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## Zinnote®, a new age tool, unleashes data for the common man

**“Designed for Windows 95/NT” certification just received**

Positive Support Review, Inc. (PSR) (formerly introduced Zinnote® (<http://www.zinnote.com>), a comprehensive and flexible visualization, connectivity and integration tool. Zinnote enables users to generate extensive, meaningful reports from existing data sources efficiently and easily. Zinnote® is an indispensable tool for business professionals who need to provide cross platform connectivity by linking the PC desktop with network and mainframe data sources. With a single click of the mouse, Zinnote captures data and produces graphical reports and measurements that can be distributed electronically via Microsoft Word or HTML.

“Every CIO, because of the Year 2000, faces critical issues with cross platform connectivity and how to get mainframe data to the PC desktop. Zinnote does this better than any other product that I have seen,” said Stan Johnson, former CIO for the Port of Los Angeles and the current Assistant Executive Director of the UCLA Associates.

“Zinnote has the ability to integrate data and provide a quality reporting process.... Its ease of use and consistent reporting has led to a rapid acceptance in the technical community. This has resulted in our ability to extend metrics more quickly than otherwise would have been possible.” stated Leo Collins, Senior



**I have the budget surplus and you have to get elected to be responsible for the Year 2000 Problem.**

## Report design and presentation of data is not all art

**Tools make it easier to be creative and be a winner**

Until recently, it was very difficult to present professional looking colorful data in other than tabular form without a great deal of expense.

In the rapidly changing business environment with its focus on productivity and quality, there has been an explosion of demand for metrics for things like a Balanced Score Card to the Electronic Dash Board. The demand for these graphical reporting systems has continued to expand at a rapid rate with the electronic publishing of data via e-mail and the internet.

Two questions need to be asked. First, what are the engines that you can use to take advantage of this new way of viewing information? Second, what are the pitfalls faced as data is presented in these new ways?

Microsoft in its Office 97 product introduced some basic colorful autoformatting. This along with the advent of inexpensive color printers, PC-based projection systems and graphics tool kits like Zinnote have helped to accelerate the process. Now artistic capabilities are available to everyone.

The only limitation is one's imagination and artistic taste. Taste and style are issues that creators of reports must deal with now.

We have found that as data is presented in graphical form, often it may not convey the ideas the information represents. To aid in this we have developed a number of guidelines -- definitions for producing good versus poor graphic presentations of information using these tools

## Data presentation rules

Traditional reporting systems have been developed in connection with accounting

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## **Zinnote®**, a new age tool, unleashes data for the common man

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Vice President of Architecture and Technology at Home Savings of America.

"The ability to generate useful reports quickly is essential for today's busy business professionals," stated M. Victor Janulaitis of PSR. "With Zinnote, users can effortlessly retrieve and integrate data from various platforms and data sources to produce high quality reports. Zinnote will save users both time and money by simplifying a normally complex task into a few key strokes and mouse clicks."

Zinnote was developed to solve the problem of data retrieval from disparate computer platforms and software applications. In the past, business professionals have had to manually copy data from a source and enter the data into a spreadsheet format in order to generate useful reports. Zinnote has solved this problem by integrating the data within itself and allowing the program to generate reports business professionals can use. Zinnote® can capture data needed to produce high-quality reports and graphs from desktop systems as well as enterprise-wide networks in an extremely efficient manner. In addition, with one click of the mouse, Zinnote® automatically updates the latest information from various data sources.

### **What users are saying about Zinnote**

In a survey of over 60 users the following comments were used to describe Zinnote.

*"Query tool that does not require a schematic layer resulting in an unmatched ease of use and administration."*

*"Application with a strong workgroup dynamic."*

*"User aid that releases the user from burdens imposed by the enterprise's inadequate tools."*

*"Connectivity tool with an object backbone that broadens overall information functionality."*

*"Cross platform vehicle that provides heterogeneous joining of data and provides a unique form of connectivity."*

*"Reporting asset that has an awareness and sensitivity to data locations."*

*"Broad based query and reporting tool with NEW AGE pricing."*

### **How Zinnote works**

Zinnote enables the user to connect to a data source, graph the data, and create reports that display the

retrieved information in either Microsoft Word or HTML format. Working on the Windows 95/NT platforms, Zinnote maps to any data in any location. Data can be mapped from any ODBC compliant data source as well as data contained within the following desktop databases: Access, Excel, dBase, Btrieve, FoxPro & Visual FoxPro, Paradox, Quicken, CSV and .txt formatted files. Once mapped, the information is available for report generation through the established data links. Once a report is exported to Word, the resulting images can be imported into PowerPoint, PageMaker, or converted to JPEG format for Internet publication.

