



ESBER'S TIMING CRUCIAL

SOFTWARE CHIEF EXEC HAS WITTY STYLE OF MANAGING.

Software boss' forte is timing

Edward M. Esber Jr. isn't just in the catbird seat. He's glued to it. Permanently, it would seem.

This week, his perch is atop the world of personal computer software. As president and chief executive of third-ranked software publisher Ashton-Tate Co., he clinched a commitment for his industry's biggest merger to date — a \$19 million buy-out of Multimate International Corp.

Industry watchers say the move will help put Ashton-Tate in an ideal strategic position. But Esber, the 33-year-old son of a Cleveland lawyer, is used to ideal positions.

As a designer and programmer at IBM Corp. in the mid-1970s, he helped explore the then-heretical idea of buying chips from outside suppliers. IBM rocked the computer world by doing just that in 1982.

By then, Esber was at VisiCorp working under software wizard **Mitchell Kapor**, who now heads Ashton-Tate's archcompetitor, Lotus Development Corp.

Even his entry into Ashton-Tate proved to be ideally timed. Signed on as a consultant in March 1984, he became executive vice president in May, president in August and chief executive in November.

He's been with eight high-tech companies since his 1974 graduation from Case Institute of Technology. He also picked up a master's degree in engineering from Syracuse University and a Harvard MBA.

"Unstable, eh?" Esber says before breaking into his booming laugh, then jokes that he was able to fit it all in only by giving up skydiving after 375 jumps.

Always keen on science and math, he got hooked on computers in high school. At home near his firm's Culver City, Calif., headquarters, his time goes to a daughter and new-born son, his IBM PC/ AT and Apple Macintosh computers and subscriptions to "every magazine known to man."

Esber's penchant for professionalism has moved his employees out of blue jeans and into suits. But insiders say his wit helped preserve the company's freewheeling, fast-

moving management style. The lone complaint Since Esber habitually eats at his desk, lunches out have become passé.

■ Kevin Anderson

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