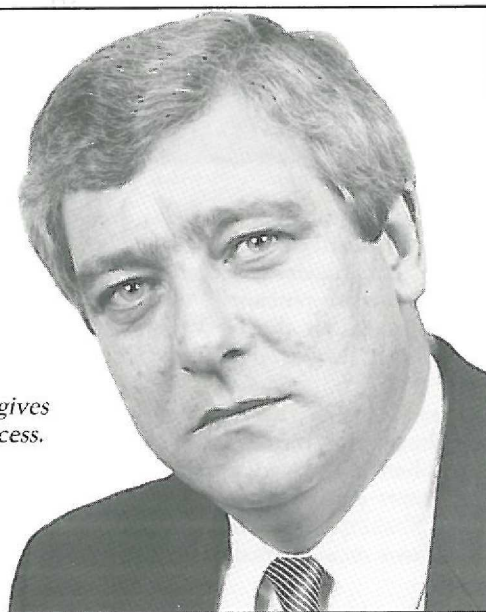


WHY ACORN NEEDS THE QUALITY EDGE PROCESS



Operations Director Jim Merriman gives his views on the Quality Edge Process.

Let's get one thing straight: the quality of our hardware is good. But that doesn't mean that it can't be improved. Similarly, there are improvements to be made in each division of the company. The satisfaction we give our 'customers', both inside and outside the company, is the cornerstone of our future.

In this sense 'customers' does not mean just the people who buy Acorn products. Your 'customers' are all the people with whom you have a business relationship. For example, the manufacturing group is a customer of the development group; my secretary Marina is the customer of everyone who sends her mail on the email system. We must think about the effect our actions will have on our customers, even down to the level of straightening a dislodged carpet tile so that the next person who walks that way doesn't trip up.

An appreciation quality will create a better working environment, and that in turn will make you feel good. I find it a real pleasure to walk into the high-tech companies in Silicon Valley where there is an absolute order in the management and layout of the workspace. People are proud of their surroundings, even though they walk about in tattered jeans with a stomach larger than any seen in this company.

If we get the awareness of quality right and the environment right, then the development of the individual will also fall into place. Each member of the company must be personally responsible for quality, although that responsibility does not stop with the individual. Quality must have a common ownership within the company. Even though all the separate units within the company work extremely well, we must work together to project the professional image to our 'customers', and through them to the rest of the world.

I believe that the Quality Edge Process will help us to make attention to quality as part of our everyday thought processes, and that this will benefit both the individual and the company.

Time costs more than money

If there had been any faults in the ARM 3 chip, the company would have had to find a large sum of money to put things right. But the twenty-five week wait for a corrected prototype to come back from America would have been more damaging still. In that half-year our position as an innovator would be undermined: our competitors would forge ahead and new product development would be delayed. (Jim Merriman)

Quality edge and the organisational climate survey

The Organisational Climate Survey, the first stage in the Quality Edge Process, was completed in March. The survey is designed to provide a detailed picture of Acorn employees' thoughts on working for the company.

It looks at

- how closely staff follow set working procedures,
- how much responsibility each employee takes for the quality of their work,
- whether staff feel they are rewarded in proportion to their efforts,
- how clearly employees see their function within the firm,
- how strongly they are motivated by team spirit.

The completed questionnaires are now being analysed. The findings that emerge will help John Hammond of Management Dynamics Cambridge to mould the Quality Edge Process to match Acorn's needs. It will point strengths on which the process can build, and highlight areas which need special attention.

Poster competition

The first Quality Edge poster has already been seen. The intent is to change the message on the subsequent ones that are shown on the notice boards.

We invite all members of staff to submit their ideas for a short message through the Comment programme. Those messages used will be acknowledged by the name of the originator on each poster. The only restriction is that it must be short and able to follow the words "The Quality Edge . . ."



Which Computer? The R140 of course

The Which Computer? Show ran for four hectic days at the NEC in Birmingham. A great many people — both from the company and from third parties — worked extremely hard, before during and after the show, to make Acorn's presence memorable. At the end of every day Bob Coates and Roger Cranville awarded two bottles of champagne: one for the person at the top of the leads league, the other to the 'personality of the day'. David Winch, Frank Burdett, Krys Boughie and Steve Cormie collected the leads prizes. Top personalities were Riché Boyce of Hugh Symmons, Leslie Cherland of Kelator, Peter Grove of Granada Microcare and Acorn's own Hugo Tyson.

