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Positive outlook for Office 2000

Lee: *Different and in leading position.*

By Wendy Lee

MICROSOFT (M) Sdn Bhd is confident that when it comes to office productivity suites, Microsoft has garnered a leading position worldwide and not only has it done so but done so in a different and unique way.

This leadership position is further buoyed by the launch of Microsoft's latest office productivity suite – Microsoft Office 2000 – in the US last Monday and locally last Thursday.

At the local launch which was also in conjunction with Microsoft Malaysia's *Digital Nervous System (DNS) Day*, the company's managing director Benedict Lee said the latest offering is a unique and growing set of tools that lead the way ahead, enabling different workgroups to work differently and optimally.

"I do not really see us having any competitor out there in the market. We believe we are different and in a leading position in terms of applications for now and the future.

"Our immediate challenge is to continue playing that leadership role so that we will always be able to provide all types of solutions for the market; enabling from the start-ups to the big companies to use simple business tools on the computer and the Web," said Lee.

He said Microsoft Office 2000 – a key component of DNS – empowers users in an organisation with the tools needed to capture information from various points, turn that information into knowledge and then take the necessary actions.

"The future is all about velocity: the speed of business and the speed of change. To be ahead, businesses must accelerate the flow of digital information in order to think and move quickly enough," said Lee.

"Microsoft Office 2000 introduces new features that enable knowledge workers to do more than technology allowed them before by unleashing the power of the Web workstyle which would take users into the digital age."

The new suite of applications, he said, drills in Microsoft's concept of the DNS in three main ways: by creating opportunities for companies to improve the flow of information throughout the organisation; increasing the speed and efficiency of their business operations; and doing business on the Internet.

In terms of business, Microsoft Malaysia is optimistic of its performance for fiscal year 1999 ending June 30 with revenues surpassing the targets set.

"We see this coming from an increased level of confidence in business and market acceptance, and we see tremendous opportunities of growth next year. We plan to increase our headcount by 25 to 30 per cent and the new intakes will take up positions in our technical, sales and consulting departments," Lee told reporters after the launch of *DNS Day* and Microsoft Office 2000 in Kuala Lumpur.

Microsoft Office 2000 is available in three separate versions – Standard, Professional and Premium – with estimated retail prices of RM2,019, RM2,429 and RM3,229 respectively.

The Standard Edition comes with Word 2000, Excel 2000, PowerPoint 2000 and Outlook 2000.

Upgrades – from any previous version of Microsoft Office (i.e. Office 4.X, Office 97) – for each of the Standard, Professional and Premium versions are to retail at RM1,029, RM1,409 and RM1,829 respectively.

BBS becomes Authorised Java Centre

By Chandra Devi

BINARY Business School (BBS) has been appointed as an Authorised Java Centre (AJC), making it the first local private college to be included under Sun Microsystems' Authorised Training Centre (ATC) Value-added Instruction Programme.

The appointment allows BBS to conduct training and offer courses on Java technology and Solaris system administration.

BBS' president and chief executive officer (CEO) Joseph Adaikalam said as an AJC, the college is now in a position to offer industry-relevant training and skills which are marketable worldwide.

"There is a global demand for Java developers and Solaris System Administrators and this appointment signifies our intention to prepare students to meet this demand," he said at the signing ceremony between BBS and Sun Microsystems to mark the appointment in Kuala Lumpur last week.

Joseph said all students in the business and information technology (IT) programmes, both at diploma and degree levels at the college, will now be exposed to Java technology.

Joseph: *BBS to offer industry-relevant courses.*

Govinathan: *A visionary move by BBS.*

Anton: *Stringent selection process.*

"As students at BBS will now graduate with industry-recognised certification, they will benefit in two ways. They will not only be ensured of good job prospects but also be able to enter the global job market," he said.

The college recently invested RM1.3 million in purchasing 15 Sun Ultra 5 servers. About 600 students are expected to undergo training using Solaris-Unix in the first year.

