GRAFX DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

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DO YOU REALISE THAT THE PEOPLE YOU'RE ASKING FOR HELP – THE INTERNET DESIGN HOUSES – ARE ACTUALLY YOUR COMPETITORS?

Assuming of course that we all survive the start of the Year 2000 (air traffic control, traffic light chips, and hangovers permitting) and that the world's bank computer systems don't forget where we put our cash… we can be sure of one thing – things will still need selling. The major challenge facing your company is to make certain the advertisers – *your clients* – continue to turn to you to present their product message.

The Internet, digital interactive television, and electronic newspapers will all have a major impact on how those messages will reach the audience – and this gives the "techies" even more chance to poach your business. You must plan now to make sure you continue to be involved in the creative process… that you and your colleagues are able to discuss new options, so that your clients don't need to look elsewhere for their ideas. In short you need to make sure creativity "comes home".

The first stage is to start to understand the coming changes and how they will affect what you and your clients do. Do you design a catalogue in a traditional printed form or should you migrate to CD or the Internet? Should you be looking at ways to communicate product technical data over the Internet? Do you print and distribute or distribute and print?

We've seen the explosion of magazines following the arrival of DTP – now every sector, segment, clique and coterie is served by its own title.

Soon digital television – satellite and terrestrial – will bring a channel for every conceivable interest (and sub-titles in several languages!)… and then there's digital radio. Media planning will soon require encyclopaedic knowledge to give the best return on the client's investment… while the creative challenge will be to achieve differentiation in such a noisy environment.

Yet how many advertising agencies and design studios are seriously looking at the impact all this will have on their business? Do designers realise the way they go about creativity is about to change again? Are account handlers aware of what the new opportunities can offer their clients and the agency?

Their understanding (or lack of it) will set the pace for your company's inevitable change.

You will, no doubt, already be starting to think about these issues – but does this attitude spread through to the people at the "coal-face"… are your clients putting Internet projects to computer "techie" companies because they perceive your account handlers (and therefore your company) as insufficiently qualified?

We are undertaking a programme of education and development to help agency principals focus their thinking, and encourage confidence in account handlers in discussing digital options with clients.

For details call Tony Briscombe on 01242 245005.

DESIGN FOR POWER

Again Apple have proved that computers needn't look as though they have been designed by Le Corbusier on prozac.

Nobody I know has seen the new G3 laptops and not liked them – if you travel (and work) on a train then this is a must for making your fellow travellers look jurassic. And you'll be the fastest too. Every G3 produced – including the laptops – is significantly faster than the highest spec'd Pentium computers as well as being cheaper.

If we can't appreciate good design, who can?

