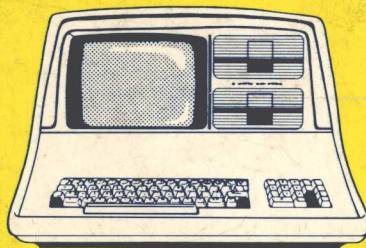


HOW TO MAKE YOUR SMALL COMPUTER PAY OFF

GARY GAGLIARDI



What the first-time business system
buyer **MUST** know

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**HOW TO
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This book is dedicated to my mother, Anita Gagliardi.

Preface

As a business person, you know it is the question that never got asked that ends up costing you the most. When you go to buy a small computer, missing the right questions can turn a potentially profitable investment into a waste of time, money, and effort. This book gives you the right questions—all of them.

If you have ever browsed through a rack of computer buying guides, you probably felt slightly uncomfortable with the books you picked up. These books obviously weren't for you—they were written for hobbyists or by hobbyists. They are too disorganized, or too incomplete, or too technical, or too “gee whiz” to be taken seriously by a business person who wants to invest a substantial amount of money in an important business tool.

This book is different. I wrote it because making the best possible small-computer purchase is nearly impossible without taking a systematic approach to all of the considerations involved. Here you will find a sensible, organized plan for determining which computer is right for you. The process involves:

- Analyzing your business
- Discovering where computerization really pays off—and where it doesn't

- Translating your computer needs into a shopping list
- Comparing computer hardware in ways that matter
- Finding the software you need to get the job done
- Uncovering the “hidden” factors in after-sale dealer support

The vast majority of these considerations are overlooked by even the best books on the market, and, when they are addressed, they are usually presented in a way that is difficult for the average business person to understand and use. Reading this book gives you the information you need—quickly, and in terms that allow you to grasp both the meaning and the importance of the factors involved in selecting a small computer.

Part I provides you with the questions to ask yourself before you go shopping, and Part II the questions to ask the salesperson when you get to the showroom. Throughout are checklists, guidelines, and other useful tools for attacking the small computer market and coming out with what you need for your particular business operations.

Gary Gagliardi

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Part I

HOW TO GET WHAT YOU NEED OUT OF A SMALL COMPUTER—A Look at *What You Want to* Computerize and *Why*

In this section of the book we provide you with a step-by-step process for determining the particular benefits you can realistically expect from a small computer. These are the *analysis* chapters describing what you need to understand and calculate *before* you invest in a small computer.



1

To avoid the traps most people fall into when buying a microcomputer, you must first understand the nature of the microcomputer marketplace and examine the "wrong reasons" for buying a microcomputer.

Never Have So Many Who Know So Little Tried to Sell You So Much

So, you have decided that it is time to invest in a small computer for your business. You have talked with friends who have made similar purchases; you have seen the commercials on television; you are familiar with some of the "name brands." You walk into a computer showroom—or two, or three, or four—ready to buy. What happens?

The first salesperson is unsure of himself. The next is too technical. Another is unfamiliar with many of her own products. None of them knows anything about the products of others. Many find it difficult to understand what you want. Some are in too much of a hurry. A few fail to make the machine do anything. One tells you things about the competitors that you know to be untrue. The only things that most salespeople seem interested in are when you are going to buy and how much you are going to spend. They seem unconcerned with what kind of system you actually need and whether it will work.

Why? There are three major reasons that the microcomputer market is such a jungle:

1. The market is so new that most of its salespeople and representatives are inexperienced.
2. The market is so competitive that exaggeration, hype, and (to put it kindly) unfounded optimism about current computer capabilities abound.

3. The market is so fragmented and it changes so rapidly that often no one knows just who is responsible for filling your needs or providing the maintenance that computers require.

The following subsections show you how each of these market characteristics can cost you time and money if you are not prepared for them.

DEALING WITH “DANGEROUSLY” INEXPERIENCED SALESPeOPLE

Fitting a computer and its programs to your changing needs is a complicated task. It involves understanding the computer (a little) and your business (a lot). Unfortunately, retailers and manufacturers alike are trying to do something that has never been done before—sell computers to the general population—and no one has figured out just how to do this yet. Seldom have so many *inexperienced salespeople* gathered together in one business. The salesperson that you encounter today in a computer store was probably selling real estate the week before last. There are simply too few computer professionals to go around. The inexperienced personnel all need more training, but few companies have the resources or the time to train them. Probably even more to the point, no one really knows how.

This lack of expertise creates all kinds of communication problems in the computer showroom itself. And frequently, these problems are discovered only after you have made your investment, as the following tale illustrates.

Example 1: When Your Computer Is Two Sizes Too Small

One man who owns a bookstore went shopping for a system to run his business. The main reason that he wanted the system was for inventory control, but he was also interested in automating his bill-paying. He went to the various retailers and looked at several systems. They all had inventory control and bill paying programs. He looked at the programs and finally purchased a system.

It wasn't until he had owned the system for several months that he discovered some very disturbing things about computerization.