

Dilshan Fernando: International IT

Part One - *Read to the bottom of this page, then stop.*

It was Friday and Dilshan Fernando was nearly caught up with his work. This didn't happen often, because as Manager of Information Resources for shipping company APL Limited in Sri Lanka, Dilshan was busy all the time.

To prepare for his job, Dilshan had completed a National Certificate in Information Technology as well as Network Technology coursework at Sri Lanka's Colombo University. His job had changed quite a bit over the nearly 8 years since he had started at APL in 1992, as technology had changed. These days, he was responsible for keeping APL's hardware and software working together and helping both APL sales reps and customers with e-commerce issues.

Dilshan's job was particularly important because of how much the shipping industry had come to rely on the power of information technology (IT) to move goods from place to place. Customers anywhere in the world who were shipping products in or out of the Port of Colombo in Sri Lanka expected to be able to track their shipments in real time through the Internet. They expected to be able to reserve space for a shipment and handle paperwork by computer, and they expected that all of these services would be available – and accurate – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

In addition to his normal duties, during much of 1999 Dilshan had been working on the Y2K issue. He had been making sure that the computers, software, and applications used in APL's Colombo, Sri Lanka office would continue to function after the calendar changed from 1999 to 2000. Dilshan had approached this project carefully, checking and testing every one of the applications his colleagues at APL used to make sure he had reprogrammed them correctly.

But before Dilshan could relax and enjoy the start of his weekend, he received an urgent call. The head of IT for APL in India had just accepted a new job and would be leaving the company. Could Dilshan take over his Y2K work in addition to his own?

STOP

Part Two - *Read to the bottom of this page, then stop.*

Dilshan realized that he was probably the closest APL IT manager to India, as Sri Lanka lies just off India's southeast coast. He could easily travel back and forth between his office in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and APL's offices throughout India.

But the assignment would be complicated by the fact that APL had offices in seven cities in India, and shipped products through nine different ports. APL's India offices were located in the cities of Calcutta, Cochin, Hyderabad, Kandla, Madras, Mumbai, and New Delhi. It shipped through the ports of Calcutta, Chennai (Madras), Cochin, Haldia (Calcutta), Kandla, Nhava Sheva (Mumbai), Porbandar, Tuticorin, and Vishakhapatnam.

Dilshan realized immediately that he would simply not have time to travel to all of these offices and ports to oversee the work in person. He would have to prioritize and visit only the busiest offices, supervising work at the smaller locations by e-mail and telephone. After reviewing APL's operations in India, Dilshan decided to visit the largest offices in Calcutta, Madras (Chennai), Mumbai (Nhava Sheva), and Delhi. He would ask staff at those offices to help him oversee work in the smaller offices.

At each location – those he would visit as well as those where he would offer assistance by e-mail or phone – Dilshan was responsible for seeing that all hardware and software issues related to Y2K were resolved. He had been asked to provide weekly reports of his progress.

Dilshan knew that supervising work at all of these sites over a very short time would be difficult and complicated. Each office had a different setup and a different set of staff people. Each office had been doing different things to prepare for the year 2000. But Dilshan needed to make sure that each office solved all its potential problems, not just the ones the staff had selected to work on. And, he needed to track the progress of each office.

Before he visited the first office, Dilshan decided to create a form to help him keep track of all the information related to each office's work on the Y2K bug.

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Part Three - *Read to the bottom of the page then stop.*

Dilshan knew his new assignment in India would be a real challenge. He would have to develop good working relationships and team spirit with people he had never met before and would see only briefly before returning to his own office. Even though he did not officially supervise any of these people, he would need to get them to report their progress to him and he would be responsible for making sure that their work was thorough and accurate.

He decided that good information would be key to help everyone work together. For each site at which Y2K work would be done, Dilshan decided to ask the following questions:

- How many IT staff does the office have?
- What hardware, software, and applications does the office use?
- How many transactions does the office process each day?
- What work has already been done on Y2K?
- What work is still to be completed and when will it be completed?

With this information from each office, Dilshan would be able to compare ‘apples to apples.’ He would be able to see how each office was similar to or different than his own, and would therefore have a good sense of whether the Y2K work would be similar to the work he had done or different. He would have a good sense of what had already been done to prepare for Y2K and could review the work that had been done at each office to make sure it was complete. He could see the upcoming work planned for each office, and could supervise their progress by the timelines they would give him. But perhaps most important, he could quickly see what issues were NOT on the lists of the offices, and could quickly get involved to help address issues that the staff at those offices had not yet identified.

Dilshan knew the next few months would be very busy. But he hoped with the help of a good list and timeline that he could keep track of the work at each of APL’s India offices and make sure it was complete and accurate. In the process, he would have a chance to meet a new group of colleagues and build APL team spirit around the region.