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LocalTalk PC Card: IRQ Issues

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TOPIC -----

The LocalTalk (formerly known as "AppleTalk") PC Card can function only with IRQ (interrupt request priorities) 2, IRQ 3, or IRQ 4.

DISCUSSION -----

Many users of the LocalTalk PC Card have found that if the IBM PC has two serial ports, each serial port uses an IRQ, and that the PC itself uses the third one - leaving none available for the LocalTalk PC Card.

The best solution is to move one of the IRQ lines coming from one of the serial ports (examine the manufacturer's instructions before doing this) to an IRQ number that can't be used by the LocalTalk PC Card - like IRQ 5. Then, the LocalTalk PC Card can use the newly-available IRQ line 2, 3, or 4.

Users who have installed LocalTalk PC cards in IBM PC-ATs find that nearly all of the IBM PC-ATs use both COM1 and COM2. So, using IRQ priority level 4 or 3 is not possible, and they are forced to consider using IRQ2 -- but the LocalTalk PC card manual states: "Do NOT use switch 3 (IRQ2) if you have an IBM PC-AT computer."

Fortunately, if you have AppleShare PC 2.0, this configuration (using IRQ priority level 2) should work fine.

Quoting the README.DOC file on the AppleShare PC disk:

"The 2.0 version of the LocalTalk PC Card driver (AppleTalk.EXE, included on this disk) does not use the card's hardware interrupt feature. This means that the default card settings will not conflict with a COM2 serial port, as your card manual indicates. The 2.0 driver ignores the /cardint command line parameter."

Some users of the LocalTalk PC card have reported problems after installing the card and changing the IRQ (Interrupt Request line). Symptoms have included:

- When printing to "*", the LaserWriter just hangs.
- Selecting a printer causes the "Looking for AppleTalk Zones" to blink forever.
- AppleShare hangs also.
- Inter-Poll can't see anything from the outside.
- Reloading software doesn't help.
- Reducing the number of machines on the network doesn't help.
- Changing LocalTalk PC cards doesn't help.

The key is that you must tell DOS when you change IRQs. To do this, put the command "/cardint=x" in the AUTOEXEC.BAT file of your boot disk, where x is the new IRQ level (either 2 or 4). Check the LocalTalk PC card manual under the subtitle "Driver configuration options" for more information.

Note: The LocalTalk PC Card is now owned, sold, distributed and supported by Farallon Computing. Search under "Farallon" for contact information.
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