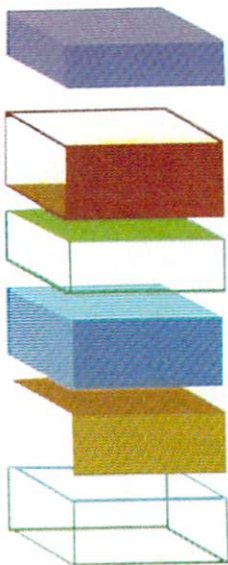


# White-Collar Amiga



*The Amiga is ideally suited for the office, but unless you know what you're doing, computerizing your business can be exasperating. Here are some hints for making that conversion painless and profitable.*

Everyone knows that computers are valuable tools in the business environment: word processing, accounting, forecasting, spreadsheets, database managers, telecommunications, etc. Yet this is just computer jargon until it can be turned into savings in time, expenses and trouble. Bottom-line profits are the reason for having computers in business, and if you have to endure weeks of training, software that doesn't do what you need or a machine that can't handle the work load, then the flashy image or the prestigious corporate name on your computer isn't going to mean much.

## **The Learning Curve**

Computerizing a business always involves a learning curve. That curve can be costly to any business, large or small. The curve can be as simple as learning the commands of a new piece of software or as complex as fighting a system for months before finding out that it was the wrong system in the first place. The curve can be complicated by misconceptions about just what a computer can and can't do for a business. If you are going to be keeping an inventory of 50,000 parts, as well as a payroll for 200 employees and the books for a two-million-dollar business, then a microcomputer of any make is not what you are looking for. If you think that a computer is going to help you unravel a hopelessly confused checkbook, then hire an accountant to do the company books. But if you are willing to do a little learning and don't expect the computer to change everything overnight, then there are dozens of good reasons to bring the Amiga computer into the office, wherever that office is.

The Amiga computer, the right software and the right peripherals will give most businesses a head start. It has the power, speed, peripherals and software to tackle most business problems, but the Amiga by itself is not the final answer. Using the Amiga as a base, or starting point, the person thinking about using the computer in a business should ask a few questions.

## **Memory Matters**

What sort of memory configuration should I start with? Add to the total cost of the Amiga computer system all the memory expansion that you think you will need, rather than getting the computer with the basic 256K and then finding out later that you really need the 512K expansion, or even the 1 MB expansion card from Tecmar. Deciding how much memory you will need is not an easy question to answer, even for people who are familiar with micros in business. Keep in mind that computers are not cars, and "the more the better" principle does not always hold true.

Try to base your decision on the software that you plan to use. Most good software will allow you to expand the memory or hardware configuration (add-on drives, new printers, hard disks, etc.), but some software requires a minimum amount of memory. Read the software manuals carefully, because sometimes there is a minimum RAM required to run the program, but that





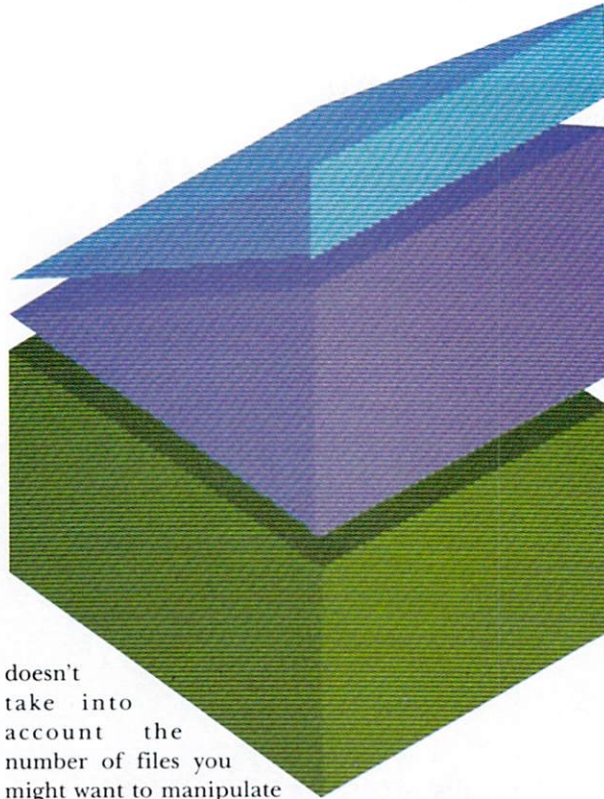
Document Title: SPECIAL  
Doc and Ref's: 770  
Use cursor keys to page through display.  
Volume 8  
A product of The Software Group of SA

