From the Desk of Paul Higginbottom

It’s time for all of us to work together more efficiently and effectively. We all know that Amiga systems and the available hardware and software are exciting, powerful, creative, and a great value for the money. However, they could be so much more exciting, powerful, creative and an even better value if there weren’t so much duplication of effort by developers and if products worked more effectively together.

This does not mean that I am opposed to competition in the Amiga market. Compiler wars, spreadsheet wars, editor wars, and so on, have meant the continuing release of better and better products. But unless a new product is significantly more powerful, cheaper, or different from other available products, it is unlikely to succeed in the market.

If we all work together, the Amiga will be a stronger competitor in the marketplace. You may be thinking that this is something that only Commodore should worry about, but the Amiga’s competitiveness directly affects and is affected by the size and growth of the market that you sell into.

Working together more effectively means producing products that work well with other complementary products on the market. Due to a lack of user interface and file interchange standards on the PC, software vendors created so-called "integrated" packages. Integrated packages consist of a number of applications such as a word processor, spreadsheet, and database that each utilize a common user interface, and can exchange data. These huge packages provide the user with a simple, seamless environment, but one that is basically constrained to the applications contained in the integrated package.

If applications from different vendors do not have a consistent look and feel, a consistent, but huge, integrated program may look attractive to the user. But, if applications from different vendors are consistent, and work well together, the platform itself is much more attractive, giving the user the ability to find the tools that match their needs without worrying about learning massively different user interfaces, and dealing with incompatibilities. That is why conforming to standards to make your products consistent from the users’ point of view is so important. We don’t want or need huge integrated packages. This is the Amiga we’re talking about. The machine that can run multiple packages at once. The machine that offers operating system and user level communication between programs (Exec and ARexx respectively). So design your products to not only work well by themselves, but to work well with other products also.

If you cannot beat a product in an existing category in some way (price, performance, unique features, etc.), you should focus on developing products where there are holes in the market. Such a product may not be a new concept, but simply a bridge between existing applications that don’t work well together.

Another way for us to work more efficiently together is to sell your strengths, and buy your weaknesses. If you are developing a product but lack the expertise in one area of development, buy it from another developer. There is tremendous talent in the developer community, but there is also too strong a desire to do everything alone. If you know that you have an area of development expertise, market and sell it to other developers! We (CATS) will gladly distribute flyers from you to other developers touting your available expertise. All you need to do is contact myself or Susan West in CATS about this, and we can advise you on what to do. Usually we ask you to send us a box of flyers, and we take care of the rest.

At the recent DevCons, I was very impressed by the increasing level of professionalism in the Amiga developer community. In order to be more successful, we now need to focus our efforts, capitalize on our strengths, and work on our weaknesses.

Remember, if you have any questions, suggestions, or criticism, feel free to give me a call. My number is (215)431-9228. You can send email to me care of someone in CATS on BIX if you wish, or through uucp at ‘‘higgin@cbmvax.commodore.com’’ or ‘‘{rutgers| uunet}!cbmvax!higgin’’.

-PH