NEXT TO DO VERSIONS OF OPENSTEP FOR NT, WINDOWS95

NeXT Computer Inc is celebrating its first full year of profit in its nine-year history by announcing a strategy to pre-empt Microsoft Corp's Cairo by putting its object-oriented front-end and applications development environment up on Windows NT and Windows95. A new Open-Step for Windows is scheduled to ship early next year, and it will be integrated with Microsoft's Object Linking & Embedding. News of the project, known internally as Robin Hood, has been doing the rounds for some months (UX No 503). NeXT says it's already got its Portable Distributed Objects (PDO) model and its Display PostScript implementation up and running under Windows; objects created under OpenStep for Windows applications will be able to communicate with portable distributed objects running on DEC, HP, NeXT and Sun servers. NeXT says it's also got PDO and OLE/COM objects communicating with each other via a translation mechanism in PDO which allows OLE objects to appear as PDO objects and PDO objects to appear as OLE objects. OpenStep for Windows95 and NT applications will therefore be able to

take advantage of all OLE services, according to NeXT, including Microsoft Office applications such as Excel and Word. OpenStep applications will run inside Microsoft Windows windows alongside native Windows applications via the port of Display PostScript. Like other implementations, OpenStep for Windows and NT will support mixed Objective C and C++ development. NeXT, which says it isn't getting any help from Microsoft, has the rest of the application framework to get up and running on Windows and NT, and expects to have full beta implementations by the third quarter. It plans a six month test programme before the product becomes generally available.

NeXTStep 4.0 or OpenStep 1.0?

By early 1996 NeXT will also have the next iteration of its NeXTStep environment ready, although it hasn't decided what to call it. The release should by rights be version 4.0 (it's at 3.3 now), however the 4.0 code will be the first OpenStep implementation of NeXT's own NeXTStep system and it's wondering whether to call the thing OpenStep 1.0 - and risk the negative connotations associated with 1.0 code releases - or stick with the current numbering scheme. Version 3.3 is out on Sun and HP platforms this month. NeXT's 1994 revenue was up 247% over 1994 at $49.6m. Profit was $1m.

Improved SoftPC for NeXT

Separately, NeXT and Insignia Solutions Ltd announced a collaboration to improve SoftPC for NeXTStep/Intel which enables Windows applications to run under NeXTStep. "SoftPC 4.0 under NeXTstep for Intel delivers the highest performance system for running Windows applications short of running the MS-DOS and Windows operating system itself," says Steve Jobs. RedNeXT, now with 250 employees, says its audited 1994 sales more than tripled to $49.6m, on which it made $1.03m net profit.