The Bakersfield Californian: FCIS is getting the paper out, every day.

The Bakersfield Californian publishes 365 days a year for its 55,000 daily subscribers. Circulation swells to 80,000 on weekends. SoftArc's FirstClass Intranet Server has helped the newspaper's departments communicate seamlessly as they deliver news and advertising to readers throughout Central California.

"We're using FCIS as our e-mail system for the whole building," says Jim Southerd, FCIS Administrator and a Senior Systems Analyst at the newspaper. "Reporters in the field and independent writers can dial in from throughout the area, and e-mail their stories to the department editors. Everybody in the company has an e-mail address on the server. "

Some 42 different conferences for different subjects and departments are available for reporters and editors. FCIS makes it easy to form dozens of e-mail groups, so editors can keep their staff, including independent writers outside the building, fully informed. Editors can hold virtual staff meetings even with geographically dispersed reporters to assign stories, review coverage, and critique stories. Staff members who are traveling connect to the system using an 800 number. "They love that part of it," Southerd says.

Before FCIS, reporters dialed up and dumped stories onto the mainframe—"no two-way communications, " Southerd said. "Reporters on assignment would either have to call the newspaper, or the editor would have to track them down to resolve questions or solve problems. The proprietary e-mail system on the mainframe in effect prohibited communications with the outside. The FCIS two-way dial-up system let's anyone reach anyone, inside or outside."

SoftArc's FirstClass Intranet Server gives reporters and editors more of the most critical element in the news business—time.   "Time-saving is tremendous—a reporter covering a ball game, a government meeting or a crime scene types the story into his laptop, goes to a phone booth, and zips the story onto the server at the paper," Southerd said.

Advertisers use FCIS to send ads as attached files, ready for the advertising columns. It's a major savings in time and money for both newspaper and advertiser. Seventeen of the top 20 newspapers in the U.S. use variations of FCIS to receive ads.

The FCIS system has become "the heartbeat of the company," Southerd says. "The only time I can take it down and play with it is after one or two o'clock in the morning, after most of the users are gone." He estimates there are 310 e-mail users at the newspaper and another 20 remote users.

Southerd rates FCIS as a solid system that is easy to administer. "I just trained an assistant to do most of what I do, and she learned very quickly – in one afternoon—all of the basics, like adding and deleting users. FCIS is easy to pick up, it's no problem. Users in all departments really like it because it's one of their main work tools."

The system's security is excellent, but the best feature of FCIS is the ease of dial-up, Southerd says, even for users with little or no expertise or interest in technology or computers. "There's no need for an Internet account, just dial up directly, and tie in to the mail system," he says. "Many of our users aren't interested in computers or the Internet. But we can set them up quickly and they can be sending e-mail or filing stories over the system within minutes. Our employees with Internet connections can also access it."

"FCIS is a very good tool that works well and is stable, easy to learn, even for those who aren't computer-literate," Southerd said. " I'd recommend it to my best friend. It's seamless communications, and it does a great job in helping us get the newspaper out each day. That's what counts."

Visit the Bakersfield web site at http://www.bakersfield.com

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