

HandyWork Newsletter



Winter 2017

Backing up is essential

Backup Horror!

Sadly, we had three users lose (almost) everything in the past few months. "How could that happen?" one might ask, given that we have emphasized proper backup procedures for decades.

In one case, the user was relying on an external backup service, but ignored the warning messages telling them that their backups were full. As such, nothing new was being backed up. Nothing! And when their computer failed, as all computers will do at some point, they discovered that it was many months since anything of value had been backed up.

The second user just got LAZY. Even though we setup his backup, walked him through the process and made it all so easy, he simply stopped doing it. So when his hard drive failed, as all hard drives do at some point, all of his data was lost. He couldn't even find the USB that might have had some data.

The third user was also using an external backup service. But he had neglected to tell the service what directories to backup. While the common document folder was being backed up, the crucial handy-works data was not.

The bottom line is for you to understand that you need to both backup and verify that your backup worked. Only then can you be certain that you have your data, as something bad will certainly happen at some point. **!!PLEASE Backup up your data!!!**

ChargeItPro vs X-Charge?

Credit cards are a fact of life and using them with HandyWorks has never been easier. We natively support two excellent options; ChargeItPro (CIP) and X-Charge. While we do use both we find ChargeItPro slightly better.

ChargeItPro is less expensive with regards to monthly fees. This was our primary motivation when we made a switch. But we also noticed that CIP tech support is faster and friendlier. Lastly, the CIP system has more cool features.

Our favorite feature is saving a patient's credit card info (a secure token, not the actual credit card) for use on subsequent visits. Just check Save Card in the patient's "1" screen, and the next time you go to enter a credit card payment, HandyWorks will ask if you want to used the saved credit card. How cool is that?

And the new PAX300 swipe machine with signature capture integrates and accepts the new EMV chip cards for enhanced security. The CIP website interface gives you timely information on charges for the current or any prior batch. If you make a mistake, fixing it is simple. We use it in our office and our staff LOVES it.

If you are tired of paying high rates for credit card services, why don't you reach out to Bill Crook at 800-989-2135.

Data Archiving

As the years roll by, data from a busy practice accumulates a large number of records, making your HW data file more and more bloated. Believe it or not, some users have over 25 years of records and data files approaching 500 megs!

Storing this much info is not necessary, and even worse, drags down the performance of the system. Who needs a slow system? No one! So while you might feel reluctant to get rid of old data, there is actually a very safe way to preserve older records. It's called data archiving.

At the end of each year, we make a copy of the HWDATA file and save it under a new name with the year appended to the name, e.g. HWDATA2016. This file has the entire data set as it existed at the end of 2016. Next, we open up HandyWorks and go to the Patient Data screen. There's a button on the bottom of the screen labeled Inactives. To delete patients who have not been in for 7 years, we put in dates of 1/1/1980 and 12/31/2008. We click the Trash Can to actually do the deletion. This removes patients who have not been in after 2008. To finish up the task, we need one more step, which is to compact-repair the HWDATA.

Should there ever be a reason that you need to find something that was deleted, simply reattach to your HWDATA2016, and all the older records can be viewed.

For Your Tech

Many users hire outside tech support to handle routine computer tasks. But this can go wrong if you are not careful. Most techies are good at their job, but very few of them understand the dynamics of relational shared databases.

There are some simple guidelines that your tech needs to follow when modifying your system. The most important thing to understand is that each computer workstation runs its own copy of HandyWorks. This means that each computer workstation must have its own copy of Microsoft Access. The data is what gets shared, not the program. If you try to share the program across your network, your program will malfunction.

There are also version issues to consider. In 2007, Microsoft changed the type of database from an MDB (Microsoft Database) to an ACCDB (Access Data Base). So if you were running HW2000 or HW2003, and your computer got upgraded to Office 2007 or 2010, you probably started running HW2007 or HW2010. But there's a problem here.

While the new versions (ACCDB) of Access could connect to older data sets (MDB), the connection is less than ideal. What needs to be done is the older MDB must be upgraded to the newer ACCDB. That's not a job for the routine tech. Please call us to do the conversion for you.

TeamViewer

As many of you know, when calling for tech support, we almost always ask you to run TeamViewer. This program has become a critical support component for us because it lets us connect directly to your computer so we can see what is going on without having you try to explain it to us. Problems are solved faster, teaching is easier, and troubleshooting becomes a breeze. If you need a copy, we post a link to an older copy of Teamviewer on the HandyWorks website.

MD-Online

We have used a number of clearinghouses to send electronic claims. Over the years, we have used both free (OfficeAlly) and not-free systems. Of the not free, we like MD-Online the best. Their website is easy to work, claims are easy to fix, and you get immediate feedback on your claims. This is perhaps the one feature we like best about MD-Online. Please check out MDON-Line.com

End of HW2003

The Windows OS is always being upgraded by Microsoft. Major (successful) upgrades were from Windows 3.1 to XP, Windows 7, and now Windows 10. As each new product is released, support for the earlier version goes on to a pre-planned spiral of extinction. Along with upgrading the OS, Microsoft also upgrades its suite of programs known as Office. One component of this suite is MS Access, which is the engine that runs HandyWorks software.

The problem for us is that newer versions of Windows no longer allow older versions of MS Office to run. For example, Windows 7 would not run Office 97. This is why we were forced to drop development of HW97. Similarly, Windows 10, which is the new standard, won't run MS Office 2000 or 2003. Nor will it allow us to run an XP emulation window that Windows 7 supported.

So, at the end of this year we will stop developing and supporting these versions. And if you have Access 2000 or 2003, you will need to upgrade to a higher version of MS Access this year. We will be putting a "nag" message on these older systems that will periodically pop-up encouraging you to upgrade.

In the meantime, we are keeping a live Windows 7 machine so we can continue to develop the HW2000/2003 version. We'll keep you informed of any changes that may affect you.

Under the hood

At this point in HandyWorks evolution, it can be considered a mature project. As such, all of its major features have been fleshed out, it is substantially bug free, and it maintains a level of stable functionality.

That means that you will not be seeing major changes, but rather, expansion along the edges. This will manifest as reports with more options, faster data entry and minor tweaks and improvements driven by user questions, comments and suggestions.

Our goal is to always make HandyWorks easier and safer to use. Bad data can't get into the system, database structural integrity is tested every time you start HandyWorks, and reports grow more sophisticated. Overall, we seek to create an easier and more efficient system.

Why Upgrade?

We are constantly evolving the HandyWorks program. While many changes are subtle, they do accumulate! For your own well-being, you don't want to fall too far behind the current version.

If you are not having any problems, then there's no pressing need to run our routine monthly upgrades. But if you are having a problem, an upgrade may fix it. Issues with features are handled by upgrades. Issues with bugs, maybe not. That's what Tech support is for.

Doing an upgrade is easy. We provide an express link to our upgrade webpage that is accessed from the menubar on your main switchboard. Just click add-ins, and follow the link to the Upgrade.

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