

Mac vs PC

The study of why Macs are better than PCs

MIS Management?

[Note: *MIS = Management Information Systems, sometimes called IS or IT or something similar. These people are usually in charge of such technical matters as network operations, computer setup, computer troubleshooting, etc.*]

After hearing about HUNDREDS of cases (and seeing many first hand), the inescapable conclusion is that MIS persons are responsible for the majority of the: **1)** Mac problems in network installations, and **2)** PC replacements of Macs.

When you look at the many technical advantages of Macs one would think that technically oriented MIS persons would be attracted to such an option. But often that does not seem to be the case.

*My personal conclusion is that it appears that many school (and business) technology resource people are making decisions based on what **they think is in their interests**, rather than acting as a service group that exists solely to benefit the computer users and owners.*

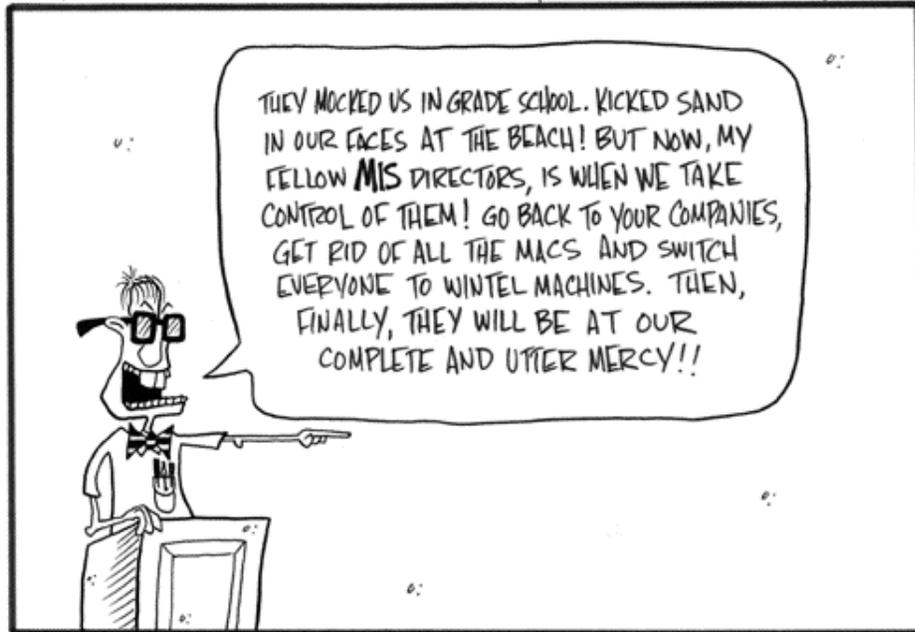
Well why not just keep these people in the background (i.e. providing a service)? Easy with a Mac system, but **not possible with Windows/PCs**. To avoid overwhelming you with hundreds of citations, here is just one example of a technically competent user trying to make everyday changes on his Windows/PC. The interesting ZDNet/eWEEK [article](#) is aptly called "Messing with PCs: It's the Devil's Work." Conclusion: once you choose the Windows/PC route, the MIS dependency is inescapable.

Just so you do not get the mistaken idea that this is only my view, in the [Single Platform Lie report](#) (a PDF file) R.M. Terence, M.S. puts it even more bluntly by saying that "The hard and true fact about platform selection is that MIS managers who support the Single-Platform Wintel argument do so, **not** because they objectively feel that they are doing what is best for their company and users -- but because *they simply happen to personally prefer using and supporting Wintel systems*. **This is not in the best interests of their employer.**

"And their 'reasons' for standardization are merely after-the-fact rationalizations for their actions and opinions. These lame, weak justifications do not stand up under close analysis.

*"The test for the single platform lie is simple: any MIS manager who supports single-platform Wintel should be brought before his management and made to bring out all of his departmental and user task-time studies and requirements analysis documentation to **PROVE** that he had an objective reason for choosing Wintel, and prove that there were cost savings in support, acquisition, training, and life-cycle cost of ownership.*

"As there is ample evidence in quality publications by independent sources to challenge such an assumption, the lie becomes obvious."



Charles Martin, from Chapel Hill, NC succinctly writes:

"An IT department survives by making itself useful and increasing its budget. How does it do that, you ask? Well, the inherent problems in the Wintel architecture make the IT department very useful when those problems arise. And they arise frequently, which makes the IT department happy.

