

IBM takes step toward wired world

Firm unveils strategy to link office systems with 'token-ring' network

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Mary A. C. Fallon

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SAN JOSE, Cal. — A few years ago, soothsayers predicted that there would be a computer on every desk by now and that all computers would be linked together. Access to encyclopedic amounts of information would be a snap. Communication between a California office and one in New York would be a simple keystroke.

As it's turned out, today's computerized society is closer to a Tower of Babel than smooth and easy communication.

But International Business Machines Corporation's announcement last month of a basic strategy for linking office computers on a "token-ring" network is a giant step toward a wired world.

In the system, an electronic "token" moves at lightning speed from one machine to another along a ring-shaped layout. Picture a cir-

cle of people, each one facing a door. A token, which is like a key, zips between them opening the doors. Some have higher priority than others and get to flash through a door faster.

Have been hesitant

Now that the biggest force in the computer marketplace has laid out its cards, corporations are expected to invest heavily in linking computers together. They have been hesitant until now, waiting to see what IBM, which sets industry standards, would introduce.

William Krause, president of 3Com Corporation, the Mountain View, Cal., company that invented the Ethernet networking standard for personal computers, believes the local area network market has been in a development stage. LANs have been sold as a way companies could save money by sharing computing power and accessories.

"We needed IBM's endorsement to be able to sell it on the intangible benefits of productivity gains," Krause said.

The same day IBM announced its networking scheme, most network manufacturers announced plans

for compatible products. Until now, they've been making products that were compatible with other network standards, such as Ethernet. LAN manufacturers "see a lot of gaps" in IBM's product line, which is expected to start shipping in mid-1986, and will plug those holes rather than compete head-to-head with the giant, Judith Estrin, executive vice president of Bridge Communications of Mountain View, said.

Texas Instruments, which makes the semiconductors for IBM's network, expects two dozen Silicon Valley network companies to announce more than 100 related products for the system by mid-1986. Dozens of firms, including Bridge, 3Com and Ungermann-Bass, worked closely with IBM on token-ring technology so that they could have compatible products ready when IBM brought out its line.

Boom not expected

However, the LAN market isn't expected to grow with the same explosive force as did the early

(See IBM on Page 2C)