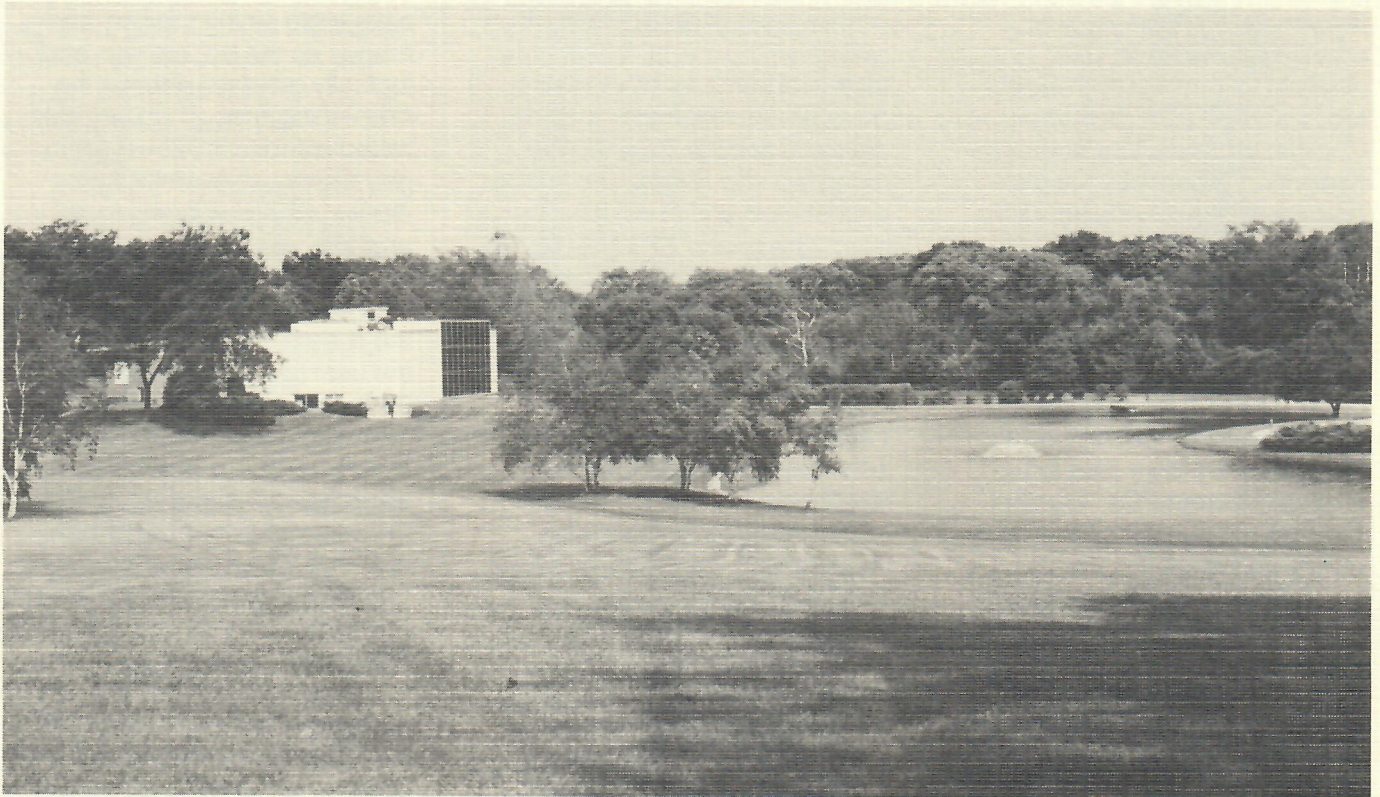




THE SIDWELL COMPANY

G.I.S. News



Sidwell Becomes An Employee-Owned Company

“**G**ood morning. The Sidwell Company.” Wendy Lane says those words hundreds of times a day as she handles incoming calls at the reception desk in the lobby of Sidwell’s home office.

March 15, 1990, was a particularly good morning for The Sidwell Company and its employees. That’s the day when Sidwell became a 100% employee-owned company. And Wendy Lane, after only 18 months with Sidwell, became one of its owners.

She is an owner through an Employee Stock Ownership Plan, or ESOP. The ESOP controls 61% of the company’s closely held common stock. The remaining 39% is held directly by a handful of veteran Sidwell employees.