Here are some individuals' views of Which?

Roger Cranville, stand organiser:

The Acorn stand was very successful, and that's not just our opinion. There were PCs to be seen all over the place, but we had something a bit different on show. We were so busy that sometimes even the thirty-five or forty staff on the stand just were not enough.

The R140 won an award from **Practical Computing** as the highlight of the show, and some of the suppliers of R140 software asked to have our product leaflets on their stand because they were being inundated with queries about the new machine. As far as the Archimedes was concerned, there are now so many applications that we always had something that would satisfy potential users.

Terry Shurwood's pre-show briefing prepared the sales team well for the gruelling days ahead. The positive air he conveyed carried through until the very last minute, and every one worked very hard.

Relaxation in the evenings was provided by Rusty's Caribbean restaurant and a mediaeval banquet at Coombe Abbey. Rusty's curried pineapple was remembered throughout the next day, as was Bob Coates' low-level limbo dancing.

Harvey Coleman tried to hide under a very large and frayed straw hat. The atmosphere at the mediaeval banquet was much more cultured than I'd expected — more Shakespearean than Carry On. Lindisfarne mead helped to moderate the tone.

Company welcomes German graduate

Yvonne Ziegler is spending the Easter term working for Acorn as part of her postgraduate course at the European School of Management. The school is based in three countries — France, England and Germany — and the second year's course is taught in England.

Yvonne has already spent one year in Paris, where her industrial placement was with a franchising consultancy. This year she wanted to work in a bigger company, preferably one that was involved in computers. Her application to Acorn had to describe why she would be an asset to the company's marketing department. She must already be good at marketing her own skills.

Since she started at Fulbourn Road in January Yvonne has produced a survey of the home computing market. This involved telephoning more than fifty potential users to uncover their reaction to a proposed new product. If the reaction was negative, she had to find out what sort of machine they did want to buy. "It was great to have a project to work on from the moment I arrived. I've learnt quite a lot about computers while

David Winch, Unix product group: Which? was the general public's first chance of a good look at the R140, and we were nearly swamped by the thousands who came to see it. The stand was so busy that it was impossible to get away for lunch after 12 o'clock, and difficult to leave earlier. The rush continued until 5.30, even though the show closed at 5.00. I'd talked myself hoarse by the end of the week.

I'm thankful I didn't accept David Slight's offer of a lift to Birmingham. As he was cruising along in the outside lane of the M6, an iron bar came through the passenger's side of the windscreen. He arrived shaken, but not stirred, with a bent door pillar. If I'd been there I wouldn't have arrived at all.

Linda Storr, Sales operations:

I'm obviously very biased, but I thought the Acorn stand was attractive, noticeable, very busy and extremely well manned. Whenever a question was asked, there was someone on the stand who could answer it. I had a good poke around at the other stands, too, and was disappointed that their sales staff couldn't answer my questions. I'm not very technical, and I really wanted the information.

Stuart Brown, Project Planner:

I went to Birmingham on the coach and was glad to have the opportunity to see Acorn in action. The stand was very

I've been here, though its not too difficult to understand the differences between K and RAM. But a lot of the computer jargon is still a foreign language." For someone who already speaks French, German and English fluently, computers should not take long to learn.





impressive, and the staff were helpful and friendly towards the general public. I did just notice a good-looking planning and project management system on the Hewlett-Packard stand . . .

Ken Parnis, Personnel director:

The vitality among the staff at Which was contagious, so I approached potential customers with enthusiasm. I answered as many questions as I could, then I passed the visitor on to someone who knew more about computers than I did.

Guy Daniels, Market Analyst: "This was my first ever visit to a computer show. I found it huge and overwhelming. I wandered round incognito pretending to be a student teacher, and was accosted by articulate and fluent salesmen. After a while the constant stress on 'the best' whatever it was became oppressive and my head started to swim. I'll be more resilient next time."

Harvey Coleman, Managing Director:

The show was important for Acorn as the full launch of both RISC OS and UNIX took place. There was tremendous interest from visitors and I believe it was the busiest stand at the show. The tremendous enthusiasm of our staff, the ISV's and the design and layout of the stand helped us to achieve the Highlight of the Show award — this success gave me enormous pleasure. Now the shows over we have to transfer all that interest into sales.

