

# COMPUTING CHANNELS



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**Business Builders:  
Using Re-engineering  
and Marketing  
Techniques**

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**Client/Server  
Technology  
Accelerates  
Onto the  
Information  
Superhighway**

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**The Impact of  
DBMS Products  
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Business**

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By Doug Hughes

## Client/Server Technology Accelerates Onto The Information Superhighway

**H**ow quickly things change. Three years ago, 28 percent of IS (Information Systems) executives surveyed by Framingham, Mass.-based International Data Corporation dismissed the term client/server as a buzzword. By last year, that number had dropped to nine percent; and *LAN Times* magazine was proclaiming client/server a household term.

Whether client/server truly qualifies as a household term may depend upon whose household we are talking about, but it has certainly enjoyed the spotlight in the trade press. An electronic search on the topic in the past year's trade publications will pull up hundreds of articles. Use of the word has spread so quickly that no one can agree on exactly what it means — or even how to spell it.

What everyone can agree on, however, is that it is going to be really big.

### WHAT'S CAUSING THE REVOLUTION?

Why are these predictions being made? Simple economics. Prices have come down and volume has gone up because of advances in technology, economies of scale and increased competition. Computing power — once reserved for the corporate elite who could shell out hundreds of thousands of dollars for a mainframe solution — is now available to the masses. Today, any mom-and-pop shop with a few thousand dollars can join the club.

These economic realities have been a boon for network products vendors and the reseller community. Novell, for example, estimates there are some 40 million NetWare licenses out there in the business community. Despite this huge installed base, the company feels they have just scratched the surface because the definition of the network is continuing to broaden with the advent of multimedia, interactive TV, mobile connectivity and telephony services. The information superhighway we hear so much about is, in fact, a network. And it will run not just from business to business, but from house to house. Based on this assumption, Novell's new president and CEO Robert Frankenburg suggests these market dynamics could open a potential market of a billion people for the products Novell will offer.

Also helping to fuel the adoption of client/server technology is the practice of rightsizing. By redistributing applications and processing to where they make the most sense through the adoption of client/server systems, customers are realizing the economies of scalable computing.

Other emerging trends contributing to the client/server demand include the concepts of mass customization and the virtual corporation. At the risk of oversimplification, mass customization delivers mass-produced products tailored to individual needs; while the virtual corporation quickly assembles teams of geographically dispersed workers best suited for a specific job, disbanding them when the job is done. This requires excellent communication, knowledge sharing, and crossing traditional boundaries such as those between different cultures, departments or locations. Here is an example:

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### Client/Server Statistics

**67 percent** of U.S. corporate computing end users and **49 percent** of European users are currently implementing client/server computing (Business Research Group)

The worldwide client/server market is forecasted to grow from **\$1.4 billion** in 1991 to **\$20.8 billion** by 1996. Over the same time period, the networking market will grow from **\$3.7 billion** to **\$9.2 billion** (Forrester Research)

From any perspective, client/server describes the next generation of computing "style" for customers. In light of declining markets elsewhere, the key opportunity of the 90s is here (International Data Corp.)

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In the United States, a major department store chain installed satellite links into all of its stores nationwide to provide global weather reports and trending information. This allows them to anticipate next week's demand for weather-related products (snow shovels, bikinis, umbrellas) on a store-by-store basis. The chain then electronically places orders for these products with its suppliers for quicker shipment. This enables each location to be stocked to take best advantage of local conditions, while safeguarding them from overstocking unnecessary items.

Each of these trends is causing new demand for incredibly powerful, yet fully integrated, enterprise solutions — and that spells opportunity for the reseller.

### WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

Now is the time to hop on the client/server bandwagon — preferably somewhere near the driver's seat. It is not only smart business, but it is going to be the key to survival in the next century. The trouble is, many people have already figured this out, so the bandwagon is getting crowded. To make sure there is a place for you, here are three suggestions:

☐ **Do your homework.** You cannot sell what you do not know. So, your first step is a commitment to ongoing education, not only for you and your staff, but ultimately for your customers as well. As client/server efficiencies increase and costs decrease, users are rushing to implement the technology, while attempting to learn about it on the fly. The rush is fueling a huge demand for education and courseware — an

additional business opportunity for resellers who provide training and education services.

☐ **Stake your claim.** Decide whether you want to be a generalist or a specialist. As the market expands, there will be plenty of strong vertical markets that will be able to support resellers who want to service them. To land these vertical accounts, learn about their particular needs and tailor your proposed solutions accordingly. In the U.S. medical community, for example, President Clinton's impending health care reform is prompting hospital organizations to look for new ways to cut costs, improve efficiency and create new services. To this group, the open, heterogeneous client/server solution is the right prescription because it gives them the flexibility to form virtual corporations of geographically dispersed medical professionals. By facilitating such collaboration, both the health care institutions and their patients stand to benefit.

☐ **Follow the leader.** Above all, stay in touch with the movers and shakers in the industry to know what their plans are for the future. You can get much of this information from corporate road shows or major industry events. The rest you can learn by asking your key contacts.

As you gear up to stake your claim in the client/server world, remember that momentum is on your side. Customers have already demonstrated that they want these solutions. You earn your margin commission by developing your expertise and then using that expertise to help them make the right choices.