

HandyWork Newsletter



WINTER 1994-1995

Backup Horror!

Good Guy, Bad Things

The nice thing about being a computer programmer is knowing everything about computers. All that electricity and magnetic stuff becomes second hand, and a techie realizes that silly precautions that regular people take are simply not necessary for professionals. It's an enviable, secure life.

Not so long ago, one of our HandyWork programmers got a new hard drive. Psych! "A new hard drive is the first step to a better tomorrow," this fine fellow thought. "I'll swap my drives and use a simple backup to move the data - quick and easy for someone like me."

So our programmer walked into HandyWork Central, threw aside some old Newsletters with backup instructions, and greedily grabbed a bunch of disks. After a quick strut home he shoved the first disk in the drive and began selecting backup options: "Compress - yes, that will make things faster; Error Correction - a bit of time, but what the hell; Write Verify - oh, computers don't mess up writes. No need to waste my time."

After a quick and painless backup the techie took out his old hard drive and threw it in the back of his closet. He put in the new drive, restored his data, and that's the end, write?

No write. No write verify to be exact. A couple of hours into this fun procedure, our guy found that disk #37 of his backup didn't quite take the data. Oops! And of course, the original hard drive was now under a pile of cat hair at the back of Mr. Superprogrammer's closet. Whoops!

Moral? Compress. Error correct. Write verify. And learn how to restore your data. Do it for your children, if not for yourself.

New Look

Sweet Vision of New Version

Check out the slick new screen designs, the biggest change in HandyWork 6.30. New screens are meant to be easier on the eye and easier to get around. The history of the beautiful new looks, inspired by Renaissance masters DaVinci and Michaelangelo, actually begins with some of our users. Disgruntled, unhappy people suggested that HandyWork could look better. At first we took these comments as the product of an off day or two - even we have them - but nit-picking comments persisted, and we took a look at the screens ourselves. Low and behold, it turned out the users were right. Hate it when that happens!

SOAP Note Frenzy

SOAP notes has also improved through much easier string manipulation. Huh?! Strings are the parts from which narratives and SOAPS are built. Each string has a

code, just like each office visit procedure, and one puts together a narrative or SOAP note by choosing a group of codes.

As of version 6.30, all SOAPS and Narratives are based on the same strings, now edited in Alt+N. That means SOAPS will hold virtually unlimited information. Try out the new SOAPS - heck, try out the Narratives, too. If you don't understand what's going on, let us know and we'll fax/send you a set of directions. This stuff is easy to use, will increase your productivity, and make you happier.

Faster Networking

HandyWork networks will work faster with version 6.30, if a simple step is followed. HandyWork 6.30 lets you put the program part of HW on every computer, so that workstations only need to ask for data. (Call us for directions.)

Good Intentions, Bad Tape

Then there was the dutiful HW user who programmed his computer to back up every night. A cool setup - let the machine do the work when everyone has gone home. Since computers do exactly what you tell them, all is safe, isn't it?

Our dutiful good doctor came in one morning and found that his hard drive had taken a turn for the worse. So he got another drive, and proceeded to restore from his backup tape. The clever fellow had different tapes from different days, so that

even if one didn't work, he could use another.

That planning proved to be a great comfort when this HWer discovered that his first tape had nothing on it. It proved less and less comforting as he found that no tape had anything on it.

The sad truth is, our doctor never, ever bothered to check his backup. He never tried to restore his data to assure that everything worked.

But a great system isn't so great if it isn't proven. Try to restore your backup once in a while, to make sure your computer isn't just spinning its disk.

Have You Tried ...

1. Patient Receipts? From the OV screen, after you have saved your OV, hit F7. To get a HCFA, press B. To get a statement-like receipt, type P. If you switch to Payments and press F7, you can get payment and OV on the receipt. Neat.
2. Accessing HW through Windows? HW comes with an icon and a PIF file to set up HW. If you want directions on how to set up HW through Windows, give us a call.
3. End of Year? It's that time, folks. Alt+Y clears out doctor statistics and other current-year data. Make sure you zero productivity (Alt+Y, F5) before you put in any 1995 transactions.