Six weeks after her arrival Yvonne's car was smashed into at the traffic lights outside the Robin Hood pub. The car was a write-off; she was very shaken though not seriously injured. "The crash made me realise that everybody in the building knows I'm here, and seems to care what happens to me. I've been offered lifts, lent a bike, and showered with good wishes and offers of help. Ian Laurence took the trouble to come and ask how I was on the day after the accident — I hadn't realised that the news spread so fast."

Students on the same course came to visit Yvonne from their placements around the country. "I've shown so many friends round the colleges here, I've really got to know them well. We're agreed that Cambridge is prettier than Oxford, but the night life isn't so good. But I concentrated on nightlife in Paris last year; this year I'm more interested in reading and staying healthy."

Yvonne has passed a happy and interesting term at Acorn, and is sorry to be leaving. "Working here has restored my faith in the business world. Last year in Paris it was horrible, my boss was a tyrant and a despot. Working for Katherine Abell was a very pleasant change."

New names, new faces

We welcome the following people who have joined Acorn since the last issue of the newsletter:

Name	Department	Job title
Guy Daniels	Marketing	Marketing Analyst
Jane Jeffery	MD's Office	Secretary to the MD
Nostrat Momtahan	Information Systems	Database Administrator
Ken Millard	Product Marketing	Unix Software Coordinator
Sheena Payton	Facilities	Receptionist, Fulbourn Road
Ian Sadler	Warehouse	Storeman
John Marshall	Information Systems	Manager, Development & Operations
Rachel Pullen	Customer Services	Support Services Manager
Val Jansen	UK Sales	Secretary to the UK Sales Manager
Murray Papworth	Purchasing	Senior Buyer
Tracey Stewart	Personnel	CCAT student on 6-month industrial placement

News for the world—from our news releases

Master boards track the popular tunes

Acorn Master computer boards have been incorporated into Arbiter Leisure's Discmaster CD jukebox to monitor the most popular tracks. The world's first computerised jukebox can hold up to sixty compact discs, offering listeners a much greater choice of music than the standard juke boxes in pubs today. Pub-goers are enjoying the system around the country, and brewers report that their jukebox takings are going up. In London, customers in Harrods and the Tower megastore can sample a CD on a Discmaster player before deciding to buy it.

Champion computer system on show at Crufts

Visitors to the Pedigree Petfoods stand at Crufts Dog Show could call up details of their favourite breed instantaneously on an Archimedes computer. Over 70 types of dog were illustrated on a touch-sensitive board, part of the Popular Dogs of the World system from Crystal Presentations. Dog-lovers simply touched the picture of their chosen breed and information ranging from the dog's historic origins to grooming tips appeared alongside a colour picture on the computer screen.

Art flourishes in primary schools

Acorn and Lincolnshire Local Education Authority have set up a collaborative project to develop the use of creative and expressive arts within primary education. Eleven primary schools and the secondary school they feed will be involved in the CANTO project (Creative Arts and New Technological Opportunities), which starts in April. Each school will have an

Archimedes computer to explore the power and advantages of 32-bit technology in new areas of the primary arts curriculum.

The 200,000th Master finds a good home

Harvey Coleman gave the 200,000th Master Series computer to Westway School for the handicapped at the BETT exhibition. The schools' scheme to create a 'total environment' room for its 50 mentally and physically handicapped pupils was chosen from a number of worthwhile projects.



Stephen West, Westway's head teacher, accepts the 200,000th Master. (Well, there had to be a picture of Harvey somewhere in this issue!)

Acorn's free information service

The Acorn Schools Service for teachers was launched at BETT. The service, which is free, will provide information and software support to teachers at all levels of schools computing.



Cleaner air floods into the building

Thank you to all those who let Personnel know their feelings on the No Smoking proposals. With your comments in mind, we have introduced smoking restrictions on a trial basis until the end of May. See how the changes affect you, then send your opinions and suggestions to Personnel through the Comment Programme.

Here is a summary of the trial policy.

Smoking is **not** permitted in

- reception areas
- open plan areas
- corridors
- areas where food is prepared.
- training and conference rooms in Unit 5
- Toilets

You may **always** smoke

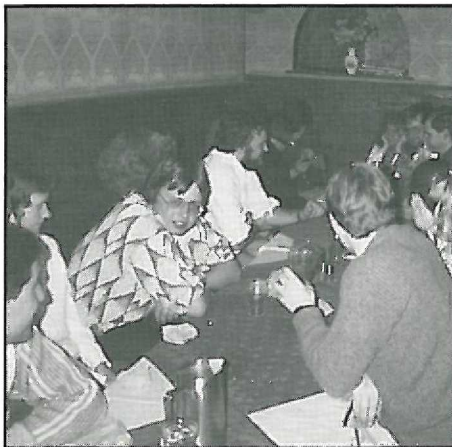
- in the rest area on the first floor of Units 8/9
- next to the coffee machines which are not in a food preparation area.
- You may decide whether smoking is permitted in your own office and company car (if you have these).
- You may smoke during meetings if a majority of those present agree that smoking is allowed.
- You may smoke in an open plan office only if all the people who work in the area agree that smoking is allowed.