"Now, if the budget does not grow commensurate with the problems, the IT department dies. It survives by getting more funding because it proves itself very useful in solving those nasty Windows problems (or at least hiding them under the carpet until the next inevitable time when the problems rear their ugly heads again).

"And how do they ensure more Windows problems – right – by recommending the purchase of more Windows computers. And the IT department lives happily ever after because it makes itself look good.

"Choosing Macintosh computers would not enable their survival because most of the Mac users would know how to solve their own problems (on the few occasions when they do arise on Macintoshes)."

From another IT Manager "I agree strongly with your basic feeling that too many MIS personnel have poor attitudes that can appear self serving... Too often MIS personnel are not familiar enough with the end use of the data so they concentrate on the other half of their responsibility – **control**." See how this dovetails with my "[A Bit Of History](#)" comments.

This August 2003 [article](#) on the PBS website says "It comes down to the IT Department Full Employment Act... Macs threaten the livelihood of IT staffs. If you recommend purchasing a computer that requires only half the support of the machine it is replacing, aren't you putting your job in danger? Exactly. Ideally, the IT department ought to recommend the best computer for the job, but more often than not, they recommend the best computer for the IT department's job."

The [UNIX Guide...](#) argues that "the present mess, in which most systems expenditures produce frustration and unmet expectations rather than the quietly effective solutions promised, arose mainly because **the incentives given systems people contradict their service mandate**.

"The incentive is to grow by expanding the systems budget and you don't do that by being effective, you do that by balancing on the knife edge of continuous near failure, because that gets you executive attention and user pressure to increase your budget. Someone whose living depends on fighting alligators is, after all, more likely to breed them than to drain the swamp."

An Atlanta consultant says: "The MIS world is divided into two distinct groups. The first group (fairly small I am afraid) is savvy on multiple systems. They love to learn and experiment with whatever new comes along. The people I know in this group have generally proven to be very respectful of the Mac and many use a Mac as their personal machine.

"The second group seems to unwilling to touch anything but what they were trained to use down at the local votech. These people will go to their graves clutching their Netware or Windows paradigms and certifications. I find this group completely unwilling to even look at something different from what they know."

Another experienced educator writes: "Here is my opinion of what the problem is:

1. Tech people only know networking: and that is normally Windows NT or some version of it. These are the most influential people when it comes to schools and technology. They know more than anyone else (or at least that's the impression they want to convey).

2. Tech people don't know software. Nor are they interested in the art of creating. Their only goal is to use Windows, to get a computer to turn on, to allow people to work with Word or some other Microsoft product.

3. When you start talking about kids doing real creative projects with their computers these tech people are of little help..." mainly because **this is outside their area of expertise.**

Still another technical person in the trenches comments that "Unfortunately computer decisions will continue to be the personal opinion of some computer geek who is impressed with himself for knowing the 12 parameters of the DOS print command rather than any real objective analysis. Been there, heard that.

"In as much as the word of a school's (company's) resident asocial, self-absorbed technophile is gospel, I suggest Windows is becoming more popular because of its complexity and un-ease of use, in contrast to it's implied claims. Fortunately, there's a critical mass somewhere. Oh, well, at least Wintel is keeping lots of folks employed!"

Dan Loeb in an *OSOpinion* piece, insightfully, says "IT people are involved in careers that involve the management, maintenance and integration of computer systems in a specific environment, among them business and schools. Such IT people don't make decisions based on a computer's external design or even its software availability. **They make their purchasing decisions and throw their support behind systems and technologies that will enhance their careers and increase their job security and earning ability.**



"This is the missing human link in this battle. PC salesmen are not just selling computers, they sell careers. IT people working on Microsoft networking or Internet technologies, using Intel-based servers and other technology (VBScript, SQLserver, etc.), also acquire certifications and skills on these technologies that they can take with them on their next job search.

"A Macintosh salesman cannot offer any of those things. They cannot sell a career to an IT person. 'Selling a career' is against the very nature of Macs."

John Bell, a technical writer, said "With the advent of Windows NT, in-house techs got an operating system built just for them. Rather than the lowly desktop user being in charge, NT put the MIS person in charge. The MIS person had all rights to the machine, and could dole out rights to the user accounts on a user-by-user basis. Add to that the ability to control an NT workstation over the network, it meant that an MIS guy could affect your workstation without ever setting foot in your office. MIS people became god.

