



# MnIPS NEWSLETTER

A Publication of the Minnesota Information Professional Society - Vol. 1, No. 7 - April, 2000

## NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

The MnIPS Newsletter is published nine times a year (September-June) by Minnesota Information Professional Society. We welcome materials submitted to our calendar or articles on computing topics. Submit materials by disc or e-mail to:

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## NOTE: MEETING INFORMATION

*The meeting place:*  
**Holiday Inn - Bloomington**  
**35W and 94<sup>th</sup>**  
**(1201 W 94th St.)**  
**Phone: 884-8211**

*Meeting Times:*  
5:00 P.M. Social & Registration  
5:45 P.M. Dinner  
6:45 P.M. Meeting and Program  
8:00 P.M. Adjourn

For reservations call:  
Dennis Cummings by Apr. 14th

and Choose  
Filet Mignon or Salmon

Tel. (651) 707-0523 (H) or  
(651) 205-2632 (W)

or  
E-mail:  
Dennis.Cummings1@usbank.com

\$20 for members  
\$25 for non-members

## Dinner Meeting NOTICE Tuesday April 18, 2000

*Joint Meeting of*

**Minnesota Information  
Professional Society  
(Formerly ACM & ASM) &  
Computer Professionals for  
Social Responsibility**

Speakers Topic:

**"Ethics Be Damned:  
The Religion of Technology"**

Speaker: **Paul Kiley**

## SPEAKER Profile

Paul Kiley is a Jesuit schooled, palmer method, media maven who has been involved in creating Internet access for whole communities of people in northern California and helping people think and act smarter about the literacy challenge facing America. He returned to Minnesota in 1996 to help build online communities of citizen advocates who can enable system change.

He has worked with NEC-Computer/Japan leadership and served as lecturer in communication technology at the University of St. Thomas graduate program in business communication.

Paul is a self declared cynical romantic about communication technology and the future.

## TOPIC INFORMATION

Awesomely powerful computers tackling ever more important tasks with awkward, old-fashioned interfaces. As these machines leak into every corner of our lives, they will annoy us, infuriate us, and even kill a few of us. In turn, we will be tempted to kill our computers, but we won't dare because we are already utterly, irreversibly dependent on these hopeful monsters that make modern life possible.

Conversion to the dogma of heavenly technology is moving forward. Computers no longer interface with humans-- they interact, and the interaction will become steadily deeper, more subtle, and more crucial to our collective sanity and ultimate survival.

Fortunately, **THERE IS HOPE**, we have another option. Paul Kiley believes that we need to fundamentally rethink how humans and machines interact. And rethink the relationship in deep and novel ways, for the fault for our burgeoning problems lies not with our machines, but with us.

## President's Letter

Our March MnIPS meeting was recently held on the first day of Spring, March 21. We had a wonderful presentation by Anita

Cassidy of Strategic Computing Directions, Incorporated. Her discussion regarding the use of IT planning for a competitive advantage gave us special insight into the "whys" and "hows" of using planning effectively!

In April, be prepared to learn why our guest speaker says, "Ethics be damned..." This is an important joint meeting with Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility.

Also coming in April, we're looking for your participation, whether it's just to vote, or to seek elected office. We need your support!! We are preparing to elect a new board of directors and want input from all of you. If you believe you know of someone who can make a significant contribution to MnIPS, please nominate that person for office. Or if you are personally interested, call Joe Perzel at (612) 897-6420, or Joe Reilly at (763) 513-5951.

Even if you feel your level of involvement can only be as a committee member, we need you!! You can make a difference through participation and contribution. For those of you who are ready to go to work now, we need volunteers to help with the Strictly Business Expo where there will be three educational programs we are presenting: Cyber Crime, e-Commerce, and Project Management. If you'd rather participate, sign up now by calling Joe Perzel at the above number.

Our board and senior members have formed committees (outlined here last month) that will be meeting before the April

membership meeting to decide the next steps to be taken towards continuing improvement in our organization's strengths, goals, and member support. Until now, changes that have been made are being supported enthusiastically.

Going forward, we need to capitalize on that enthusiasm. To do that, we need you. Please continue to "talk up" our organization to your colleagues and friends. Be there on April 18<sup>th</sup> and bring a friend!!!

