

AT&T BARES BARGAIN NET FOR OFFICES

Twisted-pair Star LAN for microcomputers runs at 1 Mb/s and has Ethernet coding;

but the IEEE rebuffs initial bid to establish it as standard □ by Clifford Barney

Vancouver, B.C., Canada

AT&T Information Systems has a local network in the wings that uses ordinary unshielded twisted-pair telephone wire and promises to cut the cost of connecting an office's personal computers to \$150 or so a station. That's about one fifth the cost of an Ethernet connection and about half that of "Cheaper-net," an Ethernet version that substitutes TV-quality coaxial cable for more expensive local-net coaxial cable.

First look. AT&T gave the first detailed look at the new system, called Star LAN, at a late-July meeting in Vancouver of IEEE committee 802.3, which handles standards for local-area nets that use carrier-sense multiple-access collision-detection technology. Like Ethernet, Star LAN uses a collision-sensing multiple-access protocol with collision detection; however, it operates at only 1 Mb/s, one tenth the Ethernet data rate.

Its throughput is comparable to that of the Omniminet network, marketed by Corvus Systems Inc., of San Jose, Calif. (though unlike Omniminet, Star LAN offers collision detection). Omniminet is one of dozens of low-cost proprietary nets intended to fill a gap left by the generally more powerful but far more expensive backbone local nets.

The low-cost nets have been considered by many as candidates to

Net set. Robert Galin of Intel (left) talks with Timothy Rock of AT&T Information Systems about the VLSI chip Intel has on the way for AT&T's low-cost local network.

strained by their proprietary interfaces; the backbones have been used mainly to connect high-performance work stations and are considered too expensive for office use. (The rule of thumb is that a local-net connection should not cost more than 15% of the station's cost.)

Star LAN could connect to a high-speed baseband or broadband backbone through a bridge or gateway. In addition, its use of ordinary phone wire makes it easy to integrate with private branch exchanges.

Timothy A. Rock of AT&T's Office Information Systems Laborato-

ry in Holmdel, N.J., was careful to say that Star LAN is not a committed product for the firm. But representatives of other firms involved indicated that they would probably offer a product themselves, whatever the IEEE or AT&T may do.

"Within two or three years, there will be more equipment, in dollar value, connected to this network than to any other kind of local net," said one engineer who had worked on the proposed IEEE specification.

The IEEE group rebuffed the initial effort by a consortium led by AT&T and Intel Corp. to establish





AT&T
Information Systems

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April 13, 1984

Locus Computing Corporation
3330 Ocean Park Boulevard
Santa Monica, California 90405

Attention: D. Butterfield
C. S. Kline
D. Laxer
J. Popek
J. Rothschild

Gentlemen:

AT&T's presence at Comdex/Winter was a success. Your help in making the PC-INTERFACE demonstrations happen certainly contributed to this. In fact, for many customers visiting the AT&T-IS Bonaventure Suite, the PC-INTERFACE demonstration was a highlight.

I wanted to thank you for your support in getting the product ready, suggestions in tailoring the demonstration and aid in running the demonstrations at the suite.

Thank you again for a job well done and I will look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature consisting of stylized initials and the name "G. R. Gianforte" written below them.



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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. R. Gianforte".

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The logo for Cache Technology, consisting of the lowercase letters "ctc" in a bold, sans-serif font.

Jeffrey Rothchild
Vice President
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