### **Zinnote's flexibility**

Zinnote users have infinite options for customizing their reports, not requiring rigid templates. Zinnote provides users with the ability to modify the type, size, color, scaling and focus of a chart with a few mouse clicks. Additionally, because Zinnote produces the graphs and charts as "objects," they can be transferred to any Windows compatible software via cut-and-paste. Zinnote offers the user the option to e-mail files consisting of data links, charts, reports and workspaces. Files can then be dragged and dropped within the program while maintaining established links.

### **Charting and Report Options**

Zinnote is capable of generating more than 100 types of charts and sub types – on the fly. Dynamic and vivid chart options include:

- Bar Chart
- 3 D Bar Chart
- 3 D Pie Chart
- Gantt Chart
- High/Low Chart
- Polar
- Pie Chart
- 3 D Area Chart
- Log/Line
- Line Chart
- Area
- Others


### **Pricing information**

Zinnote has several pricing/support and licensing formats to fit within personal or corporate financing structure.

- Single User: \$749
- 5-User Pack: \$2,795
- 2-Day Training - client site: \$2,495 (plus expenses)
- Tech Support (one user for one year or 360 minutes): \$350

### **Free download sample - Balanced Score Card and Y2K**

There is a 30 minute multimedia tutorial and fully functional (for 20 days) version of the application available on the Internet at [www.zinnote.com](http://www.zinnote.com).

The samples that are shipped with the product include the IT functions, Year 2000 Status and Industry Specific metrics. For more information consult the web site. 

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ics, data analysis and presentation. This has led to a certain amount of excess measurement of minute details that do not matter. As reports are produced out of computer systems, totals are traditionally printed on the last page.

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**List summary totals  
on the first page of a report  
not on the last**

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The accounting approach to reporting has resulted in massive amounts of detailed information. We have gone from cases of "green bar" paper to inquiry tools that summarized the information but required massive computer power "on-line" to get the answer.

The best data is normally so buried that action that could be taken is taken too late or is not taken at all. It may seem obvious, but this one approach will improve the value of any reporting system where it is implemented.

Paper or electronic reports are still required. However, it is the desire by many on the technical side of the Information Systems business to be accepted by management. This causes too much irrelevant data to be captured and reported. We can all remember the reports that were produced by well intentioned individuals that provided no value except to the pulp mills that produced the paper. Why do all reports have to be detail reports?

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**Produce summary reports  
as the primary source of information**

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Most executives and managers do not have enough time to get their day-to-day functions completed in a cost effective manner. So much data and e-mail crosses each individual's desk that summary data information is the most beneficial. We have found the most powerful presentations of data are those that are the simplest and most comprehensive. Once an idea crosses into multiple pages, many factors begin to take hold.

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**Produce one page reports**

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In the case of senior executives, we have found that there are many who do not want to know the details of an issue.

One quote that we recently heard from the head of a major studio was, "I do not need data, rather I need charts that help me to see where the problems are. My managers need to work about the data -- I need to know the problems are being addressed. Green bar reports do not help - GOOD charts do."

That is an excellent example of what they want and need.

It is more important to communicate facts on the status of solutions to problems and the trends that will impact the business. They do not want to be the ones who find problems by reviewing data. That is the job of the individuals who are producing the reports.

*One CEO told me that he spent his entire career hiring people better than him. He did not want to do their jobs for them. Rather he wanted them to do their jobs and give him the tools necessary to measure their performance.*

Most reporting systems in place are like the engineer who is measuring the size of the hole in the side of the ship as it is sinking. It would have been much better if time had been spent on a good radar system to show what was about to happen before it did.