Computer Upgrades

Everyone at HandyWork likes buying new computers. It's an excuse to spend otherwise meaningful hours pouring over obscure ads in computer magazines and talk about numbers full of X's, which are pretty neat. After a lot of unneeded deliberation, we get to take apart our computer and spend a lot more time poking around the wires and computer chips as we wonder why we ever waste time taking showers and washing our hair when we could have such fun. Heaven for computer nerds.

Some people aren't like this - a genetic deficiency, perhaps - and want to just upgrade their computer without a lot of trouble. This article is for those poor souls.

"What does my new computer need to do?" is a tough question, since it will need to do more tomorrow. Our suggestion is to buy last year's best technology. After a year, prices take a dive, but power remains pretty high.

"How much should I pay?" has two interesting ramifications. First, there is what kind of hardware and software you can afford, and second there is whether you want to buy a new system or pay someone to salvage parts of your old computer for the new one. Make sure you have a lot worth salvaging before you upgrade, because man hours cost.

Otherwise, give the old computer to your kids' school and write it off.

Last year's best processor - the computer's brains - is a 486-DX2/66. A DX2/66 will put you on a good upgrade track.

In addition, you will need gobs of short term memory, called RAM. RAM is crucial to running Windows programs. A neat thing about RAM is that it can often be salvaged from old computers. You should have at least 8 megabytes of RAM, although 12 meg is vastly preferable. This should cost you \$300 - \$450.

RAM comes in two types, an older one and a newer one. You will probably be able to use the newer stuff, called 72-pin, on the supercomputer you buy two or three years from now. The older stuff, 30-pin, won't work much longer. Fortunately, many 486s handle both types. So take the old 30-pin RAM off your old computer, if you want, but only buy 72-pin from now on.

The last major thing you want is a fast, big hard drive. The standard type of drive is called IDE - you probably want it or its new cousin, Enhanced IDE. Get a big one - at least 500 megabytes - because programs are not getting smaller. Get a fast one, which means an 'access time' of 10 milliseconds or less. This may be harder to find, but if you want to be able to use this drive on your next computer, you can't buy anything much slower.

A big monitor would be nice, and maybe a corner office with a window view of Central Park. Unfortunately, those cost a bit more and have not been proven to improve efficiency.

Consider upgrading soon, because prices are good, and HandyWorks for Windows will want a fast computer to work well. Plus, you'll be able to play better games.

Windows Update

It's in our office. It isn't speedy - yet - but it is tracking our office's patients' visits and payments, and we're pretty happy.

We expect HWW to ship to a few people early next year, and depending on how well they like it, it should spread to other aspirants

Training New Staff & HW

HW is not second nature for most people, but with a little help, new staff should be able to pick up the system pretty quickly. Here are a couple of pointers for the transition:

1. Explain HW processes; don't just show the features. Whether you relate your own experience or let new users work through Section I of the Manual, explain what you are thinking, not just key strokes.
2. Give staff a chance to make mistakes for free. Create some fake patients, and let the staff put in OVs, create bills, and put in payments. When they're ready, let them delete the play data by hand for a final exam.
3. Encourage questions. Put up with questions now, even if it is hectic. You will encourage good thinking and avoid problems later when well intentioned mistakes clog up the system. Repeatedly tell staff to ask questions, read the HW manual, and call Tech Support.
4. Don't forget basic management. Praise good effort even as you explain mistakes. Think seriously about making the new experience pleasant for everyone. Your thoughtfulness will pay off in better work and a happier workplace.

within the first quarter. We're still taking suggestions, so let us know if you have some more ideas.

Basic improvements in HWW include putting OVs and Payments into one Transaction screen, fixed dollar amount co-payment handling, and greater control on ranges and information that print on bills and statements. But that's not it ...

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