The DATAIR NEWS

News for the DATAIR Pension and Benefits Professional

Spring   *1998*

From the Top

by Aaron Venouziou

If they can celebrate Christmas in July, I'm entitled to Thanksgiving in April, or even in February. Yes, I'm thankful for the return of golf season to Illinois. In February, though, I began celebrating the sixty (60) subscribers using our new WINDOWS application, the Client & Task Manager System.

The management of client relationships and tasks isn't theoretical anymore. All of our discussions over the years have resulted in the system *you've chosen* to manage your client relationships and manage the tasks you perform for those clients.

Not only are *you* using it, some of you have already recommended Client & Task Manager to others in our DATAIR community. I have long believed that such a system is essential for efficient, profitable operations. Thank you for showing your agreement in such a concrete way.

Also, I appreciate your comments on everything from the installation process through the readability of the user manual. Keep those cards and letters, e-mails, phone calls and FAXes coming.

We are hard at work on release 1.01, incorporating your suggestions for:

- Rolodex-type cards
- Client Data Sheets
- and more!

Release 1.01 will also include a few of our ideas, such as:

- adding a Generic Import utility
- making more fields available for Quick Search
- adding color to Plan/Company Views
- and giving you more flexibility in customizing your view into the data.

(Watch for the release 1.01 announcement later this Spring for a more complete list of the enhancements.)

Whenever you have an idea that will help the Client & Task Manager System make your operation even more efficient and profitable, please let us know.

We understand how important our products can be to you. We hope you understand how important your insights are to us. We are partners in each other's businesses, in each other's success. If I see you at NIPA or an ASPA Regional meeting this summer, I'll thank you in person. Until then, thank you for your contributions to another DATAIR success, Client & Task

DATAIR's Profile

by Laurie Brophy

Meet DATAIR's Supervisor of Defined Contribution (DC) Support, Gina Iaccino, otherwise known to one of her fans, Carlo at his 3rd birthday (pictured above) as 'Grandma'.

Gina has over 20 years experience in the pension industry, 9 of these years spent with DATAIR. In addition to managing the DC staff, she conducts specialized training in all areas of retirement planning and administration, including a one-day, CE-approved Pension Essentials class.

Prior to DATAIR, Gina worked at a small TPA firm associated with Massachusetts Mutual Insurance Co. for 10 years giving her a background for insurance under qualified plans.

Before Gina became involved in the pension industry, she was busy raising a family of three children with her husband, Hugo. They now spend all of their free time with their seven grandchildren, ranging in age from 4 months to 7 years.

Her love of Italian food (and family) is steeped in tradition, having been born and raised in Italy. At the age of 11, she and her family moved to America and settled in on the Northwest side of Chicago which she still calls home.

What's notable about DATAIR, Gina? "The diversification—I never get bored!"

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☑ How ARE we doing?

In the last issue of *The DATAIR News*, we asked you to 'Tell Us How We're Doing...' in meeting our Customer Service goals.

Why did we conduct this survey? For several reasons: we depend on your feedback to help us target areas for improvement, to monitor our progress, and to help identify your future needs. Each December this survey will be repeated so that trends may be charted and new goals established to address your changing needs.

But enough about the reasons why. Let's take a look at what you had to say.

Customer Service Goal: To have 90% of all incoming messages returned within 2 hours.

☑ 74% of you say that this goal is 'extremely important'.

☑ On average, you say we respond within 2 hours about 73% of the time.

Problem Resolution Goal: To provide an answer, solution, fix, etc. as soon as possible!

☑ 63% feel that it is extremely important that we have a quantifiable goal for problem resolution.

☑ 74% feel that 80% of all questions answered and problems resolved within 48 hours is an acceptable goal.

Customer Relationship Goal: To be consistently pleasant and responsive to your needs.

☑ 95% find our Customer Support staff pleasant and responsive.

☑ 92% feel that they receive complete and accurate answers.

☑ You ranked 'Customer Support Attitude' as our best area with 'Product Knowledge' in second place.

☑ You ranked 'Speed of Problem Resolution' as the area that needs the most improvement with the 'Speed of Initial Response' in second place.

☑ You ranked the 'Speed of Problem Resolution' as the most important element of customer support, with 'Speed of Initial Response' and 'Product Knowledge' sharing second place.

☑ You ranked the 'Customer Support Attitude' as the least important element of customer support.

Customer Support Delivery
Of the various customer support delivery modes available (Phone, Fax, E-mail, Website, Newsletter, Release Notes, System Help)...

☑ You ranked 'Phone' as the main support delivery mode, with 'Release Notes' ranking second.

☑ The 'Phone' is also the most important support delivery mode to you.