"Naturally someone used to playing god with NT workstations reacts negatively to a Mac, which puts the power in the hands of the user at the keyboard. Put simply, **Macs put the power of choice in the hands of the people, whereas NT puts the power in the hands of the MIS person.**"

Check out this [commentary](#) which asks why lower priced Macs are bypassed for higher priced Windows/PCs. "It's called the fine art of specification writing. It's one of the principal reasons why you can see so many Dells in government offices rather than no-name PC clones that integrators can provide more cheaply. In other words, if one is skillful enough in writing the specifications one can pretty much dictate what one gets **despite procurement laws specifically designed to prevent this.**

"Who writes the contract specifications? The staff of an IT department does, of course. While contract officers or buyers may question specifications or ask for a justification, they are frequently **easily bluffed by IT people...** Apple, with its purposefully small number of computer models, is a sitting duck for those who do not want to give Apple a chance *via* the specifications method.

"Why on earth would an IT department in an educational institution want to write out Apple, especially if teachers, students and parents are clamoring to retain Macs in schools for educational and classroom efficiency reasons? **Arrogance, ignorance and greed are some of the motivations that come to mind.** Ask yourself how well public schools pay when compared with the enterprise market. What IT technology monopolizes the enterprise market where the big paying jobs are? Now, certainly not all IT people in educational institutions are so self-serving that they put their interests above those of teachers and students but there are enough..."

An interesting reading report from [Aberdeen](#) makes the case that sometimes the MIS people are also the victims. **The report explains how a Windows NT migration caused "a one-third decrease in performance accompanied by a fifty-percent increase in management costs. This does not include production time lost because of workstation freezes, transmission drops, or the constant re-booting needed to keep the server operational."** (Ed: *Astounding that this made it into print!*)

And they go on to say that the culprit is management, not MIS people: "For the Company, the senior business executives decreed both the what and the how. They made a business decision to go with Microsoft irrespective of its various products' strengths and weaknesses, assuming all were "good enough" to meet the business' needs. The decree, in effect, tied IS' hands and prevented it from finding the best solutions available – and now IS finds it politically incorrect to make their bosses aware of the massive problems the decree has caused."

Another writer submitted a different perspective as to why many technical support individuals making computer platform recommendations may not be able to produce an unbiased report for the school board to evaluate:

"If your IT people have taken Microsoft Certification (MCSE) classes, they are required to sign a statement that they will not make public statements critical of Microsoft Corporation or its products. MS went after an individual a couple of years ago, legally stripping him of all of his certifications, after he produced a personal home page examining bugs in Windows."



As you can see by now, I have received MANY letters on the Mac vs PC issue (some 3000). To keep things brief, I have only quoted selectively from a choice few. [Here](#) is the entirety of a longer one that I can't adequately abbreviate. This email eloquently discusses an aerospace program manager's experience when his company switched from Macs to PCs, based on a misguided management push.

And, speaking of MIS people being victimized, this November 2003 PBS [story](#) gives them the ultimate bad news: these MIS people who had a huge part of Microsoft being successful are now being phased out **by Microsoft**. Guess what happens when you play with a rattlesnake?

Of course there are many objective MIS persons who are willing to give the Mac platform its credit. A good example is from the [Denair \(CA\) School District](#). In this well-written article their Technology Coordinator discusses why the Mac is lower cost, is easier to educate users on, is less expensive to set-up and maintain, has better longevity, etc.

* * * * *

This IT manager wrote me in September of 2002: "I've been a Mac user since March of 1984. In 1995, I bought a PC and have focused much of the past few years learning how to exploit the best features of the PC world. My last position was as IT Director for a PC-only company – so it's not as if I'm a Mac bigot. My belief is that one should use the best tool for the job – after all, we're choosing a tool, not a religion. Me, I jumped with 2 feet into the PC world because PC jobs pay a whole lot better than Mac jobs – because there is added complexity on this side of the fence. Personal preferences don't necessarily line your wallet."

However, he has no doubt that the Mac is the better computer, and goes into detail on four reasons: **1)** Macs are and have been more technologically advanced than PCs. **2)** Innovation is lacking in PC software programs. **3)** Learning how to use a Mac first actually HELPED me to learn more about PCs. **4)** Research has shown me that Mac users know how to use more programs than PC users."

