



## Connecting with All Persons DEC

People who retire from high-tech companies in New England in particular have long felt a need to stick together. But no group is so dedicated as those behind the newly named and energized The DEC Connection, a formal organization of friends, co-workers, colleagues and vendors for Digital Equipment Corporation.



Refugees from the first wave of DEC retirements in the early 1990s banded together "for the simple reason of staying connected," says Bob Moore, who was the first president of the first group of retired DEC employees, the Digital Retirement Association (DRA). Moore is now the president of The DEC Connection. Today The DEC Connection, the successor to the DRA, has the potential to reach 50,000 members, according to Nancy Kilty, a founding member and vice president. Kilty and other former DECcians like Moore, Jack Mileski and Anker Berg-Sonne, broadened the DRA's focus with a group they called DECedOut. DECedOut was named after the DRA's hardcopy newsletter that was sent through the mail to the retired Digital employees whose addresses had been collected one way or the other, in the dark times before the information highway. (In fact, Moore still sends out a few by paper mail, "and probably always will," he says.)

DECedOut's first big effort was to support the June 2006 groundbreaking event at Gordon College for the Ken Olsen Science Center, named for the founder of Digital Equipment Corporation. It was a huge effort to compile a contact list of ex-DECcians in order to get the word out about the Gordon College event, but it paid off. The result, a grassroots network that fairly exploded through cyberspace. The membership was a loosely affiliated group of people who paid \$10 to join. When DRA and DECedOut jointly sponsored a tour of the former Old Mill in Maynard in May 2007, over 1,000 people showed up. In September DEC alumni gathered in Stow, Mass., to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the company.

"Once we had a critical mass, we could get to 'housekeeping' issues that had been on the back burner," Kilty said. Subsequently, DECedOut itself has undergone a transformation. An amended constitution was drafted and disseminated to the membership in September and a vast majority of the members approved it. With a new constitution, a board of directors, and a slate of officers, the members were offered a choice of names for the new organization before settling on The DEC Connection.

The new organization is bursting with ideas -- social gatherings, entertainment and networking groups for its members. A New Hampshire chapter was formed and recently sponsored a panel discussion on navigating the job market aimed at over-50 professionals.

Membership has grown to about 500, according to Kilty, who says the organization has expanded its focus to include everyone who once worked at Digital, not just those who retired from DEC (many of whom are now in their 70s and 80s). This means many former DECcians in their 40s, 50s and 60s are eligible to join.

The DEC Connection's "interactive Web site is a hub with events planned to bring people together," Kilty says. It fills not only a social need but also a business need. "People in their 40s, 50s and 60s are vulnerable, they need business networking," she says.

The DRA's job is pretty much done, Moore happily says. Ironically though, Moore points out, it was the treasury of the DRA that helped pay for the DECedOut Web site that was instrumental in bringing so many people together. "We were caretakers," he says. "Now we're change agents."

Kilty sees The DEC Connection as a powerful tool to perpetuate the DEC culture, perhaps the most important reason behind the rapid growth of people interested in joining an organization celebrating their past. It's the culture -- the entrepreneurial spirit, the way people cared for each other, or how doing the right thing professionally, made up what

former employees call "the Digital Difference." Wherever they work today, Kilty says, people still celebrate it.

Visit [The DEC Connection](#) for more information on events and membership.

21 November 2007

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