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**Design metrics that show trends -  
not reports that show history**

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In the course of a day or a week, so much information crosses the desks of decision makers that much of it gets lost. The only time that some of this critical information can be seen is when it is recast in a period reporting process. The key is to have a period reporting process that is responsive enough to allow for an enterprise to alter course.

Have a formal reporting process that drives decisions to be made before the metric is produced. In this way, you will get much more value out of the process. If you just produce the report and shuffle the paper, why do it?

Data that is presented crisply and cleanly is much more valuable than a statistical table. USA Today showed the publishing industry the power of graphics. While that has been going on, the move away from computer screens that can just show characters and numbers to screens with objects, sound, and motion has accelerated.


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**Use graphical presentations  
of data -- the graphic should  
do the analysis**

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Analysis of data with graphic reports can simplify the communication process. If the data is presented as just a trend of a single item, it is in a vacuum. Things to consider are:

- Plan versus actual - if the numbers are what was budgeted and nothing favorable or adverse is occurring, then no time will be wasted on unneeded analysis.
- Current year versus last year for the same period-report on 13 periods for a monthly metric.

As a word of caution, remember to be hesitant in giving a loaded gun in the form of information to users that don't understand what the word "chambered" means. 



**Forecast for the National Information Technology Market**  
**IT Market has never been better for job seekers.**

by M. Victor Janulaitis  
 Internet address: victor@psrinc.com

In the last few months, population demographics have started to show up in the IT labor market. As the baby boomer gets closer to retirement, fewer individuals are entering the labor market. That, along with the increased demand for individuals who know how to use and develop systems for the IT world is causing a shortage. Add to that, the declining number of students graduating from universities that have a concentration in IT or IT related topics and it is easy to see why there is such a shortage.

One other factor is that the quality of the individuals who are entering the market is not as good as it used be. New entrants tend to be skilled in one or two areas, not having the breath that is necessary for the openings that are available.

In earlier times, people would enter the IT market from various functions within industry. It would not be unusual for someone who was an Inventory Analyst to migrate into a position as a Systems Analyst or even a Programmer. What that brought was a resource who knew how the job of Inventory Analyst was done. Thus systems and programs that were developed, more often than not, would meet the needs of the department.

Today, many programmers and systems

analysts do not know what or how jobs need to get done. For example, one of our clients had a programmer who writes some of the most elegant C++ code you can imagine. The only problem is that if the specifications do not require a "Menu" or "Tool Bar", the programmer does not bother to think about how the user is going to access the function. At the same time, the systems analyst did not understand that the functions to add, change and list for the application needed to be specified. He "assumed" that those functions were there and all he had to define was the unique transaction processing.

To everyone's surprise, the system these two "experts" implemented did not meet anyone's requirements.

With this example in mind, you may want to have your HR staff include some additional requirements in the specifications for the people you hire. At the same time, it makes sense to see that some of the "grey haired" old timers are involved in the review of systems designs before you go too far down the implementation path.

On a different topic, it seems like all of this Year 2000 talk is just that. In the past few weeks we have talked with several

individuals in key positions and they are coming to the conclusion that there are some "minor" impacts that will be felt by the date issue but for the most part systems will operate. One executive even said that his solution was going to be to have some resources available to "patch" the data when the problems associated with the Y2K begin to appear.

A number of vendors have even started to price gouge, hoping that the Y2K fear will loosen the purse strings of some key customers who are "betting" on new Y2K compliant software coming from the vendors.

All things being equal, many organizations will have to pay premium prices associated with these upgrades.

On the negative side, one "industry leader" told us that he was not going to do any Y2K work now. Rather he was going to wait and be an "Expert Witness" when all of the law suits start. Who knows what will happen.

*Vic*

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Location	Prospects Short Term	Prospects Long Term
Northeast	Good/Fair	Good
Mid Atlantic	Excellent	Excellent
Southeast	Good	Excellent
South	Excellent	Good
Midwest	Excellent	Good
Southwest	Good/Excellent	Excellent
West	Excellent	Excellent
Pacific Northwest	Excellent	Good
Best Location	West	Major Metro Areas All