The portion under ESOP control became available when the Rex family chose to divest their shares and pursue other interests. Lou Rex worked at Sidwell for 37 years and, until recently, served as Chairman of its Board of Directors. After evaluating

possible buyers inside and outside of the company, the Rexes decided to sell their shares to the employees through a newly-created Sidwell Company ESOP, which is a qualified retirement plan. The plan provides eligible employees with an ownership interest in The Sidwell Company without requiring any contributions from the employees.

Like many ESOPs, The Sidwell Company ESOP is a trust established as an employee benefit. The trust took out a loan from a bank and from the company, and used the loan to buy the Rexes’ shares. Over a period of 10 years, the trust pays off the loan with cash contributions from the company. Meanwhile, the employees earn the stock in trust for them according to a formula based on each employee’s total annual compensation.

Wendy can’t take physical possession of the shares she’s earned until she quits or retires, but she can vote the stock she owns in her ESOP account. In this way, Wendy and other Sidwell employees are

Sidwell's Master Communicators

Think about your phone. It's a simple, convenient, high-tech, desktop tool that gives you access to the people and information you need to do your work. If your work is county government, make room on your desktop for another high-tech tool. It's CID NET®, Sidwell's Comprehensive Integrated Data Network. The people that support it are Sidwell's master communicators.

CID NET® is Sidwell's system of computer programs that process county government data on networked personal computers (PCs). The PCs provide flexible, inexpensive computing power. The network allows data to be shared between PCs. Together they bring down the cost of information processing.

Sidwell's 60 years of experience in supplying mapping services to county governments make it uniquely qualified to supply information processing services, also. So when Sidwell decided in 1986 to create tax cycle software,

it could be done with an insider's understanding of the needs of county government.

Now four years into development, CID NET® supplies a complete system of programs for the real estate tax cycle. It also contains programs for other county government functions, such as payroll, warrants, engineering, recorded documents, receipting, and finance and budget.

"The goal of CID NET® is to support the functions of county government by giving individual workers the access to data and the power to process that data right at their desks," says Ron Gater, a Sidwell government software specialist. "Like the telephone, CID NET® is a communication tool that supplies workers with the data they need to do their jobs."

County workers find CID NET® practical and useable because Sidwell's master communicators have kept it simple. This is particularly evident in CID NET's® uniform "look and

feel", designed by Mike Smith, Sidwell's Supervisor of Software Administration.

Mike decided in 1987 that each CID NET® screen would have a title on the top line, commands on the bottom line, and logically grouped data on the intervening lines. Then he established standards Sidwell programmers use even today to create screens with that look and feel.

"In order to show a large volume of data without flooding the screen, I decided to allow the user to select specific data through a series of windows," Mike explained. "Thus, the Treasurer's Inquiry screen does not show Special Assessment data, but you can pop up a window with that data if you want to see it. For me, the windows are like tabs in a book. They let you quickly flip to a particular subject."

Although CID NET® itself stores only text-based data, CID NET® can link through the parcel-identifiers to graphics-based data

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An Employee-Owned Company

joining the ESOP movement, which, by the end of 1989, included over 10 million workers who own a stake in their companies through ESOPs or similar stock bonus plans, according to the National Center for Employee Ownership.

Not all companies have ESOPs. Among those that do, the ESOPs control, on average, about 15% of a company's outstanding common stock. Some well-known companies with ESOPs include Chevron (15% ESOP), Delta Airlines (20%), Xerox (11%), Polaroid

(14%), Anheuser-Busch (10%). Avis, the car rental company, is 100% owned by its ESOP.

At Sidwell, ownership had been concentrated in the hands of family members since the company's founding in 1927. But according to William H. Barg, President and newly-named Chairman of the Board, the change to an ESOP is an exciting moment in the company's history.

In announcing the change, Barg told the employees, "This is a great opportunity for each of us to participate in controlling our own destiny through the contin-

ued growth and prosperity of our company. It also provides for our individual financial security."

Has it made a difference to Wendy Lane out there in the lobby? "Well, I think we're still the same wonderful bunch of people I started with 18 months ago. I guess it hasn't sunk in yet that I'm one of the owners," she confessed between calls.

So, next time you call The Sidwell Company, don't be surprised if the person who answers the phone is one of the owners. ■

in other Sidwell systems. So on one PC without ever leaving your desk, you can see both a parcel's map and its tax information.