* * * * *

Tim Molnar who runs a high school lab of mixed PCs and Power Macs in Canada says, in part: "There are many pressures on decision makers to go with what is considered 'mainstream' (i.e. PCs). **If the school board wants a faster obsolescence in their computer purchase, then buy PCs. If they want to have more networking issues crop up over the life of the networks they will create, then buy a LOT of PCs.**"

“If, on the other hand, a school board wants machines that will continue to be productive whether on networks or not, for many years past their purchase date, then choose Macs. I have classes doing very good course work, in many cases on six year old Power Macs.

“If a school board really cares about productive teaching/computing environments where more time is spent on learning than on fixing computers and network related situations then get as many Macs as possible.

“I am not anti-Pentium/PC/Windows. I use these machines every day, and they are fine. **But I am pro-productivity and quality learning, and so for me this means getting as many Macs on to my networks and into my classrooms as possible.**”

* * * * *

Brad Stanford, system administrator, (Advanced Lightning Technology) recently stated in an email: **“ I can tell you that the more Macintosh computers you have, the better.** Amongst all of the hoopla and politics out there about platforms, it comes down to a simple decision about the goals of the school district. **If the goal of a school system is to train children and do business in an efficient and timely manner, then use as many Macs as you can.**

“If, on the other hand, the goal of a school system is to open a computer repair and upgrade facility, then purchase as many Windows machines as possible, and be prepared to make the computer system the focus of your collective lives instead of education.”

* * * * *

Ken Tuley, manager, Learning Technologies, Albuquerque Public Schools, Albuquerque, NM recently was quoted as saying: **“In Albuquerque Public Schools, we have 85,000 students, 12,000 employees, and 17,000-plus machines...”**

(Ed: *This is not a typo –17,000 computers. Should he be credible?*)

“I believe that the Windows platform adds the extra expenses of additional people, downtime and training to any technology budget. We could all save a lot of time and money by moving to a single Macintosh platform. Moving to a single Windows platform is just the wrong direction for a tax dollar supported institution that needs a transparent instructional tool that just works.”

* * * * *

A business IT manager, Cory Rau, [says](#) “I am constantly looking for ways to reduce the number of help desk calls we need to answer. I maintain that one of the most effective ways to achieve this is to install Macs wherever possible...”

“Putting more Macs in your office is likely to cause your users to thank you immediately. Your help desk will thank you as soon as they realize that something which looks like a gumdrop can kick Pentium-butt and make their users happier at the same time. Oh yeah, and you can forget about those missing .dll and .ini files.”

* * * * *

Claude Baines, CBET, CRES (the manager of a Biomedical Engineering department, with 20 years of experience in computers) writes in support of the lower support costs, etc. of the Mac OS:

“Unless administrators come to an understanding of these facts and lead their MIS departments into evaluating and **using systems that require less support and integrate information better across the enterprise, their efforts at cost containment will fail or be severely limited.**

“It will take real men and women of integrity in MIS departments to stand up and say ‘ The King has no clothes.’ This will not be easy. Humans, **once they have committed themselves down a path, will spend any amount of time and money to make it work rather than admit that possibly, just maybe, there is a better way. ”**

And, by the way, since Apple is committed to provide **superior hardware** to MIS people, they continue to upgrade their offerings. As an example, read what [PC Magazine](#) says about Apple's most recent server hardware and software: "The Xserve comes bundled with an **unlimited license** for Mac OS X Server, Apple's robust server software based on BSD Unix. This means that you can buy an Xserve and offer files, Web services, and audio/video streams to an **unlimited number of users at no additional cost.**"

"The Xserve package also contains Apple's WebObjects Web applications development and deployment software, Apple's QuickTime multimedia server suite, and **scores of open-source packages**, including the [Apache](#) Web server and the Tomcat Java application server. **All of this makes the Xserve a well-appointed and economical server solution.** The base configuration is **several hundred dollars less than a similarly equipped Dell.**"

In this January 2004 [article](#), *ComputerWorld* comes to the same conclusion: "What's stunning isn't that Apple Computer's engineers can design a server with two 2-GHz G5 processors, 1GB of memory, storage capacity of 80 to 750GB and loads of other goodies all in a slim 1U package. No, what's stunning is that Apple is pricing the Xserve system at \$3,999. That makes the Xserve the price leader for dual-CPU servers. And when you add in Windows per-client pricing, the savings become **huge**. Apple sells its systems with no per-client fees for Mac OS X. In contrast, a 25-user enterprise license for Windows adds \$2,495 to the price of a dual-processor PowerEdge 1750 server from Dell Inc."

