
Subject: Response to question about PV-WAVE and IDL

Posted by [mpfh](#) on Tue, 19 Feb 1991 16:26:25 GMT

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In article <1991Feb11.184038.20437@batcomputer.tn.cornell.edu>
hearn@batcomputer.tn.cornell.edu (hearn) writes:

> Ok, which should I buy IDL or PV-wave?

What are your criteria for purchase? What are your needs?
Why not start with an evaluation on your own system? Is everyone
in your user community comfortable with learning a new programming
language or are there also some who are more comfortable with a
point and click style of user interface?

> They were both the same at one point.

Precision Visuals has licensed the IDL software and has embarked
upon a large development effort to enhance and evolve the product,
documentation, and support.

> But now they are competing companies with almost the same product.

We have used IDL as the basis for our initial PV-WAVE product, the
Command Language version. From this solid base have added several
enhancements to the code and documentation. These include:

- RPC support for cross-network data transfer
- Floating license technology allowing license sharing on a network
- User library functions for volumetric gridding, rendering and
slicing, building menus with help on VT displays, plus fixing
and documenting many earlier routines which we found useful.
- Conversion utilities so VMS version users don't need to rewrite
"old" V.1 applications to use the "new" same-as-UNIX-version
- Learning aids including documentation, examples, tutorials, and
sample applications which help users quickly get started and
accelerate prototypes and development
- A widgets toolkit to help build applications with a GUI
- Additional drivers including CGM, QMS, Tek 4510, and DEC UIS
- A new Point & Click version of PV-WAVE, for users who want a
full time graphical user interface, which compliments the
command version.

> Which one is in wider use?

More than 1625 PV-WAVE licenses in twenty countries have been sold
since 1988. These licenses can be shared around a network, so the
number of actual users is much higher. PV-WAVE is supported by direct

personnel in North America and Europe, and through distributors elsewhere around the world.

> Which company actually wrote the product?

PV-WAVE Command Language is based on IDL. Precision Visuals has full source code and is fully capable of making any changes or enhancements required by PV-WAVE users. While both products share a common "kernel", they now proceed along different development paths based on the priorities and resources of the two companies. One of the results of Precision Visuals' effort is PV-WAVE Point & Click, a development project which rivals the scope of the original IDL development effort.

> Which has the easiest interface?

I think you will find the interface for PV-WAVE Command Language (with or without the widgets toolkit) and IDL to be roughly the same, assuming you consider a command-line interface to be "easy". However, PV-WAVE Point & Click from Precision Visuals provides a MAC-like front end for Unix workstation users. While this type of interface is easiest to learn and use, we have included a macro capability, the ability to read in PV-WAVE procedures, and other functions to provide flexibility. The Point & Click version also provides Hypertext on-line help, a data previewer to help read in data, a data table viewing function, and other capabilities which speed up the process of reading, analyzing, manipulating, and displaying data. PV-WAVE users can choose the interface they prefer, Command Language or Point & Click, and still have the same benefits which make the products so useful.

> Which company will stay in business?

I expect that both companies will stay in business, but they will be somewhat different in direction and scope. Good question though, because it indicates that you understand that sometimes good code at a cheap price may not be the best investment in the long run. Code is only part of a "product".

PVI has been in the graphics software business since 1980 and has recently reorganized to focus on the PV-WAVE family. We have over 120 employees. PV-WAVE sales have been doubling each year since we launched the product in 1988. Our research suggests that taking PV-WAVE and adding a Point & Click interface (SunView = NOW, Motif and OpenLook = very near FUTURE) will boost sales considerably. We'll be around.

I hope that this helps answer the questions posted earlier about

the differences between PV-WAVE and IDL. If you have *any* other questions, please feel free to contact me directly at boulder!pvi!mpfh or at 303/530-9000.

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