Sincerely,  
Joe Perzel, President

**YEAR 2000 MnIPS MEETINGS**

by Carol Pederson

Below is the program for 1999-2000 dinner meetings. The schedule is complete with confirmed speakers. We still have the opportunity to pursue other organizations for joint meetings. So, if anyone has suggestions, please let me know.

**Date, Title & Speaker**

- Apr. 18 Joint meeting with Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility. "Ethics be Dammed: The Religion of Technology." Paul Kiley
- May 16 joint meeting with AIT, Realizing the Benefits of Information Technology, John Thorp.

**YEAR 2000 AITP MEETINGS**

- **April 6, 2000 Monthly Meeting. Speaker:** Rachel Hollstadt (moderator), **Topic:** IT Managers Panel on "How to Have a Successful Project"
- **May 16, 2000 Joint Meeting with MnIPS. Speaker:** John Thorp, **Topic:** Realizing the Benefits of Information Technology.

**PART-TIME INSTRUCTORS NEEDED Summer and Fall 2000**

Metropolitan State University seeks part-time instructors to teach evening courses. Our highly motivated adult students are pursuing undergraduate degrees in computer information systems and computer science.

**Summer**

ICS 362 Computer Organization and Architecture. This course introduces computer organization and architecture concepts, as well as providing an introduction to assembly language. The course meets on Monday nights, 6:00-9:30 p.m. at Metro State's downtown Minneapolis campus. Summer session begins May 5 and ends August 14. It's a 4 credit undergraduate course.

**Fall**

Part-time instructors are needed for courses in Data Structures (using Java), beginning Java programming, C, and Visual Basic. Other opportunities may become available. These evening courses are offered at a

variety of locations. The fall semester begins August 28 and ends December 16.

### Contact

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**“H-U-M-O-R &  
I-N-S-P-I-R-A-T-I-O-N”**

Hiaku for your Pain

In Japan, Sony Vaio Computers have replaced the impersonal and unhelpful Microsoft error messages with their own Japanese haiku poetry, each only 17 syllables.

A file that big?  
It might be very useful.  
But now it is gone.

-----  
The Web site you seek  
Can not be located but  
Countless more exist.

-----  
Chaos reigns within.  
Reflect, repent, and reboot.  
Order shall return.

-----  
ABORTED effort:  
Close all that you have  
worked on.  
You ask way too much.

-----  
Windows NT crashed.  
I am the Blue Screen of Death.  
No one hears your screams.

-----  
Yesterday it worked.  
Today it is not working.  
Windows is like that.

-----  
First snow, then silence.  
This thousand dollar screen dies  
So beautifully.

-----  
With searching comes loss  
And the presence of absence:  
"My Novel" not found.

-----  
The Tao that is seen  
Is not the true Tao, until  
You bring fresh toner.

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

-----  
A crash reduces  
Your expensive computer  
To a simple stone.

-----  
Three things are certain:  
Death, taxes, and lost data.  
Guess which has occurred.

-----  
You step in the stream,  
But the water has moved on.  
This page is not here.

-----  
Out of memory.  
We wish to hold the whole sky,  
But we never will.

-----  
Having been erased,  
The document you're seeking  
Must now be retyped.

-----  
Serious Error.  
All shortcuts have disappeared.  
Screen, Mind.  
Both are blank.

**WHEN ARE WE IN  
SYNC?**

by Brian Leer,  
[brian\\_leer@mailandnews.com](mailto:brian_leer@mailandnews.com)

Synchronization of data is an increasingly pertinent (and HOT) technology topic. Many people deploy it daily, when "syncing" their hand-held electronic organizer (aka

PDA, Palm Pilot, etc.) with the PC's email program. This two-way transfer compares & updates all relevant calendar events, contact records, task lists, emails, and folders of both your traditional repository and the PDA device.

This type of synchronization event is occurring millions of times per day, across the world. And, the synchronization software not only handles the task of updating the data, it additionally is prepared to automatically resolve (through a simple set of rules) any incidents of data conflict should they occur between the two sets of information.

Data synchronization is not particularly new—database vendors have been synchronizing distributed data for two decades, at least. Today, most, if not all, of the major database systems have industrial-strength synchronization capabilities at their core.

Oracle databases and server-based email systems from Microsoft & Lotus are examples of distributed database systems requiring this type of synchronization. Within these sophisticated database environments the synchronization processes are programmable, granular, speedy, scalable, and available for controlled rollback. Comparatively, the PDA is a simple example of synchronization.

