

Digital Equipment Corporation¹
Engineering Technical Office – Memorandum

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SUBJECT: Strategy?

I developed a model for discussion of strategy in the summer of 1990. I'm reproducing it here as an introduction to what I'll propose.

Dog Chases Truck Strategic Model

1. Dog chases Truck (Dog ALWAYS chases Truck)
2. Dog catches Truck
3. Dog bites Truck fender and experiences initial exhilaration of reaching goal!
4. Dog experiences extreme rush of pleasure as it is carried along much faster than it has ever traveled before!!!
5. Dog experiences fleeting sensation of impending Doom as it is dragged under Truck!!!!
6. Road Pizza!!!!
7. Truck continues on its way unaware of the fact that it has substantially affected Dog!!!!

In the twelve years I've been at Digital, we've reached a lot of goals; and we've been run over many times by many trucks – General Motors is one of my personal favorites. In the absence of a strategy – technical or otherwise – we have no context to make engineering investment decisions. We have no way of choosing one proposal or product over another – you know all this – it's just worth repeating.

I like MOMI: Mobile, Objects, Multimedia & user Interface, however it isn't a strategy – it's a set of technologies. The question is: MOMI for what? Here's my proposal...

Digital should become the "Knowledge Company", like Xerox is the "Document Company". What are the implications of this? What is knowledge? Why is this good strategy?

KNOWLEDGE

In AI we talk about several (usually three) related things:

- Data – discrete alpha/numeric facts, like you have in a database

¹ This is a replica of the original memo

- Information – subsumes data and additionally includes structures on data like aggregations (sets), relationships, processes associated with data and reasoning about data (deductive closure)
- Knowledge – subsumes information and additionally includes structures on information like aggregations of relationships and reasoning about information (inductive methods) such as reasoning by analogy, generalization, specialization etc.

Knowledge then is “the sum or range of what has been perceived, discovered or inferred”² about something.

In order to become the “Knowledge Company”, Digital must develop products which allow people to create, refine, manage and utilize data, information and knowledge. These products will span both hardware & software and will necessarily be able to be supported in distributed and collaborative architectures and usage scenarios. We have some of the products to do this already, but will need real work in at least the following areas (not meant to be inclusive):

- Large-scale distributed systems and applications architectures
- Very large-scale (multiple TBs) data and information management
- Knowledge representation and knowledge management
- Linkage of these technologies with actual work scenarios of our strategic customers (I’m currently the Corporate Technology Partner for both Boeing and GM)

Bob – Let’s find some time to talk about this. Thanks

David Hartzband
Consulting Software Engineer

² Definition from Webster’s International Dictionary