PANEL DISCUSSION

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TOPIC:

The developing roles within the computing industry for people who do not have formal training in computing, but who do have professional skills in other disciplines.

THE PANEL:

The panel will consist of four members, all of whom are professionals working in the computing industry. The types of areas to be covered include the following:

  project administration
  technical writing
  technical editing
  product testing/user-representation
  customer support
  education/training

CONTENT:

Each speaker will address the topic from his/her own experience, following the outline below:

1) Personal background, and how this lead to a new career in the computing field.

2) The skills required of the new position, and how skills from previous experience and training have been used and adapted to the new environment.

3) An evaluation of the success of the situation:

  what has worked well
  what problems have arisen
  what steps have been undertaken to deal with the problems

This section will include a discussion of such topics as acceptance and credibility with co-workers and management, and the steps taken by management to incorporate technical and non-technical staff on a project.

It is expected that this section will generate discussion, as there are varying views on the acceptability of placing non-technical people in positions of authority/responsibility in dealing with technical staff and customers. This issue will be addressed by all the speakers.

4) What implications these topics have for future directions, in terms of new career pathways, and the transfer of new skills to the technical environment as a whole.

5) Concluding remarks: a summary of the benefits to management of incorporating people from a variety of disciplines into the technical environment.

6) Open for questions/comments from the audience.