Directories are another aspect of technology that has very significant need for synchronization. Directories of users and resource, such as Microsoft's new Active Directory and Novell's venerable NDS, are designed for massive replication across numerous servers and locales. These directory databases are very important, and are subject to frequent changes by numerous individuals from disparate locations. Synchronization algorithms must keep all of this coordinated in real-time.

Beyond these concepts, synchronization technology has begun to mutate into yet newer forms. For example, Pumatech has extended its popular Intellisync product line into a realm it calls “persistent search and highlight”. This concept promises real-time notification when important changes occur to specified data. Pumatech’s new system, recently licensed by Lycos for incorporation into its wireless web portal, proposes highlighting changed/pertinent data with visual cues.

Another example of mutated synchronization is that of network caching. Caching distributes data to network distribution points to speed access. Subsequently, however, the “freshness” of the data must be maintained through synchronizations. Great efficiencies have been realized through caching the large data files typical of new media types (sound, movies, etc.). Providers of caching (such as Inktomi, SandPiper, and Akamai) utilize secret and sophisticated techniques, advanced mathematics, queuing theory, and more to optimize this forward-looking synchronization process.

These examples have yielded some, but certainly not all, of the key drivers within the synchronization universe. In summary, four primary driving trends have been identified:

- The number of synchronization events is exploding (2 billion hand-held edge devices could be deployed within 5 years, by one estimate)
- The complexity of the synchronizations is increasing (due to dramatic growth in complex directories and distributed databases)

- The volume of data being transferred is increasing (rich, fat content)
- The number of intermediate network layers tends to be increasing (more caching points)

Furthermore, because these drivers have a (mostly) combinatorial effect, the potential number of synchronization processes seems mind-bogglingly incalculable. So, when are we in sync?

***SPENDING QUALITY  
TIME WITH THE (PSC)  
FAMILY***

(February 2000 MnIPS meeting  
review written  
by Dennis Cummings)

Mr. David Hough was the featured speaker and at the February 20 MnIPS meeting held at the Bloomington Holiday Inn. He also gave away and mailed FREE copies of his book “It’s All About Time” to attendees after the meeting.

Mr. Hough is the Director of Supply Chain Management (SCM) for Precision Systems Concepts (PSC), Inc. based in Chicago, but it has branch offices in Minneapolis, Milwaukee and Cincinnati. Mr. Hough is responsible for the strategic planning, implementation and execution of business technology and electronic-based systems for small and medium client companies.

He has E-commerce, EDI, ERP and SCM experience since 1983 and has active membership in ASC X12, the Pan American EDIFACT Board, the Data Interchange Standards Association (DISA) board of directors and the Supply Chain Council. He is also a registered civil engineer and certified plant

engineer. But, enough of the plagiarism’s from his book cover.

This was certainly one of the more entertaining and informative evenings that the MnIPS has ever had. Mr. Hough hails from St. Louis, Missouri where the “Show Me” state lives up to its name. He told a joke about how a Missouri farmer bragged that he owned a square mile of land and pointed out its dimensions to a visiting Texas rancher. The Texan boasted that his land was so big that it would take him a day to drive from one end of the ranch to the other. Unimpressed, the Missouri farmer said, “I had a car like that once too”. The moral of the story was that we all see the same thing from different perspectives. When he told the attendees to think of a “check”, did we think of a checkmark (as on a voting ballot) or a bank check?

As customers, we drive the suppliers to focus in on what products and the price that we want and their timeliness to manufacture and distribute them. We don’t care about the supplier’s internal procedures (sometimes labeled as “overhead” on the financial side) as long as we get our stuff quick and cheap.

There lies the challenge for Virtual Corporation (VC), formerly known as the Widget Company in the old college business classes. If VC’s customer wants a product, they contact the Sales & Marketing department, who contacts the Distribution department, who then contacts the Manufacturing department, who then contacts the Purchasing department that finally contacts the Supplier and their distributor for raw materials.

Intertwined in this mess, the MIS & Finance departments exchange information with the suppliers’ and customers’ banks for payments as well as updating shared information between the Purchasing, Manufacturing, Distribution and Audit de-

partments. VC must examine its internal business procedures to see where they can still deliver a quality product to the customer, yet eliminate the bottlenecks, which can add heavily to overhead costs. VC cannot control the customers' or suppliers' procedures, so VC must concentrate on doing their own process cheaper and better.

