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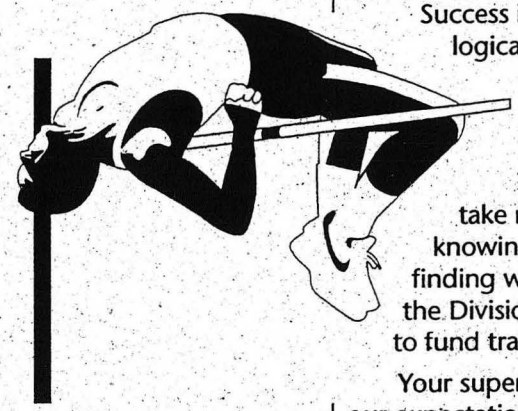
ON "RAISING THE BAR"

"We are raising the bar!" The metaphor comes from track and field, specifically the high jump and pole vault events. It means, of course, that we are establishing higher performance targets. Why are we doing this? What does it mean for ICSD?

The answer to both questions is, in a word, *survival*. Our customers, the scientific programs, are under significant pressure to reduce costs without sacrificing quality. Unless we respond in kind they won't be able to afford us. We must increase the value of our services and make using them easier, faster, and less costly for the customer. This will require all of us to improve our performance in all the ways it affects our customers.

To accomplish this, we must continually raise our expectations for ourselves and each other. Performance levels that were acceptable last year may not be acceptable this year; those that are acceptable now may not be acceptable next year, and so it will go into the foreseeable future. With each year, we expect all employees to know more and do more (and do it better and faster) than they did in the previous year, while making our customers—especially our more demanding customers—feel valued, comfortable, and welcome.



Success in this will furnish two side-benefits. Firstly, there's the psychological boost that comes from knowing we're doing a better job; secondly, we'll be working in a more congenial atmosphere, where our customers regard us as partners rather than adversaries.

To meet these ever-rising expectations, each employee must take responsibility for his or her performance and development, for knowing how expectations have changed and are changing, and for finding ways to improve performance accordingly. To assist in this process the Division has included an explicit allocation in each department burden to fund training.

Your supervisors and the Division Office are eager to help you understand our expectations and find ways to meet them. Our job—and our desire—is to help you succeed, for it is only through your success that ICSD will succeed.

Stu Loken
Director, Information and Computing Sciences Division

(Send your questions and comments to scloken@lbl.gov)

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THE LOG

by Anthony Rowley

ICSD operates a number of customer service hotlines, as does the Lab in general. These hotlines are not always as customer-friendly as one would like. Some of us might have had good experiences with such services, but most of us have endured bad experiences. We would like to ensure that our customers have only good experiences. You can help us get a perspective on the problem by answering any or all of the following questions. (You can send e-mail to COQA@lbl.gov or Lab mail to A. Rowley, c/o ICSD, MS 50B-2239.) The answers need not be limited to your experiences with the Laboratory's hotlines.

1. Can you remember any good experiences on a hotline? What made them good experiences?

2. Can you remember any bad experiences on a hotline? What made them bad experiences?

3. What do you expect when you call a hotline?

4. When does a hotline do more harm than good?

* * * * *

In our last issue we asked how the Frog should be distributed. The main criticism of our webbed version was that we didn't provide the direct access URL. We've fixed this. We are also adding a form on the index page that you can use to request that your name be added to or deleted from the subscription list for the paper version.

Anthony says: "When you are designing a system for use by people, remember that to err on purpose is human." Heigh-ho!

SPOT AWARDS

by Dave Stevens

The Laboratory will shortly an nounce a program of "Spot Awards" for quality service. These are certificates worth $50 (AFTER taxes) that may be given by supervisors on the spot for efforts that are unusually praiseworthy. They may also take the form of lunch "on the Laboratory." The idea is to provide instant recognition for good service. This program was created by the Human Resources Department in response to a suggestion from the ICSD COQA committee.

FINANCE FORUM

As part of our attempt to make ICSD easier to deal with, we have established a working group to examine our budget, financial reporting, and recharge operations. If you have observations on our current practices, or thoughts on how we can improve, please contact one of the group members:

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OUT ON THE WEB

by Jim Miller

Do you have a hotlist as long as your arm? Then you may want to investigate one of Mark Durst's freeware finds. It's called URL-minder and billed as "your own personal Web robot." You "register" all the HTTP, FTP, and GOPHER resources that you want to keep tabs on, and URL-minder looks at them for you at least once a week. When anything at those addresses changes—text, graphics, format, linking—URL-minder sends you e-mail. Unfortunately, URL-minder will not do sublinks. You must tell it every single address you want checked. Maybe one of the URLs you should tell it to check is its own—

`http://www.netmind.com:80/URL-minder/URL-minder.html`

—so you'll know when they upgrade the product.

A note of caution: URL-minder's developer, NetMind, apparently has ideas about going commercial, presumably after rendering a large number of websurfers dependent on the free product. If the necessary demand fails to materialize, you may be left with nothing to show for your efforts but a laboriously compiled list of unminded URLs.

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