

Paul Strassmann 2007-2008 Public Lecture Series

Monday, October 1, 2007

Bull Run Hall, Room 130, George Mason University Manassas Campus

Reception 6:30PM; Lecture 7:30PM

The Economics of “Thin Clients”



The last 25 years of computing technology can be characterized by the rising dominance of “client computing”. In this era Microsoft provided increasingly elaborate software that supported a complexity that previously could be delivered only by means of mainframe computers. Personal computers have now become devices that require megabytes of memory and gigabytes of disk space to support individual computing.

Offsetting such rising powers of personal computers are the rapidly rising operating maintenance costs and the increasing vulnerability to attacks on the hundreds of millions of lines of software code residing within Microsoft operating systems. Though firewalls and virus protection countermeasures have been installed to protect computing, hard to contain human errors remain the causes of most security compromises.

With improvements in communications it is now possible to support personal computing by means of “thin clients” that depend entirely on the processing power of central servers to deliver application services. Instead of protecting each of the millions of personal computers against information attacks at a huge cost, it is now feasible to concentrate defenses into thousands of high-performance servers where protective measures are more affordable and manageable.

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The objective of this lecture is to describe the current implementation of “thin client” configuration by a number of vendors, to demonstrate the economic advantages of centrally managed computing and to explain how “thin computing” offers safeguards against security compromises.

Professor Strassmann, former Acting Chief Information Officer (CIO) of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); former Director of Defense Information, Office of the Secretary of Defense; and retired Vice President of the Xerox Corporation will present his first lecture of the 2007-2008 series. The Strassmann lectures are free and open to the public. Professor Strassmann’s previous lectures from his 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 series can be viewed and downloaded from <http://www.strassmann.com/>.

Distinguished Professor of Information Sciences Paul Strassmann has written numerous books and articles on information management including *The Business Value of Computers* (1990), *The Squandered Computer* (1997) and *Corporate Information Economics* (2007). Professor Strassmann is delivering four annual lectures on current issues in information management. His research and writing focuses on the growing scope and complexity of information-intensive organizations and the establishment of empowered CIOs. Professor Strassmann created the Information Value-Added and Information Productivity formulas behind the 2005, 2006 and 2007 Baseline Magazine 500 rankings of the companies that manage information best.

Visitor parking information and campus maps can be found on the Mason Web Site (www.gmu.edu).