The key element here is to reduce the time it takes to get a product out the door to a customer, while at the same keeping a low inventory. Doing so sets a standard for the industry to match and positions the company to easily handle surges in the marketplace.

Mr. Hough accentuated this (timesaving) point by describing the difference between VC's "function-based" supply chain and "process-based" supply chain. Each process is made up of Fulfillment (a.k.a. Materials Management), Manufacturing, Distribution and Sales.

In the "function-based" supply chain, each area does their work independently creating an unnecessary inventory for its neighbor department to use at some future date. While this may work fine for a stationary product (pardon the pun) such as paper clips, it could be disastrous in the PC industry if VC's inventory now has several obsolete computers, which missed their sales and marketing window months before.

The "process-based" supply chain acts like a made-to-order system or (just -in-time) JIT inventory system, it focuses in on the slowest procedure in the chain and never goes faster than that process. If the slowest department process was billing or purchasing, VC would slow down the other areas to match that department's speed rather than build up what could be wasted inventory.

Mr. Hough compared it to a Boy Scout troop moving from one campsite to the next in the shortest time possible. Do you have Speedy Steve lead the troop or Slow Joe? We don't have a campsite completed until the slow guy gets there anyway, so have him lead. The faster scouts will have extra energy to work once they arrive at the new campsite, rather than being tired from racing to it. It was kind of a new twist on the Hare & Tortoise Race story that I heard as a kid.

How can we make the bottleneck in VC's business process worker better? VC could decide to make and/or buy certain materials or different procedures, such as subcontracting the payroll process. Has VC used the newest technology available to make all of their processes more efficient? Is EDI or wire transfers used to bill, purchase, send payments or perform other tasks?

What is VC's competitor doing to streamline their manufacturing process? Could product sales be made via vending machines (as is done now for ATM's or gas pumps) or over the Internet? Are machines used to handle redundant processes such as data entry or form scanning, which is open to errors and downtime (e.g., lunch break or vacation) whenever it is done manually?

Manpower usually costs the most, so it is best to optimally use their greatest assets (thinking, judgments and crafting skills) and leave mindless jobs to robots or artificial intelligent systems. VC must be open to making paradigm shifts as Mr. Hough pointed out via the VCR evolution. Tapes still move at the same speed as when VCR came out 20 years ago. The difference now is that the playing and recording heads move quicker than the tape speed, allowing enjoyable functions such as slow motion, pause and commercial skip. The procedure inside was changed to

help the outside customer, whose desires ultimately drive all of the business processes. The ideal situation for VC is to manufacture products at the least cost possible while gaining the optimal benefit for their customers and themselves. Failure to do so will have clients jumping fast to the competition since brand loyalty is all but history now.

Some businesses try to adapt themselves to the latest fad with varying degrees of success. Mr. Hough joked about Tony's Steakhouse attempt to attract the vegetarian crowd by opening Tony's Tofu Temple. Tony redid his menu (with red hearts for healthy choices) and replaced all of the steakhouse furnishings (such as deep fat fryers) to meet society's changing attitude towards (reportedly) unhealthy red meat eating.

However, business went sour because Tony's place was still known as a steakhouse and the owner never became a vegetarian and ultimately a customer himself. Mr. Hough gave another example asking the group "How many of you quit smoking because of the warning on pack of cigarettes?" Nobody raised his or her hands. He then asked us "How many of you would quit after a heart attack?" Everyone raised his or her hand. In a small and effective way, Mr. Hough showed us that we are ourselves, but we must also learn how to handle technology to improve our businesses.

To succeed in today's industry, VC must be fast to market, flexible (making baseball caps one week and hub caps the next), open to different business cultures and have empowered employees that make customer-friendly decisions.

Finally, VC must easy to do business with customers of all technology ranges from the telephone to Web browsers.

If you wish to get more information regarding PSC or Mr. Hough's presentation and to possibly receive a copy of his "It's All About Time" book, please contact him at 1-800-592-8003.

**MnIPS Officers for 1999-2000**

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**MnIPS Newsletter**

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**DINNER METTING**

Tuesday, April 18, 2000  
5:00 PM - 8:00 PM

TOPIC:

**“Ethics Be Damned:  
The Religion of Technology”**

**NOTE: MEETING LOCATION**

Holiday Inn Bloomington  
35W & 94th (1201 W 94th St.)

**“WHAT TURNS  
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OFF? TV!  
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ON?  
COMPUTERS!”**



by Earl C. Joseph