☑ A majority of users will be using 'E-Mail' more and will rely on the 'Phone' less in the future.

☑ You would like us to improve our 'Phone' system first.

☑ Changing to an automated voice mail system is 'Very Important' to you.

☑ 69% of you have no reservations or concerns about our telephone system (voice mail) change.

☑ 81% said there is nothing in our billing, marketing or other practices that we should change to improve customer service.

Thank you for your valuable feedback. The information you provide will help us understand your needs. The better informed we are, the better we will be able to serve you!

For a detailed copy of the survey questions and results, please contact Educational Services at (630) 325-2600.

DATAIR Responds to You!

by Judith Ringlein-Dunn

The Customer Survey results are in! We are surprised and encouraged by what you said. Yes, we can improve in delivering the type of customer service you want. That isn't surprising. We conducted the survey specifically so that you could tell us where we should concentrate our efforts.

What surprised us is how close you say we are to being "the best." One of you said we're already there, "Of my previous software support experience, your firm is the best!" Now, our job is to do what it takes to get all of you feeling that way.

Initial Response Time

We asked you about call-back time in questions 1 and 2, and again in questions 7 and 8. We have a long-standing goal of responding to nearly every message, FAX or e-mail within 2 hours. It is unrealistic for us to promise that we will return 100% of all incoming messages within 2 hours. Still, we do set a very high goal of 90%.

While we respond to nearly all calls within 2 hours, a longer response time may be because:

•Some calls come in after-hours. Our incoming telephone lines are staffed from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. CST, Monday through Friday. We work staggered hours to provide coverage during that period.

Thus, it will usually take longer than 2 hours to respond to a message taken by the answering machine outside those hours, and on weekends or holidays.

•Some messages are directed to individuals who are not in the office or are working on projects that take them off the direct support team. While we attempt to intercept and redirect those calls, your message may "sit."

•Sometimes support demands hit a peak and the timing of your call was "unlucky." Have you ever had a 20 minute (or longer) conversation with DATAIR support? The "average" call length is 4 minutes for system (pension & benefits staff) support and 7 minutes for technical (networking, installation problems, etc.) support. My personal record for a single telephone call is 92 minutes. That one customer got good service, but others had to wait.

We will improve on our initial response time by adding staff, improving our call direction procedures, and possibly expanding our hours of support. However, we'll never hit 100%. While we can try to minimize the impact of the three problems listed above, they will always be with us.

Problem Resolution

Over 70% of you agree that we should strive to have 80% of all questions answered or problems resolved within 48 hours. A few if you indicated that over 20% of your questions may be unanswerable, so the goal is not important. Others indicated that our target should be closer to 100% within 24 hours.

When is a question or problem resolved? Is it when we provide a "work-around?" Is it when we've tested a bug fix and placed it on the website? If we disagree on the interpretation of the language in a regulation, is it when we agree to disagree?

We are instituting a practice of informing you when the support staff member is "closing" certain types of "support incidents." We'll then ask you to call, e-mail or FAX us, if you feel the matter is unresolved and should remain "open." Through this process we'll develop a better understanding of what "resolved" means to you. At the same time, we'll be adding to our problem resolution history to monitor our progress toward meeting the 80%/48 hour goal.

What is important? What needs improvement?

Thank you for confirming what we have always felt to be true. DATAIR's support staff consistently demonstrates the depth of their product (and general pension and benefit) knowledge in a pleasant and responsive manner. The challenge, then, is to improve both initial response time and problem resolution, without sacrificing the qualities you've come to expect from us. Quickly offering a "shoot from the hip" answer might help the numbers say that we are making progress in meeting the 2-hour initial response goal or the 80%/48 hour goal. However, our only true goal is to improve our service to you.

"Can you FAX me that Rev. Proc.?" From time to time, some of our customers ask us to provide research services. With your responses to this survey, you've told us that we aren't meeting our goals in delivering *software* support. *Software* support is our job. Thus, until we can work out the staffing issues and perhaps establish a different fee structure for research requests, we may have to say, "no," when your request does not directly involve supporting our software.

Voice Mail

Nearly 70% of you agreed that a voice mail system will improve our service to you and had no further comment on it. Others are concerned that we'll become harder, not easier, to reach.
•We promise you that you will be able to reach a human operator at any point during your call.

•We cannot promise that we will improve significantly on the 2-hour initial response goal until the new telephone system is fully integrated into our operation.
•However, we do promise you that we will meet (and strive to exceed) our 80%/48 hour goal for problem resolution.

