

**Ford
Higgins Ltd.**

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NEWS

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

FORD/HIGGINS, LTD.

Ford/Higgins Limited, Boulder, Colorado was founded in 1983 to design, develop and manufacture low cost multiterminal computer systems. The primary goal was to ensure that these systems would not only provide adequate processing power in their initial configuration but would expand (at minimal cost) to satisfy future computer requirements.

In reviewing the alternatives it was decided that no one processor could satisfy the needs of the small business market. With proper engineering Ford/Higgins was able to design the system to accept processor boards from a variety of manufacturers and lead to the development of the POWERFRAME's Interchangable CPU Architecture.

Ford/Higgins believes that the Interchangable CPU Architecture is not only an attractive concept to the OEM but to the end user who, until the introduction of the POWERFRAME, has been forced to choose one computer technology over another.

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Products

The company's first product is the POWERFRAME 2340 built around the Digital Equipment Corporation PDP 11/23+ processor with a choice of DEC operating systems. The PDP 11/23+ CPU is the most popular of the 16 bit microcomputer system architectures on the market.

The base POWERFRAME system includes an 8-slot wire chassis with 256 KB memory, dual ports, 250-watt power supply, disk controller and a 40 megabyte POWERDRIVE with 20MB of fixed and 20MB of removable storage. The expandable system pedestal (ESP Cabinet) is designed to easily accomodate growth of memory, disks and other peripherals needs. Two plastic inserts expand the ESP Cabinet to double its original width while maintaining its aesthetic appeal. Additional inserts can be added to provide further width expansion.

Recognizing the large data storage requirements of the multiterminal user, Ford/Higgins has incorporated an eight inch mass storage disk into the POWERFRAME. Tradenamed the POWERDRIVE, the device not only provides 40 megabytes of online disk storage but because the disk has both a fixed and removable component, the removable portion provides the user with a fast, cost-effective backup device. In addition Whitney head technology has been incorporated to provide more accurate reading and insure longer disk life.

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A unique POWERDOWN feature has been incorporated into the disk subsystem so that whenever the system is powered down the heads physically move away from the storage media and lock down to avoid harming the disk. This feature will prove invaluable in today's office environment where damage to systems is possible when they are moved.

Because of the unique ESP Cabinet, expansion modules containing additional disk storage can be added anytime in the field. On-line disk storage is available in increments of 40, 80 and 160 megabytes. The internal chassis is independent of the ESP Cabinet, with or without expansion modules, and it slides out for easy component replacement or repair.

Future Products

Later this year Ford/Higgins will introduce additional POWERFRAME family members. This system will be based on 16 and 32 bit processors from Digital, Motorola and National Semiconductor. All implementations will utilize the Interchangeable CPU Architecture so that any of these new processors can be added onto the original POWERFRAME 2340.

The next system will incorporate the Digital PDP 11/73 processor. Added into the POWERFRAME this computer will be capable of supporting upward of 32 terminals. The 11/73 processor can be used as an upgrade to a POWERFRAME 2340 replacing the 11/23+ or can be purchased as a complete system.

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This system will be followed shortly by Motorola and National Semiconductor 16000 processor configurations. The introduction of the processors will enable the POWERFRAME user to take full advantage of the emerging UNIX tm operating system. Again because these processors will be implemented with an Interchangeable CPU Architecture, Transition from the PDP 11/23 to a UNIX tm based system is accomplished by swapping one processor board for another.

Application Software

Ford/Higgins also offers the POWERHOUSE family of application software. Included are the basic accounting applications, manufacturing packages, and office automation. Ford/Higgins's POWERCALC combines the functionality of the systems found on microcomputers with the computing power of the minicomputer.

With operating system options including RSTS, RT-11, RSX and UNIX, the range of vertical oriented and special need applications that can be utilized on the POWERFRAME is unmatched by any other vendor in the market today.

Distribution

The POWERFRAME computer family is targeted toward the mid-range, price-sensitive portion of the business computer market, which is characterized by the ability to support multiple on-line users, concurrent applications, megabyte memory addressing, and high performance peripherals.

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The company's distribution network focuses on well established, value-added independent sales organizations (ISOs) who sell turnkey systems. The Ford/Higgins POWERFRAME will enable the ISO to configure a range of end-user systems by simply swapping the processor boards while leaving the rest of the system intact.

In marketing through ISO channels, Ford/Higgins is building an international network of manufacturers' representatives thoroughly experienced in selling software-intensive, multi-user, multi-tasking systems to business with revenues in the \$1 million to \$100 million range.

Company management

The company was founded by J. David Higgins and C. Reed Ford. They remain the principals of the firm.

Higgins as President is responsible for the overall operations of the company. Previously, he was the Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Tolerant Systems, a manufacturer of fault-tolerant computer systems in San Jose, California. He began his career at Digital Equipment Corporation as a salesman and subsequently advanced to district sales manager, product line marketing manager, and finally overall product line manager for educational products. In 1980 he joined Tentime, Inc., as Vice President of Sales and Marketing. He graduated from Utah State University with a B.S. in Electrical Engineering and Applied Statistics and earned an M.B.A. at Pepperdine University.

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C. Reed Ford is responsible for research and development, manufacturing and customer support. He was previously the Founder and President of Software Design Incorporated, which he chartered in May 1981 to design and implement software for the commercial market. Ford also began his career at DEC, as a software support specialist. He left DEC to co-found Tentime. As Director of Systems and Operations, he had direct responsibility for the hardware and software integrations of systems sold by Tentime. He holds a B.S. in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science from the University of Colorado.

Tim Watson, Vice President of Finance, joined the firm in late 1983. Prior to joining the firm he was associated with the Denver office of Deloitte, Haskins, and Sells. Watson holds a B.S. in Accounting from the University of Colorado and both an M.B.A. and a Masters of Taxation from the University of Denver. He is a licensed CPA in the State of Colorado.

The company began shipments of the POWERFRAME 2340 in the second quarter of 1984. It occupies 10,000 square feet of production and administrative space in Boulder, Colorado.