

John A. Weeks III

Biography ~ January 2008

John Weeks first encountered a computer when the Radio Shack store where he was assistant manager began to carry the TRS-80 microcomputer in 1977. Since that time, John has earned the first degree in Numerical and Computational Mathematics awarded by the University of Minnesota, has authored over 50 commercial software tools, and has completed consulting assignments at over 150 of the top companies in the US.

John earned a Mathematics degree from the University of Minnesota, graduating Summa Cum Laude with a grade point average of 3.96. He has also completed extensive course work in Electrical Engineering, Managerial Accounting, and Computer Science. While an engineering student at the University of Wisconsin in 1986, he received the prestigious Newbury Award for Creativity, the first engineering or science student to ever win this award. In addition, John won a National Science Foundation research grant as an undergraduate, and also was awarded a Computer Science Honors Program summer grant. John is a Certified Electronics Technician, and holds a General Class Broadcast Engineer License from the Federal Communications Commission.

John worked for General Electric for 3 years as a Communications Technician, eventually being promoted to Lead Communications Technician for GE's Southern Wisconsin division. John supported communications systems such as long range microwave data links, digital paging, and MDS (commonly called wireless cable TV), as well as police, fire, and business radio systems.

In 1987, John joined the Minneapolis based Metaphor Consulting Group. He served on project teams and as project leader on

numerous development projects using the Metaphor graphical user environment. John designed and implemented core technology in Metaphor's flagship product "Discovery". He ported the Metaphor development environment to run under UNIX on Sun workstations, which lead to a dramatic increase in productivity for the programming staff. After IBM acquired Metaphor, John led a project to convert Metaphor applications to OS/2.

John then joined Rick Tanler and Butch Terrien in 1991 as founders of Information Advantage, Inc. John held many roles within IA, such as architect, programmer, technical writer, IT Manager, and facilities manager. John was a key member of teams that developed the Axsys and Decision Suite products, and was the original designer of WebOLAP. The success of WebOLAP was key in positioning IA to complete their IPO.

For the past 15 years, John Weeks worked as an Information Systems and Business Management consultant focusing on design, implementation, and operation of Open Systems and Internet based computer systems. His core focus is on UNIX system and network architecture. Key projects include the design and roll-out of server technology supporting a major business redesign at a Fortune 500 financial institution, and the design and programming of a high-level language processor that allows programmers to use a single language to simultaneously access relational databases from different vendors. These projects have ranged in size from one-day system rescues and 3-day system audits to yearlong implementations and multi-year retainers.

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John's recent focus has been on Internet and E-commerce technology and infrastructure. This includes installing the first Internet connection at Pillsbury, pioneering R&D and production Internet applications at American Express, management of several sites at Federated Direct (Fingerhut.Com and Samsclub.Com), and building both the development and hosting systems for Nistevo.Com. The size and complexity of these sites vary dramatically, ranging from sites with only a few dozen hits a day, and only a few megabytes of data, to Fingerhut.Com, which receives several million hits per day, and has a 12-gigabyte database.

To date, John's largest project has been the technology implementation to support the BestBuy.com 'Digitera' web site effort. Best Buy found that they were sending mixed messages to their customers who were finding that the on-line and in-store experiences were vastly different. An executive decision was made to build a new web site from the ground up that enhanced the store experience. The project was allocated a budget of \$80-million, of which, about half of which was spent on open systems hardware and software that was selected and specified by John and his project team. In addition to the architecture role, John served as the Operations Architect and Launch Manager for the Digitera web site. Since going into operation, Best Buy has found that many customers visit the BestBuy.com web site prior to visiting a Best Buy store. Customers arrive at the store better educated on the products and ready to make a purchase. Since the roll out of the Digitera web site, Best Buy stock has doubled in value, and then doubled again.

Outside of the computer industry, John's interests include travel, aviation history, photography, vintage stereo equipment, and collecting farm toys. John shares these hobbies through a very popular personal web site. That site includes an electronically published four-volume set of books written by John featuring photography and history of all of the highway and railroad bridges that cross the Mississippi River.

These e-books on the Mississippi River bridges lead to John's fifteen minutes of fame following the disastrous collapse of the I-35W bridge on August 1, 2007. News media found themselves with large blocks of airtime to fill, and no factual information to report. These media outlets rapidly found John's web page on the I-35W bridge. His web site was featured on many major news outlets such as CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, CNBC, and MPR, with many more quoting directly from the I-35W web page. John was interviewed by news organizations such as KSTP-TV, City Pages, NPR, and Good Morning America. The Associated Press picked up John's photography, with pre-collapse photos of the I-35W bridge being published on the front page of nearly every major newspaper on the planet, including the New York Times and the Times Of London.