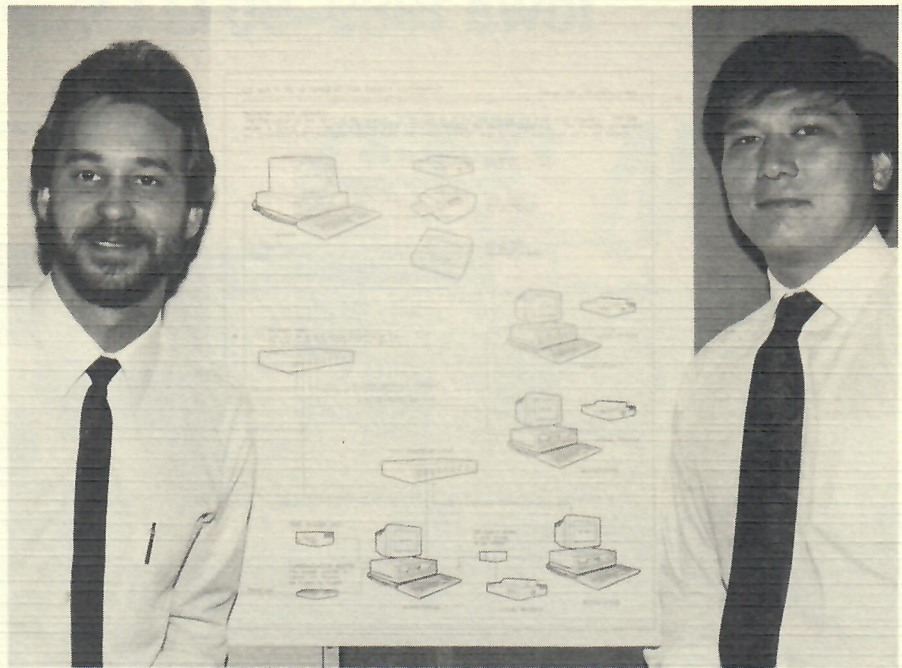
Besides communicating with many different kinds of data, CID NET® communicates with different kinds of hardware. The components are modular, so you can swap PCs, printers, and monitors. "It's like a phone system, where you can substitute different phones at each jack," Ron comments.

"CID NET® also supports software flexibility by building tables into the software to accommodate each county's special needs," Mike adds. "For example, even though the structure of the parcel ID number may change from county to county, we can easily accommodate those differences in a table without having to make any changes in our software."

"Sometimes, the county employees themselves change the tables," Ron adds. "A county's financial officer can adjust a table that determines which accounts will be affected by a particular type of financial transaction. If that determination later changes, the officer can simply change the table."

Like the phone, CID NET® is designed to be convenient. Data, processing, support, and training are available right at your desk. For instance, over phone lines and modems, Ron Gater can link the PC on his desk at Sidwell's home office to the PC on your desk in your county courthouse. Then he can watch every keystroke you make on your PC, and by talking to you at the same time over a separate phone line, he can teach you how to use CID NET® programs while he watches the entries you make.

The communicators that developed CID NET® and maintain it now have over 50 years of experience in computer hardware, software, and county government.



Jeff Smith (left) and Mike Smith in front of Local Area Network (LAN) schematic

The CID NET® team is headed by Dudley Sidwell, Manager of Sidwell's Corporate Information Services, who has been with Sidwell since 1966. Mike Smith has 10 years of program development experience at Sidwell and other software companies. Ron Gater was a county assessor in Iowa for ten years and ran his own programming services company in Iowa before joining Sidwell in March, 1988. Other members of the team include:

