The Business Challenge for the Next Expansion:
"shoot, move and communicate within an organization."

Today's military is providing great leadership, and we can use their methods to enhance our business focus. One of the methods they use to ensure that they can stay ahead of their competition is to "shoot, move and communicate." Today, business managers with profit and loss responsibility are under constant pressure to "shoot" by reducing cost, "move" by improving organizational productivity and "communicate" by enhancing efficiency. Not only are these issues daunting tasks in most organizations but, today's managers must improve internal communications to achieve these goals. This all comes at a time when they must facilitate the ability of the organization to declare War on the competition. The military calls this type of strategic flexibility within its forces "shoot, move and communicate." In today's business environment and in the next expansion, we need to have an attitude, as in the military to "shoot, move and communicate" to stay competitive and win in tomorrow's markets.

Unfortunately for most managers, they find that their current IT (Information Technology) infrastructure is not prepared to adapt to the changes needed to implement the "shoot, move and communicate" strategies. Many have seen the TV ad of the senior executive who has sold his board of directors on a new vision and asks his IT staff if their current systems can support the new vision. The look on his face is "shock and utter disappointment" when the answer from Information Technology is "NO." This is an example of a large company, but in most cases, the "computer guy" in the small business would have the same answer.

In the "Eighties" when network computing and PC's entered the marketplace, the internal demands from departmental organizations were so great as a result of the productivity gains for the technology, that many departments implemented their own solutions. The IT organizations lost control of many of these solutions because they could not rapidly respond to the organization's needs. Many believe that this inability of IT to respond actually fostered the growth of the network computing and the PC model. At the same time, the spreadsheet and email applications became "Killer Apps" within the organizations. Departments began to communicate with spreadsheets and used the new technology to fix many of the ills associated with the mainframe applications of that day.

In the "Nineties", IT organizations began to take back control of many of these systems and networks and integrate some of the functionality into the larger systems and software applications. In most organizations the information systems have evolved through one upgrade after another for decades. This was heightened in the "Nineties " with an abundance of available capital and the business requirements to integrate, re-engineer and take under IT control more of the network computing and PC infrastructure. This complexity has led to more and more sophisticated systems and longer lead times to implement the competitive changes needed by a company's managers.

The rapid expansion of the "Eighties" was followed in the Nineties with a consolidation of systems and integration. This consolidation is normal and to be expected. Economists see the same thing with business cycles. The "Internet Bubble" was a cycle and has now been played out by rapid expansion followed by the same type of consolidation. To paraphrase the book of Ecclesiastes: "there is nothing new under the sun." As long as there is business, we will see these cycles.

Recognizing these facts, we need to look to the next business cycle, the next "Killer App" and the next expansion and contraction. What will the next "Killer App" be? No one knows for sure, but it will likely follow the same pattern as before but again with surprises. One thing is almost certain; it is likely new innovations will occur around a central theme of rapid solution to problems. There appears to always be a buildup of these demands during the consolidation phase of a cycle. For some reason the consolidation phase brings with it a reigning in of excesses where constraints are placed upon organizations; thus, leading to buildup in demand with an organization to rapidly fix problems. This cycle repeats itself over and over again.

Returning to our military strategy analogy of "shoot, move and communicate," we are entering into a period of expanding deployment of applications that are hosted on either an internal Intranet or over a secure Internet connection. This is where much of the future software turf-battle will be fought. However, a very large area of Internet growth worldwide will be connections via alternative methods such as Internet connected cell phones and PDA's. Already, Japan has more access via cell phones than from normal Internet connections. Hence, the organizations of the future must be able to "shoot, move and communicate." In order to deal effectively with the coming requirements that managers will have to "turn an organization on a dime," the ability to implement solutions within "hours or even minutes and not months or years" will be critical. Not only must these solutions be developed within hours or even minutes, but they also must deploy over normal Internet browsers and alternative devices like PDA's and cell phones. Functionality will be derived from "widgets" or "snippets" of functionality that can be made to interoperate by connecting the dots. The next form of technology expansion will foster this type of application and it is likely that these rapid solutions will be the "Killer Apps" of the next expansion. In the early stage, we will see expansion of these types of applications rapidly deployed. In the later stages of the expansion and into the consolidation stage, it will focus on the integration issues regarding these solutions or the incorporation of these "rapid solutions" into the next level of applications software. The "shoot, move and communicate" strategy is always followed by occupying forces and peace keepers who secure some form of long term peace followed by reconstruction. The technology and business cycle are very similar.

Rapid Software has been in the process of assembling a number of rapid development "widgets" or "snippets" for years to build these types of solutions. Recently, Rapid Software has deployed the technology with the release of Independence™ to build online and customized account management systems / sales forecasting (3 hours), vacation schedulers (15 minutes), partner coordination systems (1 hour), and sales

commissions systems (45 minutes) to name just a few. These designs were then automatically deployed in real-time over the Internet and equally accessible via WAP enabled PDA's and cell phones. While it may seem impossible to develop systems this fast, if standard components with certain flexible design criteria are engineering into the "widgets," then the components can be put together electronically by connecting the dots. The assembly process is much the way a parts order is fulfilled for an assembly line. Supply chain systems extend this with what they call just-in-time manufacturing. We call this software technique described above as "just-in-time software." While there are some limitations as to what can be done with the technology at the present time, the future is only limited by the repository of "widgets" which can be incorporated into the master design.

The future of rapid solutions, like Rapid Software's Independence^{TM} , to reduce cost, improve organizational productivity and enhance efficiency is at the door as we enter into the next cycle. Business organizations need to "shoot, move and communication" during the next expansion.

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