

Stabilizing SIGNET

An Information Systems Bureau Priority

We Need To Do More.

SIGNET Performance. Where We Were: Since SIGNET was installed at Headquarters in 1993, it has had a chequered report card; everything from "exciting breakthrough" to "nightmare" characterize user reactions. As the evolution of releases of ICONDESK has led to version 4.4 — with all the tribulations that implies — users have become more comfortable, if not enthusiastic, with the e-mail package, when it's working. The trouble is the extent to which users can count on its stability; by March 1995, the Department reached crisis conditions in IT performance. As those of you affected by this will remember, two Headquarters servers went down for a two-week period this spring, seriously disrupting the work of the Department and causing significant frustration among SIGNET users.

What caused the "final straw?" Initially we thought it was hardware, but the problem was eventually traced to the serious instability of SIGNET's "operating systems," which support server files, printing and the IBIsys/ICONDESK mail system. This investigation led us to the present, more intensive review of the entire SIGNET architecture or structure.

Where We Are Going: "Best-Managing" SIGNET is central to the mission of the Information Systems Bureau (STD). That is our job. We recognize that for DFAIT to take the quick, responsible and decisive action required in today's changing environment, the Department depends upon the smooth exchange of information. It depends on SIGNET to function in a stable manner.

To address the current, unacceptable level of service to SIGNET users, and to safeguard the integrity of the system, on June 14,

Richard Kohler, Director General of the Bureau, announced the establishment of the SIGNET Stabilization Project. "In order to provide all users with greater system stability and greater confidence that they will be able to communicate electronically with their colleagues when they want to communicate or have to communicate," Mr. Kohler said, "we have put in place an extensive initiative called the SIGNET Stabilization Project."

The Project

We are committed to changing the way we manage our business.

The mandate of the SIGNET Stability Project, Mr. Kohler explained, "is to analyse those issues directly related to current system problems and to identify and implement changes which will both stabilize the system and ensure its *on-going* stability and reliability."

What does this actually *mean* to you, the client, in terms of how SIGNET should perform every day? Simply put, the project commits STD to resolve all known stability problems which render SIGNET unavailable to you during normal business hours.

STD is also committed - and this is key - to identify, develop and implement "aggressive management practices and controls" to supplement those in place already to ensure a consistently higher level of system performance.

But how do you stabilize a moving target?

It is impossible to stabilize a moving target. As you can appreciate, any changes to the existing environment introduce new variables that could, potentially, contribute to the general instability of SIGNET. "To enable us to

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CLIENTIPS

The "Greening of Government" and the Three "Rs" Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Doug Woods, Director of the Administrative Services Division (SBA) wrote to us with the following good idea:

"While reviewing our stores supply expenditure pattern for this FY, Bernie Persick noted that he had purchased 8,670 boxes of high or double density diskettes (\$9.50 each) and has remaining a stock of about 1,800. This translates into approximately 65,000 diskettes dispensed or 26 for each employee in the Lester B. Pearson Building." "Is this," Mr. Woods asks, "an

excessive consumption of a product that lends itself easily to reuse?" Would a campaign to encourage people to reuse their diskettes slow this consumption? We hope so!

There is, with good reason, a reluctance to accept used diskettes from stores and therefore they are not offered. However, some of you, Mr. Woods is quick to point out, don't mind reusing your own diskettes. Bravo. Duplicate labels are available in our stores to assist in reuse. We encourage you to follow this practice of reusing diskettes.