Sun Microsystems Malaysia's managing director Govinathan Pillai said with the rapid changes in the marketplace, it is important to position students where the industry is heading.

Exposing students to an open environment like the Java technology and Solaris-Unix system will be the right choice as it will provide them with a basic grounding needed to go further and prepare for the future, he added.

"The investment made by BBS is a visionary move as the Solaris-Unix environment is an open system that is widely used globally. On top of that, as an AJC, the college will now be able to offer courses that will prepare students for recognised-industrial certifications such as the Certified Java Programmer and the Certified Java Developer," he said.

Govinathan said research has shown that majority of Fortune 1000 firms are using Java and others have plans to invest in Java technology and students with this skill and knowledge will find easy employment anywhere. "In line with the demand for Java skills and Solaris systems knowledge, we are planning to appoint more Java ATCs."

Sun Educational Services' regional business manager for Asia South Anton Ravindran said the company follows a stringent selection process in appointing ATCs.

"Prior to appointing an ATC, we will ensure that the centre has the necessary facilities and manpower to deliver the courses," he said, adding that as a Java ATC, the centre will benefit tremendously.

Under the programme, lecturers of the selected centres will be given training in Java technology by Sun-certified trainers.

Anton said the centres would also be given the courseware and teaching materials to ensure quality training is delivered at all times. "A partnership with an industry professional like Sun Microsystems will assist education centres provide industry-relevant courses of calibre."

To date, Sun Educational Services has 10 authorised training centres and more than 30 AJCs across Asia South, which includes Asean countries, India and Sri Lanka.

Online cash deposit machine

HONG Leong Bank (HLB) Berhad has launched an online cash deposit machine which accepts notes in large quantity. Claimed to be the first of its kind here, the machine is able to accept Malaysian currency notes in large amount at one time, instead of piece by piece.

Initially available at its branch in Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur, the machine accepts RM10, RM50 and RM100 notes and it allows a maximum of 50 notes of the same or different denominations per transaction. HLB's senior general manager for personal banking division Daryll Morton said customers could now make deposits using the machine and have their cash credited into their accounts immediately.

Customers are also assured of safety and reliability with a printed receipt as proof their deposits, he said. "As such, it would be more convenient for our customers as they do not have to queue to deposit their money into their accounts."

Intan implements three major pilot cycles of ISAC

• From Page 1

segment has been developed by Intan," said Raja Malik.

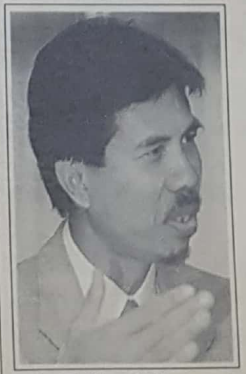
"The second part, which is the IT skills test, will examine their capabilities in utilising simple every day applications such as spreadsheets and word documents. Intan will be partnering with some private companies to develop the test program for this segment," he told *Computimes* in Petaling Jaya.

According to Raja Malik, Intan has already implemented three major pilot cycles of the *ISAC* programme with a group of 200 participants comprising personnel at the senior management level, support staff and those attending the technical courses. They were mainly from agencies like the Public Services Department and electronic government (e-government) project participants.

"With general results of a 90 per cent passing rate, and from the findings of these exercises, I can safely comment that these public servants are well-versed in IT. Their literacy level is considered high as compared to some years back," he added.

ISAC was also promoted at the recent *Infosoc Malaysia '99* where some 400 participants showed their keen interest in the programme. They include academicians, students and non-Government personnel," he added. On future plans, Raja Malik said Intan intends to make the certification programme available on the Net. There are also plans to simulate the skills test into three areas – productivity, communication and information," Raja Malik said.

"The focus on productivity would help improve skills like report writing while communication would improve integration of gathering information from various sources including electronic mail. The focus on information accommodates the skill in disseminating, sharing and accessing general data."



Raja Malik: *Civil servants are well-versed in IT.*

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