Advanced chip works first time

The prototype ARM3 chip ran UNIX and RISC OS without a hiccup on its first test run. Around a dozen people crowded round to watch it perform, all holding their breath. Then the celebrations started. Steve Furber added an eighth empty Moët & Chandon bottle to the row on his shelf – each marks a milestone passed by R&D in the last four years.

The ARM3 chip differs from ARM2 in that it has its own local memory, called cache memory. The prototype still has to be checked out thoroughly before it can go into production. But its excellent performance to date is a great achievement for Alasdair Jamie, Thomas Urquhart, Harry Oldham and Dave Howard.

AR&D group celebrating another successful chip.



Snaps & Snippets

Archimedes computers travel to China

Malcolm Hilton and Malcolm Bint of ACI Consultants will take two Archimedes computers to China at the end of April. The computers form part of their system for fault diagnosis and calibration in power stations which they will demonstrate to invited audiences in Beijing and Xian. It will probably be the first time a 32-bit RISC chip is seen in the country, which is dominated by PC-clones and DEC's machines.

Champagne flows in Customer Services

Jeff Gorton and his team in Customer Services were presented with a bottle of champagne for their work in converting leads into sales. They won their prize by arranging for the sale of an Archimedes 440 computer to Granada Microcare, who wanted it in association with their service operation.

There were more celebrations in the department when Andy Smith and Kay Morris announced their engagement. "We're getting married sometime within the next sixty years," Kay revealed.

Policeman keeps his Master in the boot

PC Chris Evans drives round the county with two BBC Masters and a library of software in the back of his police car. "As Road Safety Officer for North Cambridgeshire I have to visit lots of schools. I find I can attract the children's attention and convey a safety issue more clearly if I use computers." Chris was sponsored by the Home Office to take a degree course in computer science, and has been a fan of Acorn's products ever since.

Helping those in need

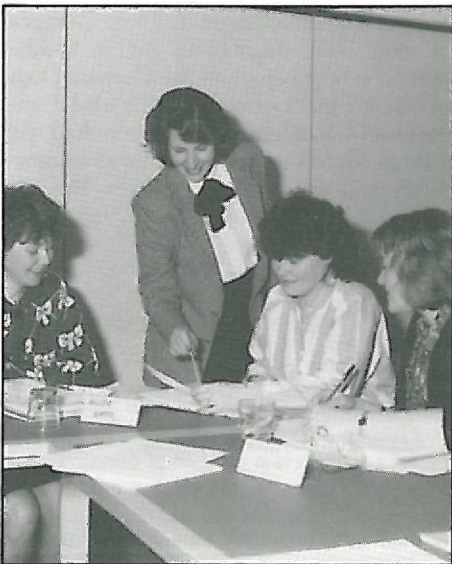
This year Acorn has given small donations from its charity budget to sponsor the King's College bed in the 1989 Rag Week Bed Race; to the Ida Darwin Hospital's vehicle appeal fund; towards the cost of cricket equipment at Fulbourn Primary School; to Break, an East Anglian charity providing holidays for the mentally and physically handicapped; and finally, to the Cambridge Cancer Help Centre.

Support Staff Train Intensively

During early March nine of our support staff went missing! They were all attending a three-day Foundation Skills course at the St John's Innovation Centre in Cambridge.

This is the second time that Marguerite Wilson from Branksome Hilders, the Olivetti International training centre, has given the course to Acorn employees. The topics she covered included time and self management, working styles, assertiveness without aggression (unanimously voted a very useful subject area), techniques of problem solving and decision making. An overview of Acorn's profit and loss account gave a clear picture of financial aspects of the business. All the participants seemed to find the course beneficial, though a little tiring since there was a lot to cover in the time.

Details of this and other courses are set out in the Employees' Handbook.



Jo Russell and Anita Watts from Facilities and Eimear Couse from Personnel with the course tutor Marguerite Wilson.