Not only that – with a double battery option and "warm" swapping, you can work through from Aberystwyth to York – and you needn't just stick to word processing or the simple spreadsheets, the higher end G3 laptops are more than capable of Photoshop retouching!
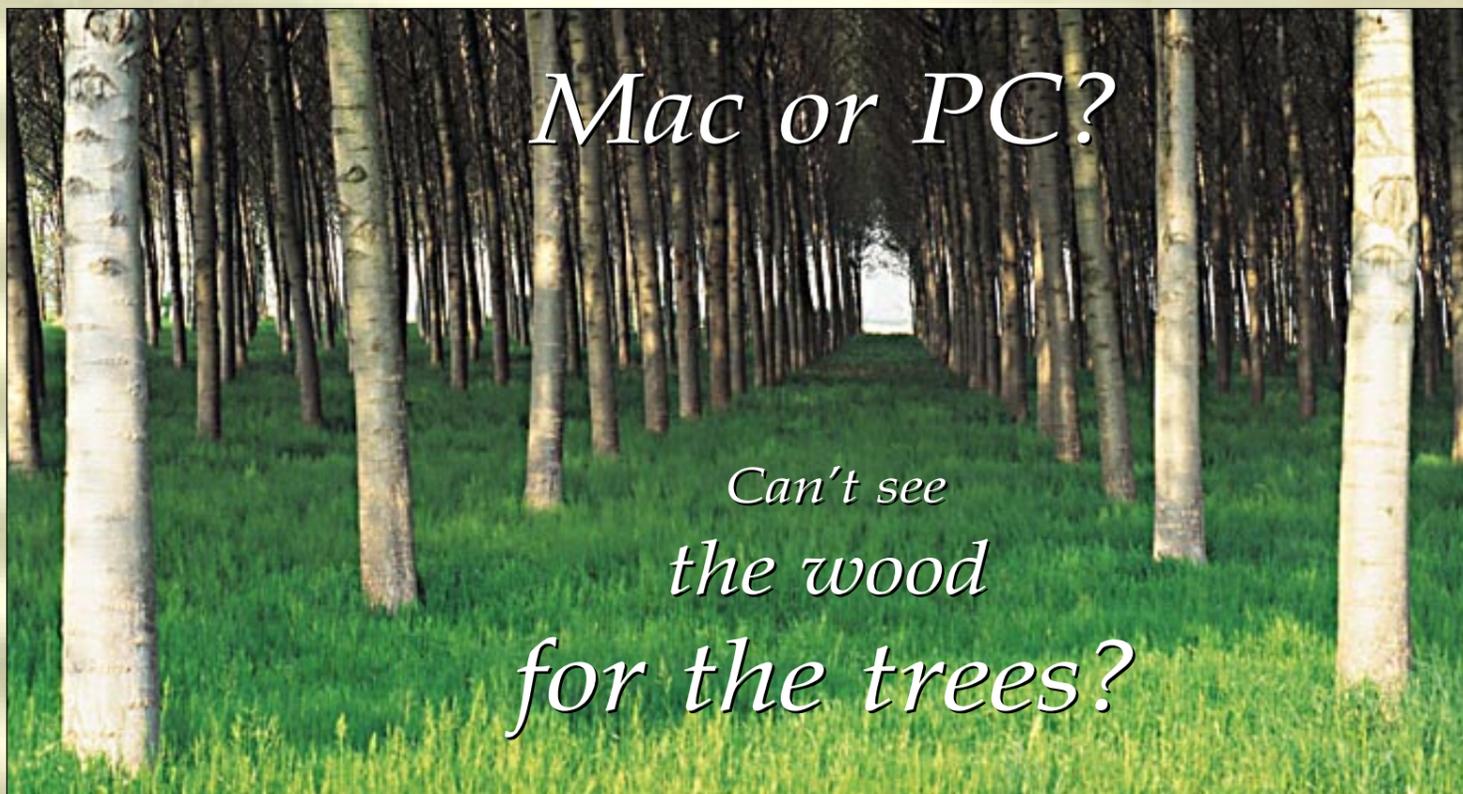
Not everybody will immediately take to translucent blue plastic, but like it or loathe it the new iMac home computer is certainly striking and once again Apple have changed the way we look at computers.

Special deals will be available for agency staff who would like an iMac for home use.

HELPFUL HINT

The best screen cleaner we know of is "Mr Muscle" non-smear window cleaner with vinegar. Used with Boots cotton wool pads (make sure they are the lint-free ones to avoid getting fluffy bits on the screen), this does an excellent job of getting rid of those finger marks, when the client has pointed to where they want the logo moving!

Mac or PC?

Can't see the wood for the trees?

THE RIGHT CHOICE

We are often asked: "shouldn't we be looking at Microsoft/PC instead of Apple?" While there is no standard answer, there are some simple and straightforward guidelines.

While Grafx is also able to supply Compaq and Siemens Nixdoft as solutions to our customers needs, in the creative and design world we still see Apple being some way ahead of the other alternatives.

If you were starting from scratch and all your clients used PC's, an argument could be made towards a PC solution. However, if you have already invested in software and fonts for the Mac, the transition could prove too expensive with little or no gain. For example, there is no practical side upgrade on software from Mac to PC, you would have to purchase new – and your font library would have to be built again completely, and there is no cheap option for retraining staff.

Why bother when you already have the easiest operating system, the best supported graphics product, superior build quality and, with a G3 system, a processor faster than any Pentium.

Today there is little saving to be made on hardware (in many cases the Mac is now cheaper) and a Mac will sit on just about any network and share files with other computers and programs. Office 98 for the Mac is 100% compatible with Office 97 on the PC.

There is a lot of hype being bandied around about having to change from Mac to PC – much of it non-altruistically generated by PC vendors – but we would find it nearly impossible to justify the need to install a PC in the creative computing environment.

