UniForum and The Open Group Work Together

Increased unity and cooperation were one of the centerpieces of UniForum '96, and this alliance is a shining example of it.

At UniForum '96, the long-awaited (and widely rumored) announcement was made that OSF and X/Open have created a partnership as The Open Group. Also announced at this meeting was that The Open Group and the UniForum Association are forming an alliance, in which UniForum extends general association memberships to all members of the Open Group Customer Council (OGCC). With that announcement, approximately 235 corporations have become an integral part of our burgeoning association.

In a press release issued the same day, Peter Shaw, vice president of marketing and sales at OSF, said, "We are extremely enthusiastic about this announcement that will offer the customer members of The Open Group the significant added benefit of membership in the UniForum Association. This closer collaboration among industry groups accomplishes a fundamental goal of The Open Group to strengthen the ties among end users and the various industry consortia supporting the open systems environment."

Richard Jaross, UniForum's executive director, added, "It is the intent of UniForum and The Open Group to work closely together and to explore other areas where our combined talents and strengths can be brought to bear for the benefit of end users and vendors throughout the industry." UniForum membership bene-fits, now extended to individuals at companies of the OGCC, include voting privileges in UniForum Board of Directors elections; qualification to serve on UniForum committees; and receipt of *UniForum's IT Solutions*; our newsletter, *UniNews;* and the annual *Open Systems Products Directory*.

It is true that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Strengthened as it now is by The Open Group membership merger, the UniForum Association must be viewed as the *Who's Who* of the industry, with our collection of corporate sponsors and end-user members in addition to the general members who make up the balance of a prestigious cast. Effective—curiously enough on this past Valentine's Day—as a result of lengthy dialogue and a long courtship, the recent addition of the OSF and X/Open user member rosters bolsters UniForum's membership in numbers and—more importantly—technological strength. The combined associations can only be perceived as a bastion of strength and education for the open systems industry.

Consolidation in Open Systems

As of this writing, we have just closed UniForum '96, and we witnessed many corporate mergers, such as NetManage taking on AGE and Pure Software absorbing both Performix and QualTrack. These mergers within our Unix community made sound business sense. Publicly or privately held, it makes no difference as these once small businesses grow into larger machines, expanding and sometimes stumbling as corporate philosophies attempt to create unity from two or more entities.

During the UniForum show, a trade journalist asked me, "What has been the most memorable business phenomenon of the last 10 years?" I responded that this will be remembered as the decade of the merger and the acquisition. We have witnessed the leveraged buy-outs of so many different organizations—RJR by KKR, NCR by AT&T, Lotus and Tivoli by IBM and numerous others. I believe that economists will view the 1980s and 1990s in much the same way. Corporations are choosing to (or have no other choice than to) join forces to build a stronger balance sheet and provide greater strength to stockholders. Whether by purchase or takeover, companies have come together, with the result of changing the complexion of our industry.

Amid all this high-profile activity, two giants were quietly courting one another. The joining of OSF and X/Open is an alliance of tremendous significance. OSF delivers technology innovations in all areas of open systems, including interoperability, scalability, portability and usability. X/Open is dedicated to the identification, agreement and wide-scale adoption of information technology standards that reduce incompatibility and help users realize the benefits of open information systems. Technologies and standards are a winning combination.

I am pleased to welcome every one of our new members into the UniForum family. Look for more information about our new Corporate End-User members in upcoming issues. **IT**

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By Steve Liebes