SESSION XIV

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO MAINTENANCE OF COMPUTER SYSTEMS

DONALD I. TEPAS, *Illinois Institute of Technology, Presider*

DEC field service: An industry leader

PRINDELLE L. THOMAS

Digital Equipment Corporation, Santa Clara, California 95151

The Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) field service for providing maintenance of DEC customer computer systems is described.

To our valued customers, Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) field service represents an industry leader. Our field service surveys indicate that 90% of our customers are more than satisfied, and we are getting better. Every day, highly trained service engineers solve complex and critical problems by demonstrating highly technical and precise account management while coordinating a wide variety of resources Digital offers to ensure customer service satisfaction. "No one is better qualified to support your systems than the vendor who manufactures them."

FIELD SERVICE—AN OVERVIEW

Field service provides the maintenance of customer computer systems, with preventive as well as remedial maintenance. DEC field service delivers a variety of services—wide enough and flexible enough to accommodate nearly anyone anywhere—and we have the depth of resources to support our efforts.

The field service has a growing force of over 7,000 systems-trained service representatives with a supporting administrative staff of over 1,100 professionals. Together they serve customers from more than 350 DEC service locations around the world, 190 of these in the U.S.

In addition to personnel, DEC has the largest inventory of mini- and microcomputer spare parts in the world. A worldwide logistics network, aided by our own computer systems, enables field personnel to use this inventory of spare parts effectively. Local service office parts supplies form a part of this inventory and are very important. Adequate and appropriate supplies locally mean faster service. Because of this, local inventories are also computer managed, with the numbers and types

of spares reflective of the field's part-usage experience.

We have a wide variety of service products, managed by DEC's worldwide service organization. DEC field service can tailor, and deliver, whatever combination meets the computer maintenance needs of DEC owners, wherever they are located.

Service agreements can be applied to all levels of computer maintenance. These provide every consideration and service necessary to keep DEC's computers at maximum efficiency. Since service agreements make us completely responsible for maintenance, the services of an account representative are provided with each agreement. This individual personally sees that the job is done correctly and that the customer has complete knowledge of this.

The customer who prefers self-maintenance is serviced also. Because DEC computers work best with DEC parts and service, we make both available on an as-needed basis. For those who require no more, DEC repairs modules, subassemblies, and terminals at repair facilities throughout the world. Other facilities supply spare parts, modules, specialized test equipment, and other services.

DEC's vast corporate logistics facility provides the ultimate back-up for local and regional inventories. But even good inventory management systems cannot predict every need. So our field efforts are backed with an emergency parts service. The emergency parts service is available to ship needed materials to the field service 24 h/day, 7 days/week. The end result is quicker service. Whether an existing customer or new, you have the assurance of knowing that the parts for your equipment are readily available. This means a high probability that a DEC service representative will arrive with all the parts required for fast repair—today.

THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW YOUR COMPUTER BEST—DEC

Existing customers account for nearly 70% of DEC's new business. These customers are satisfied because we apply the same expertise and innovative thinking to our service programs that we apply to engineering. Field service puts this expertise and thinking to practical use. Our educational facilities provide training and hands-on computer experience, on our computers and peripheral devices, for every service representative. Since these representatives carry out the day-to-day business of applying knowledge to real problems, we make sure that when they finally involve themselves in the maintenance of actual computer systems, they know DEC products well. Combine this with other facts: Our engineers designed your system, our technicians built and tested it, our field service representatives installed it and carried out your on-site warranty work. Therefore, we believe no one is better qualified to continue your ongoing computer maintenance than DEC.

RESPONSE—PROMPT AND EFFECTIVE

Typically, we respond to customers covered by a service agreement in a matter of hours. Fluctuations occur, of course, depending upon an installation's proximity to local service locations. DEC's field organization itself is the primary reason we can respond quickly. The product of over 20 years of growth, DEC's worldwide availability of field service facilities means our service is where it is needed—near our customers.

Other factors, however, contribute to this fast response. One is the continuous monitoring of response and repair times. The analyses that begin at the local level are the first link in the chain of management reports to headquarters from our district and regional operations. Field support specialists use this information to further reduce existing response times. Another factor is the branch service manager. Experienced service representatives themselves, branch managers are intimately familiar with the resources that can be utilized in the event of need.

YOUR EXPECTATIONS—OUR GOALS

Customer attitude and satisfaction surveys are another means through which DEC maintains the quality of a service commitment, by constantly adjusting and adapting to new considerations from our customers. From "statistically significant" polling to full customer population surveys, every effort is made to determine the specific responses necessary for complete customer satisfaction.

The field service conducts surveys annually for both our service agreement and our time-and-materials customers. To make sure we listen, survey results are coupled into field management reviews and into a performance recognition program for exceptional managers and service representatives.

We are proud of our service, but we are constantly working to improve it. At DEC, we feel that service is more than a method of correcting failures. To us it provides a sensitive reflection of our customers' needs.