



Auto parts retailer tunes up operations with the IBM Network Station

When Champion Auto Stores, an automotive parts retailer based in Maple Grove, Minnesota, moved its customer service department to a new location in Plymouth, Minnesota, employees were greeted by more than just their new surroundings. They also discovered 25 IBM Network Station computers sitting on their desks, linked to an AS/400® at Champion's headquarters, as well as to a Data General processor at Champion's IS center.

According to Ed Moyer, IS manager at Champion, the customer service staff heartily welcomed the Network Station as a powerful upgrade from their previous non-programmable text terminals. The Network Station not only gives them access to their usual business applications on the Data General system, but also to a variety of PC applications via a Windows NT® server connected to the AS/400.

"The Network Station lets us add PC-based word processing, spreadsheets and e-mail easily," Moyer says. "E-mail, especially, is key to their jobs and all I have to do is load it on the server to give them access."

Reduced cost of ownership
Moyer says that before his company learned of the Network Station, it had briefly considered equipping the customer service staff with desktop PCs. But he and others had concerns about the cost, as well as standardizing applications, manag-

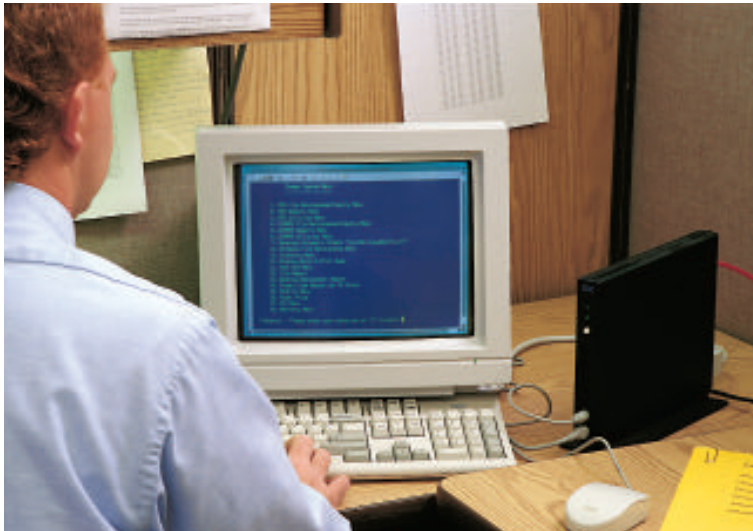
ing virus risks and a host of other issues. In the end, network computers were the only option that seemed to make sense.

"We realized that on a per-unit basis, the AS/400 and Network Station were actually less than PCs," Moyer states. Not only is the cost per station lower, but software costs are also decreased because he only needs to load and maintain one copy of an application on the server.

"Our administrative costs are greatly reduced. In a PC environment, we'd have to go out and fuss with 40 different machines to handle each software update," he says.

Application	Terminal replacement; access to AS/400, Data General & Windows applications
Hardware	IBM Network Station
Software	AS/400 business applications, Windows®-based productivity applications, e-mail





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*—Ed Moyer, IS manager,
Champion Auto Stores*

Flexible access

“We have a lot of different systems, and different locations for our headquarters, IS operations and customer service,” Moyer says. “With the AS/400 and the Network Station, we can connect users from anywhere on the network. Because the Network Station attaches to whatever we need to attach it to, it gives us a great deal of flexibility in how we structure our organization.”

That kind of flexibility is essential at Champion, which counts on being able to initiate ship orders within hours of receiving a phone call from one of its stores. In fact, the main reason Champion moved its customer service center to Plymouth was to bring it under the same roof as the company's distribution function.

Says Paul Bridgeman, vice president of Information Services at Champion, “Many of the questions our customer service people receive relate to the products. We decided that we could be more responsive if the answers they needed were right down the hall instead of many miles away.”

As a bonus, the Network Station is helping to shorten the distance between Champion and some of its suppliers, as well.

“Our distribution partner is another AS/400-based company,” Bridgeman says. “The Network Station lets us develop better, more direct communication with them, which expedites order processing cycles.”

Plug-in simplicity

Based on his positive experiences to date, Moyer sees Network Stations filling many roles at Champion. In addition to the 25 Network Stations in customer service, the company also has 15 Network Stations installed in its headquarters and IS center. Moyer expects to take on more Network Stations in the future as existing workstations need to be replaced.

“They're simply a better solution for us,” he says. “The Network Station provides access to more applications than terminals, plus a lower cost of ownership and better manageability than PCs. There's almost no configuration; you just plug it in and it works. That shows how good the Network Station is.”

For more information
To find out more about how network computing with the IBM Network Station and the IBM family of servers can help you make the most of your business opportunities, call 1-800-IBM-7080, priority code 6N7BK005, in North America. Outside North America, call 416-383-5152, priority code 6N7BK005. Or contact your IBM Business Partner or local IBM representative.

If you have access to the Internet, you can find additional Network Station information via the World Wide Web at:
<http://www.ibm.com/nc>



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