It's a different story for corporate computing – if you are looking for general admin and accounts, there are equal arguments for both platforms. If you are in any doubt what is the best solution to your needs, you can always call us at Grafx for impartial advice.

APPLE PROFIT AGAIN

For the third quarter running Apple have shown profits – this time $101 million.

With the share price climbing, it looks as though Apple is on its way to becoming a major player once more.

YEAR 2000 UPDATE

We might have guessed that it wouldn't take long for the computer community to see the expression Millennium Bug as not serious or techie enough – so now we have "Y2K".

As you will recall from the last issue of '42' the Mac has no problems when it comes to the Year 2000 issue. However, your clients will need reassurance. PC-based client staff have problems understanding that the Mac will not suffer and many companies are using the opportunity to request full computer audits from their suppliers – one of our clients has actually been asked whether they will have any problems in respect of "receipt of monies"!! Just send the cheque, we'll cope!

Will jets manage to stay up here when the clocks strike for the new millennium?

We have put together documentation relating to "Y2K" covering all major applications and hardware. If you need a copy please call Lorna at Grafx. While this service is available free to contracted clients, there will be a small charge to non contract clients.

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SHOWING OFF

FOR THE NEXT 3 MONTHS WE WILL BE DEMONSTRATING HIGH END SERVERS AND HIGH SPEED NETWORKS

Specific subjects covered will be:

- RAID
- image database software
- CD jukeboxes
- ColorSync

DESKTOP CROMALINS

We will also be demonstrating the new Epson 5000 colour proofer. One of those products which, even from its introduction, looks set to have a major impact on our industry.

The combination of Epson, DuPont and EFI have provided a superb solution to cost-effective, quality colour printing on the desktop.

The Epson 5000 is being distributed through appointed specialist outlets – of which Grafx is delighted to be one.

GRAFX GALLERY OF EFFECTS

Ever wondered how to create a soft drop-shadow on a headline without having to move the background picture, or give that photo a sepia look and a torn edge?

Quark and Photoshop – great programs on their own – but even better with Xtensions and Plug-ins. You can spend literally thousands of pounds on these add-ons, so why not visit the "Grafx Gallery of Effects" – demos of the best in Xtensions, Plug-ins and more… a couple of hours will bring you up to speed and let you add to your creative repertoire.

APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT

Joe Hirst, our application specialist, continues to monitor the new versions of the major graphics programs and to evaluate new developments.

Currently available for demonstration or training are:

- Quark 4
- Dreamweaver
- Freehand 8
- Flash
- Photoshop 5
- Fireworks

Should you have any question relating to these or other appropriate applications, Joe will be more than happy to help.

DID YOU KNOW?

WOULD YOU KNOW A PAGEMILL FROM A DREAMWEAVER? Obviously every software developer is jumping on the Internet bandwaggon. Is there one program which will serve your needs, or do your requirements need several? We can provide a straightforward guide to the advantages and disadvantages of all the major packages for use in designing and creating. web pages. Or if you would like help in creating a site call us for guidance.

GRAFX FINANCE

We are delighted to be able to announce that Grafx have been granted a Consumer Credit Licence. We can now offer directly competitive leasing rates for your upgrades.

Contact Mark Newcombe for hardware costs and monthly rates.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many of our clients are now concluding that the current price/performance of the G3 Macs means that complete new systems are more cost-effective and productive than trying to squeeze an upgrade here and there.

For £20,000 (£720 per month for three years with a finance deal) you can have:

- 1 x G3 (top of the range) Photoshop workstation
    + 400Mb of RAM
    + 20" Coloursync monitor
- 3 x G3 (high end) production workstations
    + 128Mb RAM
    + 20" coloursync monitor
- 1 x Epson 5000 with Fiery RIP for in-house Chromalin quality proofs (oversized A3).

All calibrated together and able to colour match to press output.

TONY'S GRANDAD FLASHBACK
I remember when one system with a 19" greyscale monitor, 8Mb Mac IIci with 80Mb hard disk and a A4 black and white laser printer would have cost me £15,000.

1990
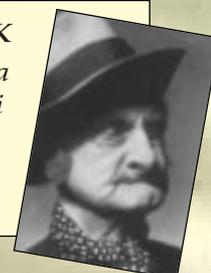
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