[eWeek](#) says that "Apple offers a well-crafted graphical operating environment, on an open-source-based operating system, supported by best-of-breed, standards-based development tools such as **Borland Software's JBuilder**..." And speaking of the many goodies included, an *SD Times* September 2003 [story](#) praises the free **XCode** programming language that is packaged... [Another](#) about Sleepycat Software's powerful **Berkeley DB**... [InfoWorld](#) says "Apple Computer's server division is gaining momentum among ISV partners and corporate users of its Xserve and OS X operating system... It is a breakthrough product."

Network Magazine gives Apple one if its "2003Products Of The Year" awards. In part it [says](#) "File system journaling increases the potential availability, restorability, and all-around reliability of files and transactions. Mac OS X Server also includes an array of Internet and multimedia capabilities, including Apache Web Server; Java 2 Platform, Standard Edition (J2SE); Secure Sockets Layer (SSL); JavaServer Pages (JSP); support for Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) and Extensible Markup Language-Remote Procedure Call (XML-RPC); WebDAV; Webmail; Quicktime Broadcaster; and Quicktime Streaming Server."

For more on Xserve see Apple's [data](#) and [pricing](#) information, and this [ZDNet](#) article titled "A Sign Of Good Things Ahead For Apple" and this [report](#) says "The Xserve is taking the industry by storm..." and goes on to explain four major reasons why, and these Xinet server [benchmarks](#), and [NewsFactor](#) says (among other compliments): "...But the Xserve's most compelling attribute may not be its small form factor, powerful server software or its tight integration. Rather, the company's service and support may be the deciding factor in a company's decision to switch. "

The well-respected RickWise company recently had this to about Apple's Xserve: "We started with the **goal of providing reliable, high volume, real-time risk management services for mission critical operations** in internet companies, banks, and other credit lending organizations. **Cost was also a key factor.** Volume would be expected to ramp up over time necessitating a scalable architecture capable of growing with the business. Many different platforms were considered including mainframe, largeunix, and other personal computer systems. Most systems presented large up front costs to achieve the required performance. The less expensive systems often lacked the features or performance to make them practical. Of the available systems, the Macintosh offered the best overall value. Support of industry standards such as TCP/IP, SCSI and PCI coupled with the performance of the PowerPC processor and its ease of use put the **Macintosh far ahead of the competition.**"

[Network World Fusion](#) has a long article that elaborates even more. And an ExtremeTech [story](#) says "It's pretty clear that the new Mac OS is being built for business integration with the new features being added in the MS-Windows support area... like Apple **supporting a welter of cross- platform protocols**, including ActiveDirectory, LDAP (Open Directory), Bluetooth, SMB browsing and sharing, IPV6 and IPSec, the CUPS print engine, and Virtual Private Network (PPTP)..."

The *Network World* article goes on to say “**Apple even moved to take the lead in some areas** that should be close to enterprise users’ hearts. Consider [Rendezvous](#), a new API that can let a variety of computers and other devices seek out each others’ IP addresses for file sharing, printing or even streaming media. In the enterprise world, how many times does a project sit waiting because a key person is out of contact? Lack of communication stalls and stifles productivity. The same could be said for files and other content; many times in a collaborative environ, the network infrastructure is made more complicated than necessary simply to support information availability.”

[Read](#) where "The Office of Management and Budget on Aug. 26, 2003 released a revised version of its Technical Reference Model (TRM), smoothing out details and adding widely-used technologies to make it more useful for people developing information systems across government. OMB oversees the Federal Enterprise Architecture, designed to foster information technology collaboration and coordination among agencies and help reduce redundancy in programs, systems and investments. It has five reference models, including TRM.

"The biggest change to the TRM is the addition of Apple Computer Inc.'s Mac OS X and Linux to the operating systems, or "supporting platforms," section of the model. In the previous version, the only platforms were Microsoft Corp.'s Windows 2000 and .NET, and Sun Microsystems' Java 2 Micro and Enterprise editions." In a related matter Lockheed Martin [announced](#) that they were buying 260 Apple XServe servers to go into Navy submarines.

