

High-tech troubleshooting and much more

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Organizations can't expect to go very far today without a dynamic information technology department doing its utmost to keep abreast of innovative software and network efficiencies.

At PEO, I & TS concerns are handled by an eight-person team comprising a director, webmaster, network/Internet administrator, programming and business analysts, and desktop and website technical support staff.

The department faces a daunting daily routine, ranging from workstation troubleshooting to internal and external communications to website design and maintenance. The I & TS team, for example, was responsible for the technical implementation of PEO's new telephone system. While it meant some long days and lost weekends for staff, the system was up and running in January, with only a few glitches and gremlins.

Eric Brown, P.Eng., ISP, PMP, director of I & TS, can outline a number of service enhancements slated for 2005. Brown likes to divide the department's major priorities for the year into two main categories: Internet-related operations and infrastructure.

Under the former category, the department has recently purchased new Prism software from Web Impact, which will enable at least three major enhancements to PEO's Internet services. The first of these is the creation of templates that will enable each PEO chapter to set up its webpage in a similar, consistent manner. Whether the local website manager is a beginner or is fluent in website programming, the new software will make it much easier to build and maintain the chapter website.

Brown says the software will also enable PEO to better manage public information in an era of increased concern about security and privacy. "Prism will allow us to make greater information available to members via our website in an appropriately secured environment," he says.

The new software will also bring addi-

This issue's Fast Facts looks at how PEO's Information and Technology Services (I & TS) department is helping the regulator rise to its information and communications challenges.

tional online benefits. Members and applicants will soon be able to more easily and securely do the following: register, make annual fee payments, and update or change their address and contact information online.

In the infrastructure improvement area, I & TS is spearheading PEO's migration from the older Windows NT 4.0 operating system to the more current Windows 2003 Active Directory. This is considered a major network update that will allow staff to more efficiently and effectively manage their email and related functions.

Staff will also soon enjoy enhancements with the move to "tier three architecture" in LicenseEase, PEO's licence holder, EIT and applicant information database. These service improvements will enable staff to access LicenseEase from remote workstations, should they need to work offsite.

I & TS is also supervising an update to PEO's financial system software. Moving to Solomon Version 6 will bring benefits to Administrative Services staff involved in

financial transaction and reporting. The upgrade should reduce the possibility of "human error" in transactions and allow staff to complete finance-related tasks in a more standardized way. The new version will also provide a better interface between the LicenseEase database and financial recording operations.

Overall, says Brown, "the I & TS department strives to support PEO processes to ensure timely, cost-effective, efficient operations and delivery of services to the membership."

Of the department's \$1.2 million budget for 2005, about 51 per cent is devoted to staff costs, with the remainder allocated to the usual hardware, software, supplies and service expenditures.

As Table 1 indicates, the department's major cost objects are divided into four general areas: information systems development, information systems operation and maintenance, web portal management and desktop support. ❖

Table 1

Major Cost Objects per ABC (Activity Based Costing)	Thousands \$	Percentage %
I.S. Development	264	22%
I.S. Operation & Maintenance	584	48%
Web Portal Management	143	12%
Desktop Support	76	6%
Other	153	12%
Total	1,220	