We are planning a voice mail system that is oriented toward routing your call based on the system involved (e.g., DC) and on whether a "support incident" has already been opened for this problem. One difficulty in meeting both the 2-hour initial response and the 80%/48 hour resolution goals is the person-specific message. A message taken for a particular person, currently waits for that person. He or she may not be the (or the only) person who supports that system. We won't find out that someone else could have helped you sooner, until that person reaches you. With system-specific voice mail, another member of the support staff will be able to hear your question and forward it for quicker action.

Until we have the voice mail system in place, please:
•use e-mail addressed to support@DATAIR.com
•send us a FAX (630-325-2660) and indicate the system (DC, DB, RDS, etc.) related to the question
•if you call, tell the operator which system is involved and allow him or her to direct the call to the next available support person
•even if the problem seems to be clearly one for technical support (e.g., network installations), please allow a member of the system support staff to collect the facts, initially. (There are 14 of "us" and only 2 of "them.")

Thanks!

To all of you who participated in the survey, thanks! To those of you who did not, please consider participating next time. We need your help in setting the course DATAIR will follow.

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Answers to 'Florida or Bust'

Exits:

Beach	=	254,240	Golfing	=	160,920
Fishing	=	41,600	Surfing	=	56,250
Gator Bait	=	137,500	In Orbit	=	402,300
Sailing	=	118,228	DATAIR	=	366,168
			Total.............		1,537,206
			Fell in a Sinkhole	=	962,794

The IRS Determination Letter Program (What is New)

by Lanning Hochhauser

The FAX you should have received from DATAIR on March 27, 1998 contained the following information about determination letter requests for cross-tested defined contribution plans:

Recently released Revenue Procedure 98-6 at Section 2.05 contains a note that the restriction on the submission of determination letter requests for Volume Submitter plans, that were cross-tested defined contribution plans, has been removed. This primarily affects age-weighted profit sharing plans and super-integrated plans (new comparability). These plans may now be submitted on Form 5307. This means the Volume Submitter plan will no longer be reviewed as an individually designed plan when submitted with a formula that requires cross-testing. Therefore in most cases, cross-tested Volume Submitter plans may now be submitted on Form 5307. If the IRS feels that the provisions that require cross-testing do not fit the Volume Submitter program they will so inform you.

In addition there are two fees for plans being submitted on Form 5307. The $125 fee which requests a determination letter on the form of the plan and the $1,000 fee which requests a determination letter based on the general nondiscrimination test under section 401(a)(4) of the Code.

One of the benefits of this change is that the Volume Submitter plan will no longer be reviewed as if it were an individually designed plan. In the past there has been some uniform objections to certain language in the plan, as well as sporadic objections to other parts of the plan. These objections should, for the most part, now stop. The comments you receive should be limited to the non-specimen language you choose to include in the plan.

I have discussed these changes with the Volume Submitter Coordinator in the Ohio Key District Office (Cincinnati). At the present time it has been decided to grant specimen language (prior approved language) status to age-weighted and new comparability language. The Cincinnati Office estimates, however, that the first opinion letters will not be issued until after the first of the year.

