

# MEET AN ICCA MEMBER

## Interest in Computers

My interest in computers can be traced back to 1969 and the first Moon landing. I was mesmerized by Mission Control and the banks of computers used to make all the calculations necessary to launch, orbit, land on the moon and eventually return the three astronauts to safety. The room was full of white shirts, thin ties and pocket protected (does this sound like anyone's competition today?) college graduates with an air of seriousness.

I remember bringing lunch to my Dad at a job where he ran multiple mainframes for a large insurance company in New Hampshire. I knew that this would be my destiny. I didn't own my first computer until the early 1980's when I purchased a screaming TI-99/4A with 256 bytes of RAM and a whopping 16 KB of graphics RAM using a cassette tape for media.

I thought I was styling (it wasn't even a word in the 80's) when I moved up to a Kaypro 10 CP/M portable (luggable) computer weighing in at a svelte 29 pounds, but with a 10 MB hard drive and a 5 1/4" floppy drive. It was with the Kaypro that I moved from writing games and other relatively useless programs to discovering the real power of computers with manually calculated VisiCalc spreadsheets and WordStar. I became a local distributor for Nevada COBOL and FORTRAN compilers that ran on PC's, which was really cool, because these programs had only compiled and run on mainframes and mini's before Nevada.

## Taking them seriously

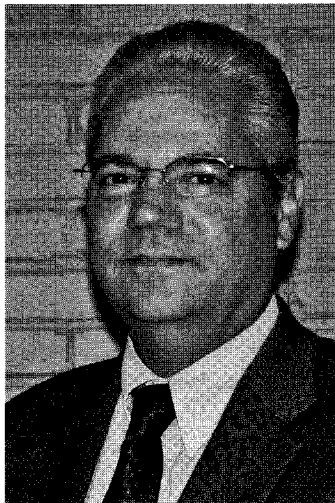
I decided to pursue a degree in Management Information Systems which, at the time, was a combination business and computer degree with a heavy emphasis on accounting, finance, systems and programming languages (COBOL, FORTRAN and RPG).

I used the skills I acquired in school in the construction industry, writing estimating software and implementing my first accounting system. I was hired by a medical manufacturing company to network their systems and wrote a MRP system in Paradox using Object Pal. Paradox was a sleek, GUI based relational database software. This was my largest and most complicated computer project and took almost two years to complete.

From there I moved to another manufacturing company with an IBM System 36, running MAPICS MRP software.

My first challenge was turning an eight week RPG class into real life programming to create and modify reports used for Inventory Control, Purchasing and Sales. My second challenge was to replace the outdated MRP system. Upgrading to the newest version required replacing the System 36 which came with a small mortgage payment. It was at this time that I began to refine my ability to analyze systems and processes to streamline operations, reduce mistakes and costs while developing a RFP for a new MRP system. We moved to the AS400 Advanced 36 model and rolled out MicroMRP's software, which required me to become an accomplished VB and Access programmer as well as a Crystal Report writer.

I was offered a position by the company that we used to implement the system and instead went to work at one of their competitors in the area as a Manufacturing Solutions Consultant. This didn't last long as they moved me back into management and I started running the Systems Engineering group. One of the ways that I stayed on top of the technology was to purchase a copy of every book that my Engineers were getting reimbursed for and spent many nights immersed in their world. By the time I left that organization I was the Director of Technical Services with 75 engineers running a Data Center one of the country's first Application Service Providers.



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Then the dot bomb hit and I decided to move into the seemingly more stable world of student loans where I became the CIO for three companies focused in lending, guaranteeing and servicing loans for student and parents in NH. We spent the next seven years overhauling their entire network and computer systems (there was even a Wang in the computer room when I arrived) while developing a sophisticated web presence with on-line loan application processing and eSignature functionality. Once we transitioned into maintenance mode, I had to start focusing on Board Meetings and the endless politics of a medium sized company.

## Today and the Future

It was during this time period that I became restless and bored as I was forced to move farther away from the technology that I had grown to love. With the support of my family I embarked on a journey to open my own consulting practice in 2007. After preparing a business plan and obtaining SBA financing, I was ready!

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I had decided to pursue the SMB market space with a three pronged approach; IS/IT project based work for tactical deployment of systems and software to solve business problems, Managed Services to provide network and backup services to companies with limited or no IT resources and Virtual CIO Services to provide strategic technology guidance for these organizations.

While the Virtual CIO Services are my passion, I also find tremendous satisfaction in analyzing problems and

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recommending solutions to solve immediate business problems. Starting my consulting practice has been very rewarding and probably something that I should have done years ago. My biggest struggle is balancing generating revenue and developing new business. I would recommend self-employment for those that have a thick skin and enjoy wearing many hats.

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