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Preface to Solve it! For Windows 3.0

Solve it! was created by the authors based on their experience teaching information systems and management courses at New York University's Stern School of Business and at Melbourne University (both graduate MBA and undergraduate levels). Business students in all areas of study need to learn how information technology can be used to solve business problems. This is true of not only of finance majors, but also of majors in management, operations, marketing, accounting, and information systems.

In introductory courses students learn basic computer literacy and develop hands-on experience working with productivity software—spreadsheets, databases, project managers, and word processing. These are still valuable skills but obviously much more is needed in today's business marketplace. What comes after basic computer literacy?

Solve it! builds on basic computer literacy skills. We focus much more on problem solving and critical thinking skills rather than teaching key stroking skills. We suspect the most effective use of the new productivity software suites like Microsoft Office results from students learning how to use the software to solve some of the traditional problems in business. Students need to solve problems by exercising their own judgments. Students learn problem solving skills by actually solving problems.

Solve it! began in its early test versions as a collection of cases and a case service. We relied on business colleagues and friends to supply us with real-world cases, recast them for class use, and then tested them in university and industry PC labs and training programs. Since then we began publishing new cases in a new edition every November. This way Fall semester students will have different problems than Spring semester students.

From working with business recruiters and interviewing corporate personnel leaders, we have learned that industry wants students to possess not only certain computer skills, but to be adept at solving some common, even classic, business problems. Problems like inventory management, accounts receivable and payable, payroll, financial analysis, sensitivity analysis, human resource tracking, and even some small applications development. *Solve it!* continues to reflect these concerns.

New Features and Web Exercises: *Solve it!* 3.0

Solve it! 3.0 is designed to support Microsoft Office 97 and 2000. Version 3.0 reflects the growing business use of the World Wide Web and the Internet by adding a new chapter containing an introduction to the Web, exercises, and case studies.

Other new features of *Solve it!* 3.0 include the more frequent use of screen

shots to guide students through the software. In addition to expanding the software base, we have added a number of unstructured exercises that usually require a written response, or enhancement to an existing data set. The Tutorial instructions have been expanded and refined considerably to assist learning, and more screen shots have been added.

Using Excel and Access

Solve it! is fully compatible with virtually all Windows-based software tools. The data files on the *Solve it!* diskette are delivered in industry standard formats for spreadsheets (.XLS) and Access databases (.MDB). These files can all be imported into each of the software tools described in *Solve it!* as well as to other packages like Lotus 1-2-3, Foxbase, dBase Windows, and Quattro.

Macintosh Compatibility

The files for both spreadsheet cases and database cases can be used on Macintosh machines. For instance, Microsoft Excel on the Mac reads .XLS files on your *Solve it!* diskette. And products like DBASE MAC and Foxbase MAC will read the database files on your *Solve it!* diskette.

You can transfer the files from the Windows *Solve it!* diskette to Macintosh machines by a direct cable transfer, via a network, or using the Apple Mac drives and Apple's File Transfer software which can read DOS formatted diskettes.

We sincerely hope you find the new *Solve it!* both challenging and rewarding.

Web Site: www.MySolveIT.com

Visit us at our new Web site www.MySolveIT.com to obtain the latest *Solve it!* updates, developments, and errata. If you have questions about *Solve it!*, visit the Web site first for answers. If you need additional information or have suggestions for improving *Solve it!*, email us at support@www.mysolveit.com.

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2001