bubble packing material with popcorn (the edible kind)!

If you come up with any ideas or projects to make your branch operations more environmentally-friendly, write MTF and share it with other branches.

National Operations Center Gives Customers The Eye



Jim Lizzi (in back) runs the National Operations Center from the Washington D.C. branch. Chuck Hatton (front) is one of the operators.

There's something out there keeping close watch on JCI customers. From coast to coast, day and night, it's making sure that school children have a warm place to go winter mornings, and that equipment is up and running for a day's work at hospitals, office buildings, and factories.

That something is the National Operations Center. Working out of the Washington D.C. branch, the center has been providing 24-hour facility monitoring, central dispatch, and answering services for hundreds of customers across the country since 1985.

The service is geared toward customers who don't have the staff available to monitor their buildings 24-hours a day, who are unfamiliar with FMS operations, or who have areas in their buildings where precise environmental maintenance is critical. When branches shut down and customers go home, the center keeps an eye on their facilities.

Washington D.C. Branch Manager Jim Holmes compares the service to an insurance policy. "Customers can have peace of mind knowing that their systems are running like they should, and that if something does go wrong, the problem will be quickly remedied. It also helps customers with the fear of the unknown. If they're unfamiliar with computer systems, they know that there's somewhere to call with an understanding and helpful voice on the line who can walk them through the necessary steps."

Five operators—all former building engineers—staff the center. Says Jim, "Our people know buildings. They have the qualifications necessary to make intelligent decisions about how to handle a variety of situations." The staff monitors HVAC, fire, and security systems including PP/4500 and 5000, DSC-3500, DSC-8500, 85/20, 85/40, 80/55, and Novar. They're also ready to handle Metasys systems as they're installed.

The operators continually check equipment performance, watching for potential problems. If a problem arises, they work over the phone with the local branch service representative to determine appropriate action, and then notify the customer. They keep branches aware of everyday activities through weekly reports or daily faxes.

The answering service is also popular with customers. Says Jim, "Since we've had the service we haven't had one complaint about busy signals or not being able to get through to the right person. The customer calls a single number and then we contact the branch employee who can best take care of that customer's needs."

The National Operations Center became part of the Washington D.C. branch after the reorganization of the regional staff in 1988. Jim says that since that time, they've been able to provide a return on branch investments in the center. "When we were asked to incorporate the center at our branch, I saw nothing but great potential for it, and I still do. It's a value-added service we can offer our customers that provides payback to Johnson Controls."

Jim says he wants to see the center grow. "We have excess capacity—we can do more than we're doing. Right now I'd say that we're the best kept secret in the company."

Anyone who wants to know more about this secret can call the National Operations Center at 1-800-638-8893. ■

Branch Efforts...

The Edmonton, Alberta branch has come clean. Branch manager Ron Buffel challenged his employees to scour their work areas and get rid of all useless material that had been filed or stashed away. The result? In just three hours they eliminated more than one ton of filed papers, recovered almost 400 spare blue three-ring binders, and emptied out several filing cabinets. The branch vowed to stay clean. They plan to do a similar office sweep about every six months, and will limit the income of unnecessary documents by using the File Access Number (FAN) system.

Canadian headquarters summoned its branches to make changes in day-to-day operations to positively impact the environment. So far they're recycling office paper, purchasing recycled paper, reusing envelopes and other materials, and using both sides of paper when photocopying.

JAWs is taking care of waste in the Los Angeles branch. "Johnsonites Against Waste" (JAW) is a group of branch employees dedicated to initiating pro-environment projects in their office. Right now they're recycling all paper and aluminum products, and later plan to include plastics and glass.

After three years, the Syracuse branch finished its work on the country's largest single construction project—the Fort Drum Army Base (covered in MTF, January 1989). Project manager Mark Fisher began closing up shop at the site office on May 30—six months ahead of schedule. The Syracuse branch was awarded a contract with Black River Constructors in 1987 to provide HVAC pneumatic control systems throughout the base, including barracks, dining halls, vehicle maintenance areas, headquarter buildings, and medical facilities. At the peak of construction, 16 field employees were involved with the project. The base spans 40 square miles. The JCI contract was completed ahead of time and on budget.

Metasys...

The first Metasys sales schools were held in Milwaukee last month. Course topics include Metasys system operation and applications, features/benefits descriptions, and sales and estimating strategies. Students also have the opportunity to give group presentations on an actual Metasys case study.

