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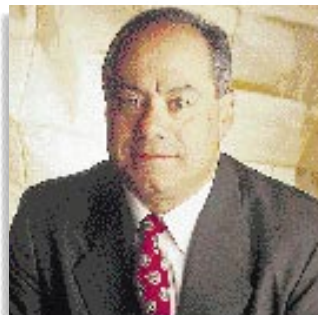
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From the Director

A Word from Our Executive Director

UniForum '97 Conference Planning Begins



One of our most important annual activities is off to a great start. Detailed planning for the 1997 UniForum Conference program began during a two-day retreat held a few weeks ago. As usual, the program committee is comprised of analysts, journalists, vendors and users, who brought insights and strongly held beliefs that will benefit those who attend UniForum '97 on Mar. 10 through 14 in San Francisco.

The goal of the UniForum '97 Program Committee was to learn from the past, explore new technologies and address the needs of the disparate audiences that look to UniForum as a key source of education. It is my feeling that they succeeded, although we cannot prove this for another nine months. Advance planning is always one of the most difficult aspects of building a conference. What's hot today may be lukewarm next March; similarly, new stuff unknown now may be sweeping the industry by then. For example, ask yourself when you first heard of Java, then try to predict how this technology will be used next spring. This is the type of challenge our committee faces every year, and it forces us to leave room in the program for late-breaking topics of real appeal.

Our group came up with a variety of topics we believe will still be current in March. We identified the following "tracks": Integrating Unix with Microsoft; Advanced Internet Technologies; Corporate Applications on the Intranet; Integrating Internet, Client/Server and Legacy Systems; Mission-Critical Systems; Middleware and Application Integration; Electronic Commerce; and Networking Technologies and Distributed Systems. These ideas remain subject to change.

Our next hurdle will be the winnow-

ing process, which will yield six or seven tracks, each with seven or eight sessions. Then threads of interest areas will be woven throughout the entire conference. These threads will, for instance, allow a systems administrator to follow a pertinent curriculum, for which UniForum will provide a certificate of attendance. Our overall goal is to produce a vibrant conference that delivers value to both implementers (such as administrators) and decision-makers (executives). These are UniForum's two traditional core audiences, and serving their different needs has always been our mission.

To be a success, the conference needs your contribution as well. All UniForum members are encouraged to submit proposals for sessions at UniForum '97. Participating in the conference is a gratifying job; a number of tracks last year were filled almost entirely by member-supplied sessions. To be a part of this exciting activity, see the call for proposals in this issue, go to our Web page at <http://www.uniform.org> or call our conference coordinator, Claudia Marshall, at (408) 986-8840, ext. 48.

Personally, I came away from the meeting energized and confident. Good work was accomplished that will need nurturing before it bears fruit months from now. I'd like to thank my colleagues on the committee, whose efforts are really just beginning. They are Jim Bell of The Open Group; Dave Bernstein, our lead facilitator; Kim Biel-Nielsen of EurOpen; Andrew Binstock of *UNIX Review*; Rebel Brown of Cognoscenti; Robert Gingell of SunSoft; Michael Harrington of Beth Israel Hospital; Philip Johnson of International Data Corp.; Derek Kaufman of Levi Strauss; Dan Slavin of Open Market; Cathie Smith of UUNorth International; Tim Yeaton and Don Harbert of Digital Equipment Corp.; Marie Burch and Ted Prindle of Softbank Comdex; and Jeff Bartlett, Deborah Murray and Dick Shippee of UniForum. Their contributions will have lasting effects on thousands of your peers—and on you as well, I hope. **U**

Richard H. Jaross is the executive director of the UniForum Association. He can be reached at rich@uniform.org.