

HandyWork Newsletter



Winter 2006

We Stay the Course

If it aint broke...

As a reasonably mature program, Handyworks offers unparalleled stability and consistency. And as such, we have little desire to upset the apple cart with endless revisions and meaningless cosmetic redesigns.

While some might see this as a weakness, we see it as offering a stable anchor in a sea of change. In fact, some of our users, who really dislike change, are still pounding away on our initial DOS based program! Way to go!

The most frequent items we change relate to Medicare and BCBS billing changes. Even though there are some national standards, it seems that each state carrier has the right to set specific requirement with regard to how a claim form is filled out. And they exercise this right routinely, letting us know of the change through the advanced process of claim denial.

Because we learned how these folks think two decades ago with the DOS version, we specifically designed the internal software of HWW to allow most changes to be programmed quickly and easily.

Another driving force that does make us change HandyWorks is you, the end user. Not only do we listen to your outright suggestions of how to improve HandyWorks' performance, but we also pay attention to your tech support questions. If we find that users (new or old) call us with similar questions, we believe it is because the design of the program has a confusing element in it. We then modify the

program to make the problem disappear. We lower your frustration level while simultaneously lowering our tech support burden.

The changes to the Preferences screen is one example of this. We took the New Patient Options, Statements Options, HCFA Printing Options and Receipt Options and placed them all in a simplified manner in Preferences. They are still available, buried in their original locations, but now more easily accessible.

Our Back Door

For the most part, HandyWorks users are shown only the pretty face of the HandyWorks program, including well designed forms, screens, reports and dignified error messages. There are, however, some occasions where you either can't get out of an error message, or worse, you find yourself in the middle of a big white box that has strange words and symbols that perhaps look like computer coding. While neither of these situations is pretty, there are a few steps that can take you out of the problem in such a way as to do no damage to the program or your data.

If you are in a white screen, that means our error trapping has failed and you've been rudely dumped into out code. First, please call us so we can fix this. But in the meantime, Alt+F4 should exit you from HandyWorks, and hopefully, upon retrying your action, you won't get the white screen again.

A repeating error message is

best dealt with by repeatedly pressing ESC. When (and if) the message disappears, exit the program and restart it. If that doesn't work, try CTRL+Break. This key is paired with Pause and is on the upper right of most keyboards. This should take you into our white screen and you can then exit with Alt+F4 as above.

As always, it is important to report such incidents to Tech Support so appropriate handlers can be added to the code to prevent further occurrences.

Don't Think!!!

I know this sounds silly, but there is an important point I'd like to make.

HandyWorks is designed to be easy to use. If you find yourself struggling to do something, stop! Take a break, take a breath and ask yourself if there is a simple way to achieve your goal. If you can't figure it out call tech support and they will help you out!

Along the same line, many offices hire technical consultants to handle their computer related issues. This makes sense because the doctor does not necessarily have the skill, time or patience to handle the myriad of potential problems that can arise from the technical complexity of today's computers.

Yet sometimes, these very consultants can act in such a way as to muddy the situation for the office and staff. Let me elucidate, with special emphasis on HandyWorks.

The HandyWorks program is designed to be simple to install, network and use. In fact, no techie is typically needed to assist in this process. But sometimes, techies, in their own wisdom, feel that the default icons, shortcuts and directory placements do not meet their need for complex intervention, and as such, they decide to muck around (technical term :-)). Later, when there is a problem, we are not always privy to what they have done, making troubleshooting difficult on our part.

So, if you have a techie, please don't let them mess with the HandyWorks program UNLESS they talk to us first. It will save all of us a lot of aggravation later on!

X-Charge it!

A number of our users have switched their credit card processing over to X-charge. Not only are they saving money with reduced fees, they are saving time because X-Charge fully integrates into the HandyWorks Transaction screen.

It is convenient, fast and reliable. If you are tired of paying high rates for credit card services, why don't you call Barbara Rivards at 800-217-3927 or email her at Barbara.Rivard@xcharge.biz. She'll ask you to fax her your current credit card services bill and show you how you can start saving money right away.

Tech Abuse

There is a difference between staff training and technical support. Our support staff is able to help with the latter, but not always with the former. This issue often comes up when an old staff person leaves (suddenly!!), and a new person is thrown into the task with no training.

Please realize that, with the exception of a new clinic, it is beyond the scope of our staff to train new users. In this regard, we recommend that the Doctor become

familiar with the operation of HandyWorks and take it upon themselves to train the new staffer. Of course we will be available to answer specific questions, but please don't expect us to take hours to train the new assistant.

Visits Count

An issue that seems to pop up regularly relates to an apparently incorrect visit count, either in Day or Monthly statistics. As a further confusion, the service amounts are correct; it is only that the visit counts are lower than expected.

The answer to this problem is really quite simple, and has to do with the "Type of Service" aka TOS. While there are broad categories for TOS, including PT, radiology, medical, etc., HandyWorks has another division: Insurance billable or non-insurance billable. (I hear a few aha's at this point, as a little light begins to dawn.)

Non-insurance billables are typically supplies like herbs, vitamins, back supports, cervical pillows, and so on. These items are generally add-ons to a patient's visit services, but are occasionally sold to a walk-in without a visit occurring. It would not make sense to classify this encounter as an actual office visit for statistic purposes.

Insurance billable services, on the other hand, are services that potentially reimbursable from an insurance carrier. They are your garden variety of exam, radiology and treatments rendered.

Backup Horror

One of our clinics here in NYC had a real problem. To start, they decided to forego tech support for the current year! (I can already hear the tsk tsk from longtime users!) Secondly, they stopped doing backups (Don't laugh, its true!). Third, they developed a weird checksum error in their data file that would not allow them to do any new billing. And then they waited a

few weeks until it became critical.

Kind hearted as we are, we took them back in and started working with them. We asked for a copy of their data, but because of the checksum error, a backup could not be made!! So we rolled up our figurative sleeves and jumped into their mess. It took many hours to painstakingly copy valid tables out of their semi-corrupt database into a brand new, pristine one, and in the end, they were able to recover almost of their data. Whew!

Two things to learn from this. One, stay current with tech support for both our sakes, and two, Backup, Backup, and Backup again. Because you never know when a problem will occur!

How to Backup

There are two types of computer users out there. Those that have lost data and those that will. Backing up is your ONLY insurance against a computer failure. If you don't have a backup and you lose your data, it will be no one's fault but your own.

We used to recommend backing up on either a R/W CD or Iomega Zip disk. But recent improvements in Flash Memory cards (Cruzer from SanDisk) have made USB backups even faster and easier. We have written a very simple backup batch file (think back to DOS) that pretty much automates the entire process. This backup routine is basically one line, but varies slightly for each day of the week. Here it is for backing up enjoyment.
`copy c:\hww\hwdata.mdb g:\friday,` where friday is a folder on our Cruzer USB disk, found in drive g:.

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