

BUSINESS PEOPLE

Tandy Executive Made President of Microsoft

Jon Shirley, credited with propelling the Tandy Corporation and its 7,000 Radio Shack stores into its position as the world's largest merchandiser of microcomputers and software, will assume the presidency of the Microsoft Corporation of Bellevue, Wash., on Aug. 1.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be charge of a company that is on the leading edge of an industry, highly innovative and highly successful," said Mr. Shirley.

Mr. Shirley, 45, leaves the security of 25 years at Tandy, where he was vice president of computer merchandising, for the Microsoft chief operating officer spot that was vacated last week by James C. Towne, who left after one year because of differences with William Gates, chairman and chief executive officer.

But both Mr. Shirley and Mr. Gates believe they can avoid a similar falling out. "I've worked with Jon a long time and know him pretty well," said Mr. Gates. "He clearly is a person with all the qualities we wanted."

He cited as an example the development of the Model 100 hand-held computers that Radio Shack introduced in March. Mr. Gates developed the concept on paper, then sold the idea to the Fort Worth-based Mr. Shirley, who suggested modifications, such as the ability to call up other computers. "We did it together," stated Mr.

Gates, who sells the software for that product.

Jean Yates, president of Yates Ventures of Los Altos, Calif., a software market research firm, said: "Microsoft could not pick a better president than Jon Shirley. He understands computer merchandising. It is a sensitive industry where few people can interact at a high level with original equipment manufacturers such as Tandy, I.B.M. and Apple. His appointment is a clear indication that Microsoft sees software being consumer oriented at a retail level, and the way the industry is headed."

One associate said Mr. Shirley was a "laid-back Texan, very self-assured, a consummate professional with an ironic wit" — a man who will be a "fabulous mentor" for Mr. Gates, who is 27.

The new president holds the key to making Microsoft a household world in the months ahead, Mr. Gates said. "This is one of Jon's jobs, something he will make happen," he stated. "Jon is a decision maker, he gets stuff done."

In addition to what Mr. Gates terms a "respectable salary," Mr. Shirley is receiving substantial stock ownership in Microsoft. Said Mr. Gates, "He will be increasing the value of those shares as the company grows, that is why stock ownership is such a key to this thing."