The National Office of the Internal Revenue Service has announced that the Determination Letter Program for the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), Uniform Services Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) USERRA and Small Business Job Protection Act (SBJPA) will open April 27, 1998. DATAIR intends to submit its defined contribution Mass Submitter Prototype plans under both Rev Proc 89-13 and 89-9 just as soon as the IRS will accept them. But, please be warned, the IRS has not yet released its List of Required Modifications (LRMs). This means the language submitted may require substantial revision through a process of negotiation with the IRS. I anticipate this process to take some time.
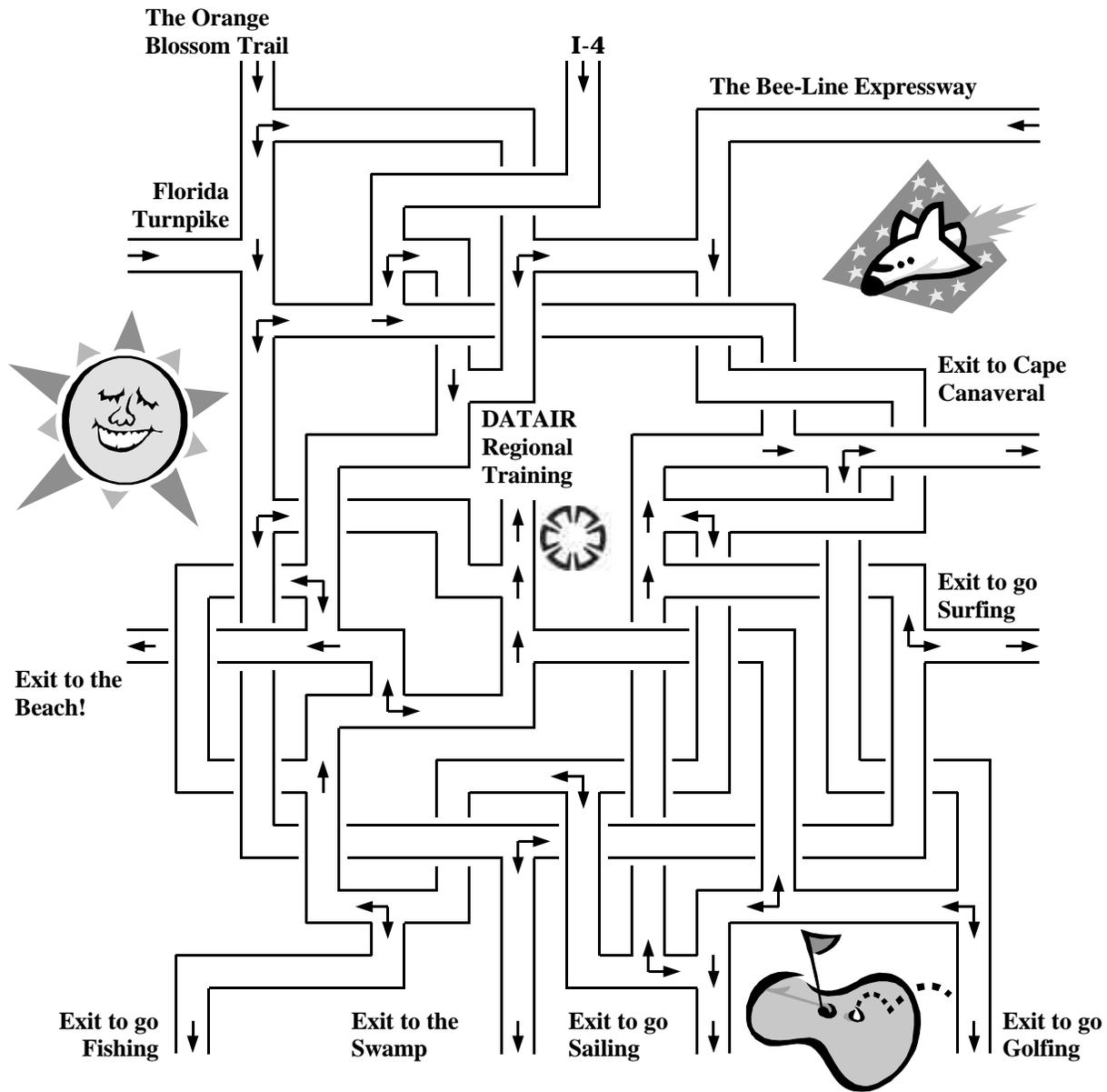
Further, once the Determination Letter Program is opened, the volume of plans the IRS receives may require the extension of the Remedial Amendment Period.

We will keep you posted of any significant changes to the program as they become available to us.

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-------Clip out for future reference---

Florida or Bust!

Rules of the Road
by Gary Ward

1. All roads are one-way.
2. Cars split equally at each intersection.
3. 20% of the cars get lost after every third turn.

Your Mission (should you choose to accept it):

If 125,000 cars enter from the Florida Turnpike, 125,000 come down I-4, 250,000 come in over the Bee-Line and, for some unknown reason, 2,000,000 arrive on the Orange Blossom Trail, how many cars exit at each of the 8 destinations.

Question: How many of these tourists get lost? *(See page 4 for the answers.)*

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Westmont
Training Schedule

(available at our Westmont, IL office)

June 15-19
August 10-14
September 14-18
November 16-20
December 7-11

Regional
Training Schedule

DATES	LOCATIONS
May 4-8	Orlando, FL
June 8-12	Las Vegas, NV
July 6-10	Philadelphia, PA
August 24-28	San Jose, CA
Sept. 28-Oct. 2	Dallas, TX

DATAIR User
Group Meetings

Our meetings will be held in conjunction with the NIPA Conference and ASPA's Regional Seminars:

DATES	LOCATIONS
May 20	NIPA Conference
	Las Vegas, NV
July 1	ASPA Western Seminar
	San Diego, CA
July 22	ASPA Eastern Seminar
	Boston, MA

Watch your mail for further details, visit our website at www.datair.com, then click on 'System Training'
or contact the Training Department.

Current
Software
Versions

PE	Pension Administration	3.04
PR	Pension Reporter	4.56
RD	Retirement Plan Doc	1.37
CA	Cafeteria Administration	4.42
CD	Cafeteria Plan Document	1.22
CM	Client & Task Manager	1.00

PA	Plan Accountant .	2.02
QP	Qualified Plan Distribution	1.50
FA	FAS 87 Reporting	1.13
PT	Participant Term. Calc	1.40
DE	Data Entry & Review	1.12a