

Acom has long flirted with the business community. Back in the distant past, in the days before DOS (yes, there was such a time!), many BBC micros were in use in small (and occasionally not so small) businesses up and down the country. At the time the BBC was state-of-the-art technology, and to capitalise on what was seen as a lucrative business market, Acorn produced the Z80 second processor, which ran the CP/M operating system (a forerunner of DOS) plus a lot of what was then the most common software in use in the business world. In 1985 it announced the new Acorn Business Computer, which was effectively a Risc PC for the eighties - dual processors built in, one of which was a Z80 to run CP/M and open up the world of business - sounds familiar?

Unfortunately for Acorn it was just at this time that the company suffered its financial problems, and worse still, IBM belatedly entered the market with its DOS-based PCs which effectively rendered CP/M obsolete overnight. The Acorn Business Computer was stillborn, Acorn went on to develop the Archimedes, and DOS took over the world.

So what of the future? In the last couple of years Acorn and its band of third-party developers have attempted to address niche markets with some success, and we shall be focussing on some of these areas in this business section in forthcoming issues. Impression Publisher and the Calligraph 1200 dpi direct laser printers have spearheaded the drive towards the professional and semi-professional publishing market; many composers and music publishers are buying Acorn systems purely for the ability to run the award-

winning Sibelius application; Eidos used Acorn technology to develop their video editing software; and with full 24-bit colour now available on the Risc PC, and graphics software such as PhotoDesk appearing rapidly (see the review elsewhere in this issue), there will be many opportunities for Acorns to pop up in the world of professional image processing.

Another factor which has not often been mentioned is the growing dissatisfaction in the software industry over the 80-90% monopoly of Microsoft. It is unhealthy for any industry to be so dominated by one player, and I think it can only be to

an accounts file that can be dropped into Sage or Prophet, and so on. This may provide the best hope for the future for RISC OS software developers.

Those who have used both RISC OS and Windows claim that the Acorn system is more user-friendly, so in a world where OS compatibility becomes less important, Acorn could do much to enhance their chances of survival by ensuring they continue to press home the advantages of their system. And in terms of DOS compatibility where this is seen to be important, Acorn and its dealers must stress that the Risc PC with a

second processor is compatible at the hardware level and not just via slow software emulation as is the case with the new PowerMac systems, for instance.

So much for the theory. In practice, it is up to the user to make the most of what Acorn can offer, and the purpose of this new business section in RISC User is to provide a forum for business and professional users to ensure that they are not working in a vacuum. We will aim to provide articles on items of interest to serious users and on specific areas of business and professional use, and hints which are of particular relevance in the business field. We welcome suggestions for articles or topics to be covered, but please contact us first with your ideas before writing articles. We would also welcome information on companies or individuals who are using Acorn machines in a particularly interesting or exciting way. Finally, we hope to act in a modest way as a kind of information

Alan Wrigley
introduces a brand
new section in RISC
User which is aimed
at the business and
professional user of
Acorn computers

the advantage of companies such as Acorn that people are now beginning to question the wisdom of putting all their software eggs in one basket. I believe the future is much more likely to see the question of compatibility in terms of files and data rather than operating systems. This has already happened for graphic images, which can be freely exchanged between most computer systems. What we need now is a standard DTP file format that can be read by both Quark Xpress and Impression,

