

## Conquering change: Overcoming technology anxiety

By Jeff Davidson, MBA, CMC

**W**ho says that the leap to intergrate even more office technology has been painful? Here are some effective ways to become more technologically adept, without giving up your identity or your life in the process:

- Each week, learn one new presentation or communication tool, particularly those which are already part of existing software packages that you use.
- Read at least one article a week related to communication or presentation technology. The article can be in a PC magazine, a business journal, or your local newspaper. You don't have to pick a highly technical article.
- Once a month, read a book related to technology. Again, go easy on yourself. Pick up Nicholas Negroponte's *Becoming Digital* or Dan Burrus's *Technotrends*, among a variety of other books that put technology in perspective in an understandable, friendly way. Also, choose one of the many books on using Internet navigating software such as Netscape or Mosaic, using a modem or fax-modem, and so forth. The Alpha and Que divisions of MacMillan Books, a Simon and Schuster Company, has an excellent series called *The Complete Idiot's Guide*, covering such topics as the Internet, DOS, Windows, CompuServe, America Online, and PCs in general, among many other topics.
- Find out what your clients and customers are doing with technology. Remember five or six years ago, when faxes were becoming commonplace in offices? The first time a client said, "Could you fax it to me?" and you couldn't made you think. The fifth or tenth time someone asked you to fax information to them, you had already purchased a fax machine, or were already thinking about it. So it is with today's latest technology. Your own clue about what technology you may wish to use and master is derived from what your clients and customers are using. Similarly, pay attention to what others in your industry, particularly close competitors, are using. Ask people how they're accomplishing certain tasks, and what works particularly well.

- Join a technology group in your area. The business page of your local newspaper will list who's meeting, when, and where. In every metro area of at least 75,000 to 100,000 people, there are PC and Macintosh user clubs, bulletin boards, support groups, and the like. Almost every community has its own news group that can be accessed over the Internet if you simply have the right group name. Form alliances and affiliations with people who know what you need to know, as well as those who are at the same level of technology that you are.

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- Once you begin to feel more technologically at ease, consider subscribing to a technical publication — for example, *Wired*, *PC World*, *Home Office*, *Internet Magazine*, *The Net*, *Byte*, *MacWorld*, *PC*

*Computing*, among dozens of others, are all available at relatively affordable yearly subscription rates.

- Look in your local paper for forthcoming technology trade shows and expositions. Again, in any metro area above 75,000 to 100,000 people, in the course of a year, there are at least four to six technology fairs where both hardware and software vendors display their latest products and services. The cost of attending such shows is usually free or the nominal price of \$5 to \$10. Many of these shows also have specialized seminars which are free with your general admission, or which only require an additional nominal fee.
- Rather than attempt to absorb new information during the work day in a subject area where you may not presently be comfortable, designate one night a week when you'll spend two hours or so learning more about technology, becoming familiar with terminology, and forsaking the world of the technologically disadvantaged. No matter whether you read or learn slowly, it's more important that you have a quiet, uninterrupted space in which to absorb new concepts and explore new ways of thinking.

(Continued on page 8)

### ***Eliminate one form and see the advantages***

According to Jeff Davidson of the Breathing Space Institute, the benefits are exponential when you eliminate just one form from your operations. Davidson will be a featured speaker at HMA's National Conference in Nashville at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 5.

Here's how Davidson sees the advantages of getting rid of one piece of paper:

#### **Immediate Benefits**

- **Paper:** Less ordering, less cost, less receiving, less handling, and less storing.
- **Printing:** Less retrieving, less printer use, less electricity, lower cartridge and toner costs, or lower outside costs if purchased by a printer or forms vender.

- **Storing:** Less collecting, less transporting, less storage space used, less employee time.
- **Distributing:** Less retrieving, less disseminating.

*For those who must complete the form:*

- **Completing:** Less writing, less handling, less ink.
- **Submitting:** Less walking, less faxing, less mailing or e-mailing.

*For those who must deal with the completed form:*

- **Collecting:** Less walking, less opening mail, less handling faxes.
- **Compiling:** Less sorting, less calculating, less totaling.
- **Reporting:** Less writing, less presenting, less mental energy.