

VisiCorp readies 1st low-end entry

ATLANTA—VisiCorp, still mired in its court battle with Software Arts over the VisiCalc trademark and a nonexhibitor at COMDEX, will make news here today as the firm unveils a product strategy geared to "breaking us out of the market perception that we're a single product company," as one official described the plan to C +SN.

The company's authorized dealers will get a preview of the new product today, important primarily because the program's \$99 suggested retail price marks VisiCorp's first foray into a new, lower-end market tier.

Simultaneously, VisiCorp will announce an across-the-board price decline on its other products and a promotional campaign on the Visi On package designed to blunt some of the market excitement generated by Ashton-Tate's Framework and Lotus' Symphony programs.

Along with hinted-at future introductions, the strategy indicates a new approach to the market for VisiCorp with products offered at all price points.

The San Jose, Calif.-based firm's new program is FlashCalc ("You'll notice there's no 'Visi' in the title," a spokesman pointed out), described as a low-cost, high-performance spreadsheet geared to the Apple IIc but compatible with DOS and capable of running on the entire II family. It will be ready for volume shipment in two to three weeks.

"The introduction of FlashCalc marks a turn for us as a company," VisiCorp president Terry Opendyk said. "We are entering a new market at a new price point with performance characteristics this market has not witnessed previously."

FlashCalc is geared to the middle-market home user but features enough-power to appeal to the business user interested in a single application package. It will be distributed through VisiCorp's authorized dealers and a company-spokesman indicated there were no mass merchant agreements to be announced.

The official did point out that FlashCalc, featuring colorful new packaging, is the "lead product from us to enter this market." While she refused to "preannounce" additional entries, the spokesman noted that, "We are interested in pursuing this market."

FlashCalc requires 64K but can address up to 512K and supports, but does not require, a hard disk. It features variable column width, extensive formatting capabilities, pop-down menus in four of the commands, data security and full financial functions.

Coinciding with this unveiling, VisiCorp will announce the price declines on the Visiseries. Price drops on VisiWord Plus, VisiFile, VisiSchedule, VisiTrim Plot and VisiLink, average 50% for both Apple and IBM programs.

Officials explained the new pricing structure positions the series as "middle-range products, positioned at lower price points and offering more performance." The new prices take effect June 6 and the company spokesman stressed that "we are absolutely price protecting our dealers."

Asked if the new pricing, low end product and suggested future introductions didn't signal a full-line pricing approach to the market, the official said, "We are leaving a hole in the mainstream business market and you can anticipate additional announcements."

Those announcements could come in the next few weeks when chairman Dan Fylstra is expected to hit the road on a press tour.

The counterpunch aimed at Framework and Symphony is a short-term promotional price on the Visi On package. Two ads will run in the Wall Street Journal, the first last Friday and the next this Friday. If the customer brings the ad to an authorized dealer, he receives the Applications Manager, Visi On Mouse, VisiCalc Graph and VisiWord for \$795, rather than the normal full-package price of around \$1,300. •

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