

## WHY TECHNOLOGY FAILS

In discussing technology it is important to be both optimistic and realistic. While technology has been heralded as the saviour of rising office costs and has been promoted as the miracle that will boost production rates, reality has fallen far short of advance publicity. Let us consider the reasons why this marvel is failing us and how we can learn from the past. Today, there are as many people enamoured of high technology as there are opposed to it. It has become such a part of our culture that to be openly opposed to it is like coming out against physical fitness or motherhood. It has become a status symbol to have a word processor or terminal on your desk. Unfortunately, an understanding of what the technology can really do is lagging somewhat behind our acquisition of machinery. The first reason systems fail is a lack of understanding of what technology can really do for us. The first need for the Department is to start improving the understanding or computer literacy of its employees. This paper presents a positive approach to informing managers about technology and how to introduce it.

The second reason systems fail is that very often those putting up the system have no clear understanding of their responsibilities in relation to Departmental experts. Those wanting the system feel that automation is the answer. They then believe the expert is going to hand them the answer. First of all, both you and the system expert must believe it is worthwhile automating. Then you must define your needs, decide how data is to be captured, who will provide the data, the organizational structure that will run the systems, the format of the data, who will use the system, how they will use it, how often they will use it, the security restrictions, how often it will be updated, how it will be updated, special edit rules and restrictions. Very often managers involved in these tasks may require special help from Personnel, Organization and Methods, or Security specialists as well as computer systems analysts. Personnel can provide assistance on organizational design, classification, training, staff relations etc. Organization and Methods (MFS) can provide assistance on data flow, data capture and reports. Managers sometimes feel that by hiring a consultant they will not have to become involved in the details. A consultant may be of help, but you will still have to spend a lot of time on the project because you are the one who knows the work. Alone or with help you still must decide what your needs are. You must ensure that needs are written out and help the analysts in testing the system during its development. You must also maintain your manual system as a backup for several months after the computer system is up in case of problems. Either computer systems or office automation will provide information on costs, machinery capabilities, systems design, testing, and systems maintenance. Even if all this is done, the system may still fail