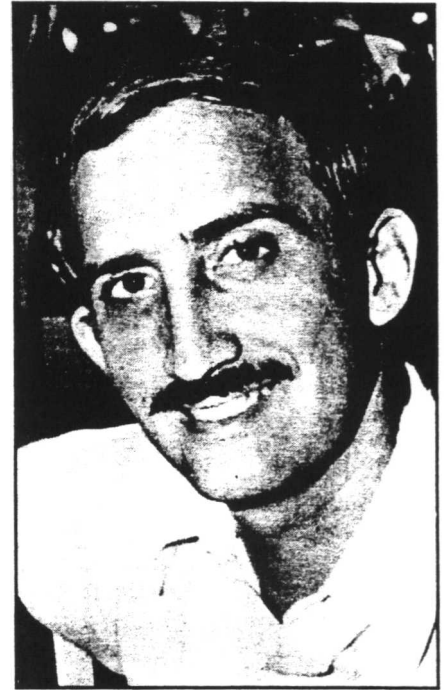


## Computers

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# Buy automation that fits your specific needs

At a time when the world is talking about automation, and the media is touting the wonders of personal computers in the workplace, it is no wonder that many tire dealers are implementing or considering a computer for their business functions.

It seems they fit into one of several categories when it comes to the application of computers and automation into their businesses. Let's examine these categories.

### Hesitant but hopeful

These are dealers who have thought about a system for a few years, especially when they:

- Shop in the newest mall and see a vendor's fancy computer system produce a neat, clean, organized invoice;

- \*Go into their warehouses and "discover" some inventory they were never quite sure they had, or

- "Wonder why they are always out of stock on things they should have and overstocked on things they shouldn't have.

But they are very confused about all the ads for computers and the "war stories" about tire dealers who just weren't satisfied with the "whiz" box that the salesperson said was the best thing since sliced bread.

These dealers are hopeful for a solution that everyone will agree upon and will be easier to understand than a push-button phone - all at half the price.

Until then, they adopt a wait-and-see attitude.

### Happy in their ignorance

These are dealers who either have

a system with limitations they have learned to accept, or have images about computers and their position in the tire business and don't realize their true possibilities. They are not even asking questions.

### Aware, but afraid to act

These dealers are aware that their current management system is grossly inadequate. This is either because of its poor design or that it hinges on one "key" bookkeeping employee who won't be around forever.

They know they have a ticking time-bomb in their office but can't take on the computer to make a necessary change.

### Hell and be damned

These dealers have decided to take a position. They feel the time is right to get automated and "never mind all those industry-wide articles that tell you that you should plan your computer system purchase."

They are going to "pick up one on a good deal" and figure out later how it fits their business needs.

### Take a logical approach - plan for automation

These dealers will establish a list of objectives, set reasonable goals and time frames, seek responsible system proposals from qualified "industry specific" system vendors and make logical choices.

The problem, of course, is that we all want to think we are in this last level of management talent. In reality, we probably fall into one of the other categories.

Today's tire dealer can consider more than 30 different systems that

claim to have the answers to his industry-specific needs. Additionally, every city of reasonable size will easily produce a slew of "experts" who will advise the dealer on what is best.

The secret, of course, is to do it right, from the start. Here's how:

- 'Don't purchase the first system you see;

- 'Don't agree that a system is right for your company without seeing the details of how it operates relative to other available systems and to the needs of your company;

- 'Don't make a decision based on hype, the colored glossy photographs or the name on the hardware box;

- 'Don't decide anything until you've seen the particular system in operation in a tire dealership similar to your own, and;

- 'Don't put the dollar investment above all else.

Some dealers buy the "sizzle" and not the "steak" and wonder later why they're not happy. Or they buy "short." That is, they purchase a simplified system rather than what is needed, then try to make up the difference with wasted staff people performing functions the system could have done better with less expense.

Consider these points, and you're well on your way to taking full advantage of the opportunities in the marketplace. \_i