All this would clearly say that any MIS person who is not **seriously** evaluating Macs for at least the server end of a network, is more than delinquent in their service responsibilities.

What about Novell networks? Well, [Novell](#) is considered one of the “good guys”, when comparing the choices in the field. Here is what one of their documents, titled “*What Microsoft doesn't want you to know*”, [says](#): “Microsoft wants more money from you. And they'll do whatever it takes to get it...” Who can argue with that? Read the whole article, it's interesting!

Other good reads about problems with Microsoft Exchange on Novell's site are: "[Press and Analysts Speak Out](#)", "[Whitepapers and Ferris Research Insight Bulletin](#)", and "[Top Ten Exchange Headaches](#)".

The biggest (Mac related) problem Novell had, is that they dropped the ball for Mac support a few years ago, when they fell behind in upgrading their Netware server software. To fill that void, they licensed a third party company, [Prosoft](#), to make Mac client software. The problems with this solution are that it added a layer of complexity, plus considerable cost. Novell now again offers [Native File Access](#) for Macs, but the damage has been done. I was hoping to be able to find a White-Paper comparing these two server options, but was unable to. (The closest I came was at the very interesting [OSData](#) site.) So here is a draft version of my [Apple UNIX vs Novell Netware](#) comparison – and thanks to the contributors that helped create this!

BTW, in my exploration for server platform comparisons, I came across [this](#), which does an insightful comparison of Windows-NT to the 30± year old CP/M operating system (i.e. the basis of MsDOS).

What about Microsoft's new product? In March of 2003 [CNet](#) said “Windows Server 2003 is Microsoft's high-end operating system the company hopes will help drive sales to the enterprise. But analysts remained cautious about widespread interest in Windows Server 2003. The Redmond, Wash.-based software giant delayed the launch of the product three times, compelling many companies interested in it to upgrade to Windows Server 2000 instead, said IDC analyst Al Gillen.

“In October 2000, Microsoft said the product would ship in the second half of 2001. In April 2001, the company pushed back delivery of the product, which is an essential component of its .Net Web services strategy, to early 2002. In March 2002, it again postponed delivery until the second half of that year. But in November, it held back delivery for a third time, setting an April launch date.

“Microsoft may also have confused customers by renaming the server software three times. The product started out with the code-name Whistler, but was renamed Windows 2002 Server in April 2001. In June 2001, the name was changed to Windows .Net Server, in line with the company's .Net Web services strategy. In August, Microsoft renamed the software Windows .Net Server 2003, but in January removed .Net from the server software's name.”

Now that it finally has been released, *ComputerWorld* [says](#) "Some IT managers aren't happy. Others are more understanding. But all of those planning to upgrade to Windows Server 2003 will find that many older versions of Microsoft Corp.'s most popular server applications won't run on the new operating system."

Shortly thereafter there was [this](#): "Microsoft acknowledged a **critical vulnerability** Wednesday in nearly all versions of its flagship Windows operating system software, the first such design flaw to affect its latest Windows Server 2003 software." *Yawn.*

In a comprehensive [discussion](#) of many Mac advantages, the author states that "Another kind of emotional negative reaction to the Mac sometimes comes from the tech support, training, maintenance, and service industries (IT/IS professionals), which comprise the largest sector of the entire computer industry. These are companies and individuals whose businesses rely on customers' dependency and are therefore **threatened by the reliability, ease-of-use, and power of the Mac.**

"It is important to note these are people who drive the majority of purchase decisions for businesses, government institutions, schools, and often consumers as well. This constitutes a symbiosis between the difficulty of using and maintaining Wintel machines and the robustness of the tech support, maintenance, service, and training industries. Wintel and these megalithic industries simply feed each other in a tragic and ever-expanding market feedback loop at the expense of global productivity and technological innovation.

"...public school systems often waste millions of taxpayer dollars purchasing Wintel hardware/software packaged with tech support/maintenance/training services, services largely unnecessary were Macs involved instead. Still more taxpayer dollars are then wasted by the loss of productivity on the user end. "

Conclusion: MIS people need to be educated (and held accountable) as to what their real function is: A SERVICE ORGANIZATION.

Once they grasp that idea, Macs will be a relatively easy sell.

This section's Haiku
(see the bottom of page 1 for more explanation):

***Stay the patient course.
Of little worth is your ire.
The network is down.***

rev: February 2, 2004

— Section #10 —