Research Machines Makes the Grade with Fast Ethernet Networks in Schools

Research Machines (RM), of Oxfordshire, England, develops and supplies networks to secondary schools, colleges and universities throughout the United Kingdom.

Chris Scott, Research Machines' VP of Engineering, explains some of the challenges the company must contend with to succeed in the tough education market place. "Schools have very limited budgets for setting up and operating networks. What's more, most schools already have a wide range of computers in use. We need to find ways to extend their useful life. Given all these economic parameters, we found keeping network ownership costs down and management simple, wins in the educational market. Certainly, the Adaptec Cogent adapters we use in our systems helps us deliver the level of price-performance our customers demand."

A WHOLE DIFFERENT CLASS OF NETWORK

In educational establishments, networks are used very differently than in most businesses.Typically, the network has a limited number of PCs, but thousands of users. Each time a student logs-on, it's likely they will be using a different computer, so RM constantly strives to make managing the network, its users, and its

applications as easy as possible. Their clients demand ease of administration and use for the constantly mobile student user population. RM delivers these features and more in the latest version of their popular network solution, RM Connect.

MAKING THE GRADE

RM Connect provides outstanding compatibility and performance for today's most popular educational applications by using Windows NT™ server and Windows® 95 clients. Every RM Connect server includes a comprehensive, integrated range of network administration tools developed by RM. The tools are designed to drastically reduce the amount of time a network administrator would otherwise spend dealing with the thousands of users and resources that exist on an educational network.
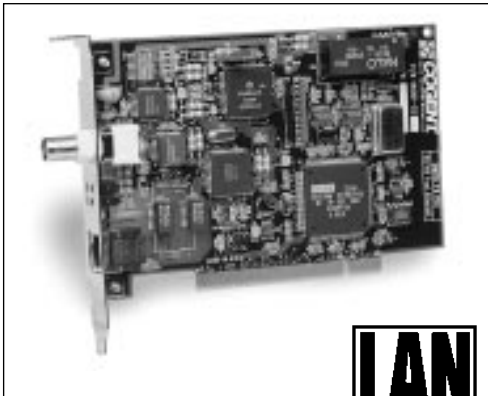
The tools include:

- RM User Manager: reduces the amount of time taken to add new users from 5 minutes to around 5 seconds!

- RM Desktop Manager: configures and distributes desktops to users to suit the different activities they need to undertake.

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- **RM Application Wizard:** handles the installation of new applications on network stations, reducing the work needed to keep a network up-to-date from many hours to minutes.

- **RM Auditor:** monitors network usage to ensure effective allocation of resources, equality of access by students and provide reports for teachers and inspectors.

COMPATIBILITY THAT COUNTS

Education establishments rarely throw out old equipment, so RM needs to support a wide range of operating systems, including Windows NT server, MS LAN Manager and Netware at the server and Windows 3.1, Windows 95, Apple Macintosh and Acorn RISC-OS clients. That fact, coupled with the large average size of educational networks, makes network performance and compatibility a critical component of system success. RM was pleased to learn Adaptec Cogent offered the wide range of drivers their systems required as well as the high performance they sought.

The EM110TX (ANA™-6911), LAN Times 1996 High-Speed Product of the Year.

AN "A" IN SERVER ECONOMICS

When RM wanted to boost throughput by configuring multiple Ethernet segments in their PCI servers, they turned to the Adaptec Cogent products. Adaptec offered the industry's first four port Ethernet PCI adapter – Adaptec Cogent Quartet™. RM could use these unique, high performance four-port adapters to configure their servers, but multiple segment support for their full range of network operating systems was also required. The Adaptec support team accepted the challenge, and took delivery of RM servers at their engineering labs in Friday Harbor, WA. There, they developed a new driver that successfully provided multiple segment support, without forcing RM's customers through a costly operating system upgrade.

Chris Scott said, "We were very impressed with the amount of personal attention they gave us, and with their thorough follow-up. By using Adaptec Cogent adapter cards, we've found we can provide our customers the best possible price-performance and tremendous reliability. Now, every one of our servers ship with Adaptec's Cogent adapters."

ADAPTING TO BIGGER BANDWIDTHS

Adaptec Cogent adapters continue to be RM's adapter of choice as they migrate towards newer platforms, and more bandwidth-hungry applications. "We are installing more and more RM Connect networks with Windows 95 and Windows NT, using Adaptec Cogent Fast Ethernet adapters to support the ever-increasing bandwidth load. They always work right out of the box. They help keep the system costs down. And they're backed by the best people in the business."