The Metasys multi-image presentation, first used for the employee new product introductions and then for customer rollouts, received a first-place Award of Excellence from the International Association of Business Communicators.

Miscellaneous...

Johnson Controls products and services were displayed at a national trade show in Ottawa, Ontario July 1 - 4. The Association of Physical Plant Administrators Trade Show featured the Metasys product family, Com/mander Maintenance Management and PreVue-Vibration Diagnostics, and a graphic panel.

Johnson Controls trade show booth took first place for the best major display at the Building Owners and Managers Association Trade Show held in Las Vegas last month. Selection for the award is based on technology, appearance, and innovation.

A Reminder...

The Controls Group has reworked its Merit Award Schedule to provide more timely recognition of exceptional performance. Merit Awards will now be presented to employees on a quarterly, rather than annual, basis. The first nomination deadline is September 1.

You can spend half the time and do something twice as well, just by repeating yourself.

The Rockford branch is doing it with their linkage strategy, or the way they pursue service contracts by linking them to new construction or retrofit jobs.

Susan Soldati, customer service representative for Rockford's Naperville satellite, consolidated their linkage activities. She whittled down several hand-offs, identified the most logical, practical (and fewest) people to work on the task, and created a work process of easily–repeated steps.

Susan explains, "Before, a lot of linkage opportunities were purged—one reason being confusion about how to proceed. Another was that salespeople were expected to take the lead. But to a salesperson with an $800 thousand construction or retrofit goal, a thousand dollar Planned Service Agreement loses some of its luster."

To ensure that all linkage opportunities receive immediate attention, the branch took most salespeople out of the chain and assigned the sales task to the customer service representative. Susan replaced the face-to-face sales approach with direct mail and telemarketing. Now she covers 100 percent of their linkage opportunities through what she calls a three-step process:

1. Pre-warranty

Linkage opportunities are most fruitful before the construction or retrofit job is finished. During this time facility owners are usually in the budgeting process, and haven't yet been approached by competitors. To take advantage of the situation Susan consults monthly branch reports to see what jobs are nearing completion. For these jobs she then sends the facility owner a letter offering preventative maintenance on their equipment, along with a service proposal. She follows up with a phone call within a week.

2. At Warranty

When the job nears its date of completion a warranty statement is sent to the customer. Included is a letter reminding the customer of the warranty's limits and the need for planned maintenance. Again, JCI professionals are suggested as the maintenance resource.

3. At the Warranty Expiration

A brief letter and proposal are sent to customers as the warranty period ends. This also acts as a reminder that their equipment is no longer covered by the warranty.

The Outcome

Before Susan reworked the strategy, every dollar spent on linkage sales activities resulted in about three dollars for the branch. Now, for every dollar spent the branch brings in about fifty-five dollars.

Susan also points out that along with the ability to extend a greater number of proposals to customers, the process helps build relationships. "Customers are almost grateful when I call, because it reminds them of the status of their equipment. They have one less thing to think about. And keeping our name in front of customers also makes them more likely to consider Johnson Controls for future construction, retrofit, or service work." Now *that's* repeat business. ■

MTF is published monthly for employees and retirees of the Field Operations Unit, SSD. Employees like:

Lubbock mechanic Roger Mitchell

for his volunteerism. Roger donates 20 to 30 hours of his time each week for a local little league baseball team. He's done it for 11 years.

Readers may submit story ideas, news items, and comments to Fran Verito, MTF Publications Editor, P.O. Box 423, 507 East Michigan Street, Milwaukee, WI 53201.

JOHNSON CONTROLS

Basic Sales Skills Workshop Held

Sales engineers learned how to present a combination of JCI products, technology, people, and services to help customers reach their goals at the Basic Sales Skills Workshop held in Milwaukee June 4 - 8. Pictured in the back row, from the left: Jonathan Lazenby, Toronto; David Karp, Vancouver; Lynn Amos, Omaha; Steve Drollinger, EMSU Milwaukee; and Eric Einwaechter, Greensboro. Third row: Bruce Potter, Rockford; Bob Linzey, El Paso; David Tamasy, Pittsburgh; Mike Pfeninger, St. Cloud; and Mike Casolari, Philadelphia. Second row: Bob Mertel, Lubbock; Joe Augeri, Hartford; Peter Pouliopoulos, Boston; Dan Kontny, Duluth; Jay Kirihara, Minneapolis; and Scott Anderson, Peoria. Front row: Gail Miller, Minneapolis and Tim Yuen, Honolulu.

MTF recognizes Press Pass contributions with this symbol.