Support Program Background Information

History

Influenced by the general widespread interest and utilization of micro-computers in business, the Shrine Recorders Association asked the Imperial Council Office (ICO) to investigate the feasibility of supporting temples for "in-house" micro-computer hardware selection and on-going standardized software support. This request was approved by the International Board of Directors in October of 1982.

A representative committee of Recorders was appointed and via meetings with appropriate Imperial Council Office staff, it was determined that the project was feasible and an overall plan was formulated. The plan called for dedication of the necessary staff to select an appropriate computing environment for temple "in-house" processing needs, software development, selection of the necessary business software, and to provide guidelines for the temples.

Essentially, selection criteria provided for a robust, affordable, flexible and expandable system that could be supported on a national level. Membership software development, productivity software selection, procurement assistance and pricing, as well as configuration, support and training would be done in Tampa. Each interested temple would select their own appropriate configuration. The turn-key system would be staged and shipped to the temple. Overall performance, reliability and pricing requirements led to the selection of the Altos micro-computer platform. The Temple Computer Support Group (TCSG) was born.

The years following included various upgrades and re-writes of the membership and other related systems including a move to personal computers and local area networks. After several versions of distributed stand-alone systems with each temple maintaining a separate database, a web-based centralized system with real-time capability was implemented to improve accuracy, accessibility, reliability and security. The department name was changed to Fraternal Information Services.
OVERVIEW

The Shriners International Office provides various computer support services to shrine temples. This program of support services is provided by the Fraternal Information Services (FIS) Group in Tampa. The support services contained in this section are specifically intended for Shrine temples. The platform is an Internet web-based, hardware independent system with a centralized database hosted ‘in the cloud’ and accessible by browser.

Objectives of the Support Program

- To provide the temples with a computer-based membership system that is functionally rich, user-friendly, quickly upgradable, reliable, accessible and secure that is updated in real-time.
- To provide temples with a continuing, standardized responsive support program that includes software development, hardware and software selection and procurement assistance, user training, telephone support, file and list conversions, etc., and that adjusts when necessary to changing requirements.
- To save time/effort for Temples in selection of hardware, software, training, etc.
- To save the Shrine money overall......

- The temple will not have to spend the time and or money for membership specific software development/procurement.
- The temple will receive professional support from FIS on the membership programs and assist with other software / hardware / networking questions.
- The temple will receive training, either at Shriners International Headquarters or remotely at no charge other than travel, lodging and expenses.
- Since the system is web-based, the temple will not need to acquire expensive servers for hosting, WebFez is accessible by browser via the Internet.
- All server based operations such as backup and maintenance will be performed by FIS.
General Business Software

The Fraternal Information Service (FIS) Group in Tampa currently does not provide in-depth support for software that has not been developed in house but will attempt to assist or provide direction in obtaining support for third party software whenever possible. Two of the most popular accounting systems used by small businesses: **Sage Peachtree** and **Intuit QuickBooks** are widely used throughout the temples. Both accounting systems can be purchased directly from their respective companies or from a local software supply house. Both packages contain the following functionality:

- General Ledger and Financial Statement Preparation
- Account Reconciliation
- Accounts Payable
- Accounts Receivables
- Payroll
- Inventory
- Fixed Assets

More information regarding these software packages can be found on their respective web sites:

Na.sage.com
Quickbooks.intuit.com

Both companies issue regular upgrades to their software. The purchase of upgrades is at the discretion of the temple, but FIS recommends maintaining the most current version available to ensure reliability. Technical support is also provided by each company and third parties. It is recommended that a reliable support contract is purchased by the temple. FIS does not maintain staff for software support that has not been developed in-house, but will attempt to assist whenever possible.
Personal Productivity Software

- Microsoft Windows (operating system)
- Microsoft Office for Windows (integrated productivity software)
- Microsoft Internet Explorer (Internet browser software)
- Google Chrome, Safari, etc. (Internet browser software)

Although FIS can’t provide detailed support or training for most third party software, all attempts to assist will be made for the products listed above and others when possible.

Hardware Information

Currently Shriners International does not employ a hardware procurement discount program but will assist with selection and configuration of hardware and networking equipment if requested. Because the WebFez membership program is web-based and browser accessible, hardware requirements are very broad and unrestricted.

Summary of Support Program

Support services pertaining to all of the items listed in the preceding sections of this document are available to shrine temples from the Shriners International Fraternal Information Services Group in Tampa. Support includes software development, hardware and software selection and procurement assistance, user training in Tampa and remotely, telephone support, file and list conversions, software installation, problem determination/resolution, hardware and network testing, hardware staging, etc. There is no charge for support and services that are provided directly by FIS including all of the membership software and accompanying documentation. The membership software is tailored specifically to shrine requirements and is maintained and supported by the actual developers.

Other services provided include the bulk mailing of Dues Notices and Shrine membership cards. These services are to be reimbursed by the temples via invoices or an adjustment to the annual assessment.