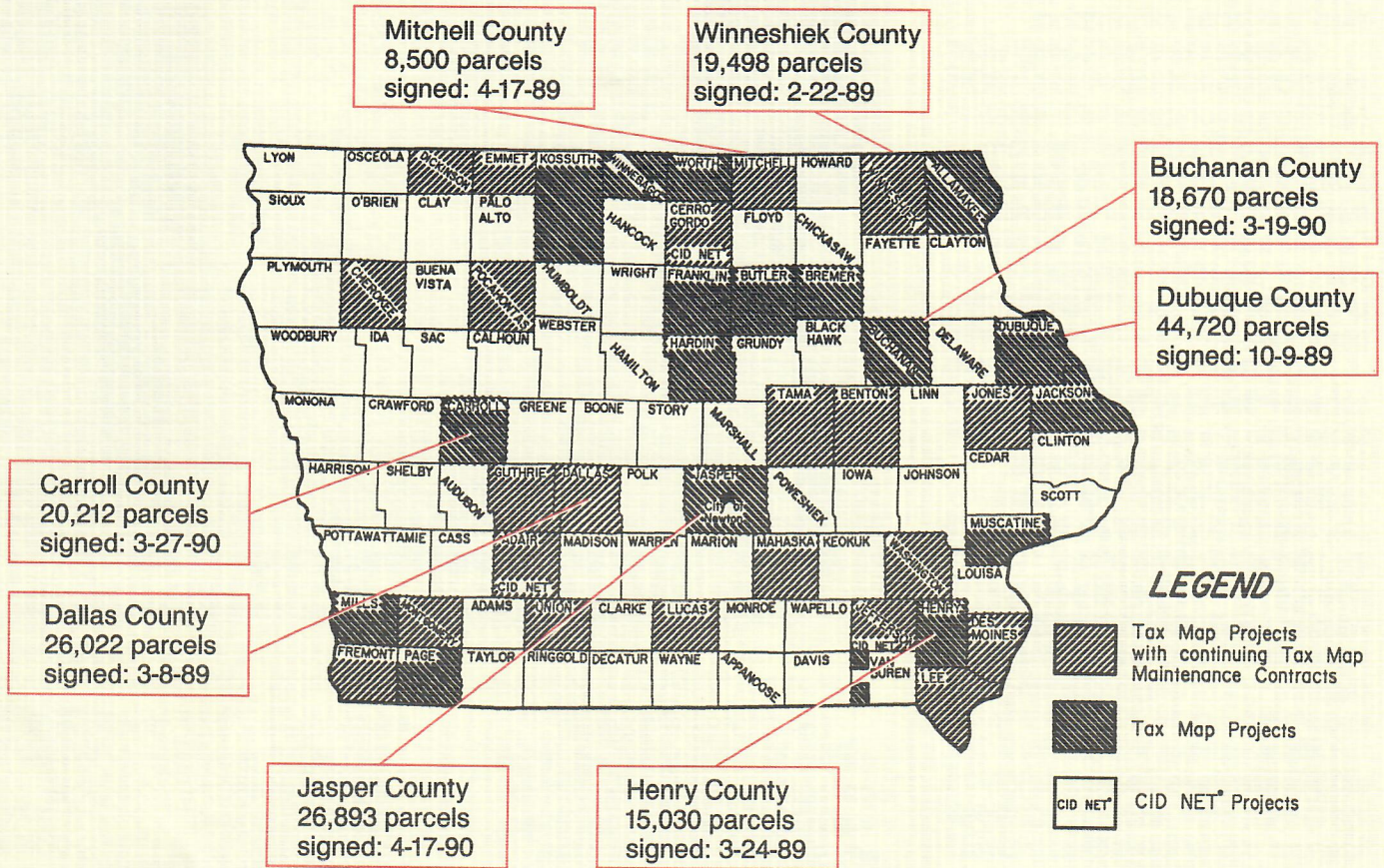
- Art Schroeder, a research liaison associate with 12 years experience in county government and five years at Sidwell.
- Jeff Smith, assistant supervisor of Software Administration with three years at Sidwell and three years prior programming experience. (He's no relation to Mike Smith.)
- Bob Frommelt, 18 months of programming experience on CID NET®.
- Brad Shockley, a contract programmer with over four years of experience in business-related fields.

- Mike Gentry, four months as a CID NET® programmer following two years of map maintenance at Sidwell.
- Tom Nicoski, four years of CID NET® programming following 11 years in other Sidwell departments.
- Lorraine Homan, consultant with Sidwell since 1989 when she retired as Auditor of Adair County, Iowa.
- Herman Cramer, CID NET® client services representative in Springfield, IL, who has two years with Sidwell and 10 years prior experience in the property tax field.

"Yes, CID NET® is built of PCs and software and a network," says Dudley Sidwell. "But it's the people that hold it together, along with the commitment of the company."

So move the phone over a little and make room on your desk top for CID NET® Sidwell's high-tech answer machine for the needs of county government. ■

Iowa 1989-90 G.I.S. Projects



Coming Up:

Here are some of the dates and places where Sidwell Representatives will be on hand to answer your questions. Please come and see us!

June 23-27

International Association of Clerks, Recorders, Election Officials and Treasurers. Little Rock, Arkansas.

July 15-17

National Association of Counties, Booths 406 & 408. Miami Beach, Florida.

August 12-16

Urban & Regional Information Systems Association. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.



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