

Notices

The Good Software Guide edited by Richard Jones,
(Absolute Research) 1989 ISBN/87/848016

This book comes under the heading of a definite perk for the reviewer; it arrived when, as frequently happens, I am expected to be the source of all that is best in packaged software. At last I have something to turn to, though for IBM PCs and compatibles only unfortunately.

The book contains reviews, of one or two pages, of software packages in 11 popular business categories ranging from accounts to word processing via Computer Aided Design and Utilities. A noted omission is Expert System shells.

The introduction specifies the criteria which are used to select the packages for inclusion in the book, and there are few surprises. The quality of software criteria are based on success in the market place, i.e. a larger user base and some special merit. All the old favourites in WP and spreadsheets are included. Its usefulness lies in the clarity of presentation, the provision of prices and addresses of distributors and minimum specification data. It remains to be seen whether Absolute Research have done a good job of selecting their entrants; at least they have produced a small reference book that is portable and likely to be useful.

At £19.95 it is not outrageously priced, the price might well be saved by the subsequent first purchase.

A.L.

Increase Profits with Strategic Information Systems,
by D.S.J. Remenyi, NCC Publications 1988, ISBN
0850127246. 147 pp.

This is a pocket-sized book of 134 pages which attempts to summarise the theory and practice behind Strategic Information Systems. It takes the theory from well known papers by leading American writers such as Ansoff, Porter, Strassmann. Practice is illustrated by means of 15 pages of cases, each meriting about half a page. Some of the well known

ones are discernible. However the cases are described in such concise terms that any key elements are often hidden from the reader through insufficient coverage.

It is hard to see who this book can suit. The content of the background theory, if it can be called that, is so concisely presented that it is likely to be understood only by those already familiar with it, rather than those who might be the natural audience for the format. The NCC format is obviously restrictive in number of words but something arguing from practice to some general principles might have been more useful for this audience. The best one can hope for is that a chief executive will pick up this book at a conference or exhibition and be tempted to put their house Information Systems portfolios in order, on the other hand they might not.

A.L.

Commonsense Computer Security by Martin R.
Smith. McGraw Hill, London 1989. ISBN
007707162. £18.95. 227 pp.

Martin Smith offers a practical guide to preventing accidental and deliberate electronic data loss. The book establishes that computer security is mostly a people, not a machine, problem, and places ultimate responsibility with management. It suggests from evidence that the main threats are from low-tech insider crimes. The main organisational weaknesses stem from poor procedures and insufficient work discipline. Therefore solutions can be straightforward, and need not be technical, complicated or expensive.

The chapters give comprehensive coverage of physical, personnel and document security; network security; hardware and software security; disaster planning and insurance; small systems security; staff training and awareness and how to develop your own security policy. The book does focus on using traditional security techniques tailored to the computer environment, but organisations using this approach will surely see