

Intel Discovers Configuration Problems With MCA Boards

BY MARK BROWNSTEIN

Despite IBM's claims that add-on memory, networking, and specialty boards configure automatically in PS/2 Micro Channel systems, Intel has found configuration problems with its boards in certain operating systems and specialized hardware configurations.

Intel's Micro Channel memory boards, for example, can be installed and configured to work under DOS, but earlier installations proved incompatible with OS/2, networking software, and certain security software, said David R. Taylor, Intel's Above Board product manager.

The problem arose from the installation/configuration routine that was used to set up the boards in PS/2 systems. Earlier versions of the software used a specification called the Adapter Description File (ADF) that included a device number (provided by IBM) and descriptive information that was used to install the device.

"When you used the ADF [to install the board], it would write on track zero of your hard disk. If you were using OS/2 or were trying to run a Novell server or a security program that prompts to a password, you couldn't use an ADF," Taylor said.

A new program developed by IBM, the Adapter Description Program (ADP),

provides a method for installing devices that does not involve writing to track zero of the system hard drive. Devices installed using the ADP can be used with other operating systems, security software, and networking software, since they make no use of track zero of the system hard drive.

Not all installation procedures for Micro Channel adapters required writing to Track zero, however. Memory boards sold by AST Research Inc. never wrote to the hard drive, said Len Herbstman,

AST's senior product marketing manager in the enhancement products division. The installation program used by AST wrote to CMOS directly, Herbstman said.

The Adapter Description Program has been made available to both Intel and AST, and "was provided to peripheral manufacturers for Micro Channel computers," Herbstman said.

Whether the ADF poses a problem to a broad range of peripheral vendors or is an isolated problem experienced by Intel and a few other peripheral manufacturers

remains unclear.

To deal with the problem, Intel has developed a new reference disk that is used to install Intel's memory boards into Micro Channel systems. The new disk is being included with currently shipping Intel boards and will be sent as a no-charge upgrade to registered owners of Intel's Micro Channel memory boards.

Additional copies of the reference disk may be obtained at no charge by calling Intel's toll-free support line at (800) 538-3373.

Invisible EMS Board Frees Main RAM for Use by Applications

BY PAUL WORTHINGTON

PC users feeling constrained by a lack of available program memory will gain a measure of freedom with a new EMS board now available from Invisible Software.

The \$299 Invisible EMS board allows users to load memory-resident programs and device drivers into shadow RAM, freeing up main memory for application programs.

A memory "back-fill" feature increases DOS memory up to 640K if there is less than 640K of RAM on the original motherboard.

Invisible EMS also has a DOS memory increase from 640K to 704K on a monochrome system and an increase to 736K on a color system.

As much as 8 megabytes of DRAM can be installed on the Invisible EMS board, depending upon the memory size used. With 256K chips, 512K of expanded memory can be obtained; using 1-megabit chips, 2 megabytes can be installed; 4-megabit chips increase the maximum amount of memory to 8 megabytes.

All programs supporting the Lotus/Intel/Microsoft EMS, Version 4.0, will run with this board, including Microsoft Windows, Lotus 1-2-3, Release 3, and Ventura Publisher, according to the company.

The EMS board also provides full multitasking support with eight mapping register sets.

The Invisible EMS board is available immediately.

Invisible Software Inc., 1165 Chess Drive, Suite D, Foster City, CA 94404; (415) 570-5967.

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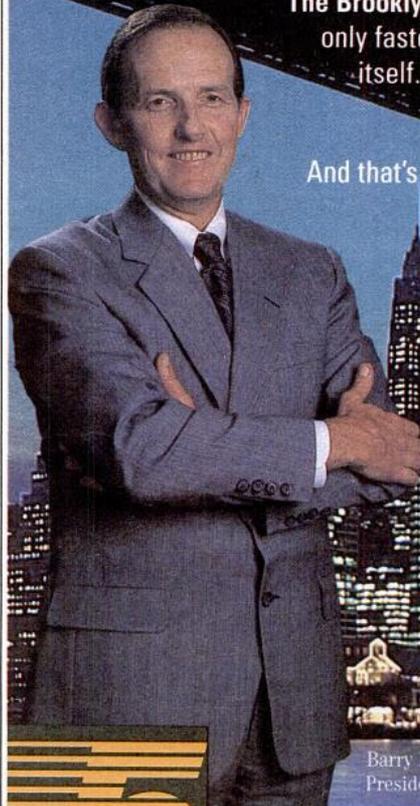
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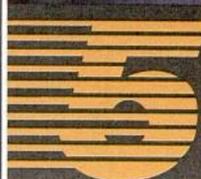
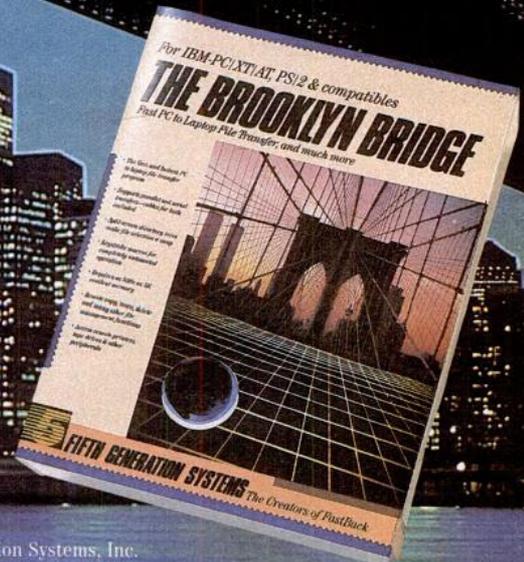
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