PROPERTY AVERAGE SALES EXPENSES VERSUS REVENUE FOR			Open
AGENT	SALARY	COMMISSION	
David, Ben	222,000.00	25,500.00	
Fitchell, Martha	218,000.00	24,900.00	

AMIGA HR

AMIGA





◀ doesn't take into account the number of files you might want to manipulate at one time. A spreadsheet may require 128K just to run, but it might only hold a dozen records at a time unless you upgrade to 512K. Consider the important difference between "minimum required" and "minimum suggested."

A good rule of thumb is "the more information you wish to work with at one time, the more memory you will need." Keep in mind that "at one time" does not mean "at one session." It is possible to segment your information into groups to be worked on separately. For example, a mailing list might not need to fit into the computer all at once. It can be saved on disk as multiple files, A-M and N-Z; then, when you need mailing labels, printing can be done in two batches. On the other hand, if you are going to need to do a cross-reference search of that list, or if you decide to enter names according to zip code rather than company name, then it might be better to have the entire list in the computer at one time.

Roughly speaking, one character equals one byte of RAM. Count on four to five records per K of memory. (A record could include company name, address, contact person, phone numbers, product description and a few comments—roughly 250 characters, counting spaces.) That's about 500 records on an unexpanded Amiga. If you need to put more than 250 characters of information into a record, then adjust accordingly, but keep in mind the size of the program that is going to be working with the information.

#### Modems

Another hardware aspect of incorporating an Amiga into a business is the

peripherals. Will you need a modem for telecommunications? And if so, what kinds of baud rates will you need? Will you need auto-answering capabilities for when there is no one in the office to answer the phone? Do you need a Hayes-compatible modem? And most importantly, will the software you choose work with the modem you choose?

All of these questions require entire articles (or even entire issues) to be answered fully. Just remember to think about telecommunications when figuring the cost of your system and when buying software. (Someday you may want to transmit files from your word processor or spreadsheet or access your database by phone.) If you decide that telecommunications is something you definitely need, Tecmar makes a 300/1200/2400-baud modem for the Amiga that is worth looking into.

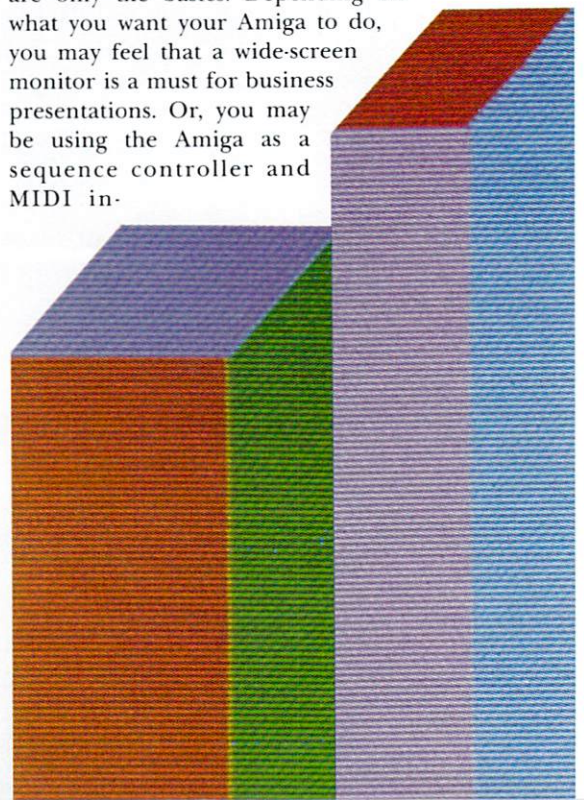
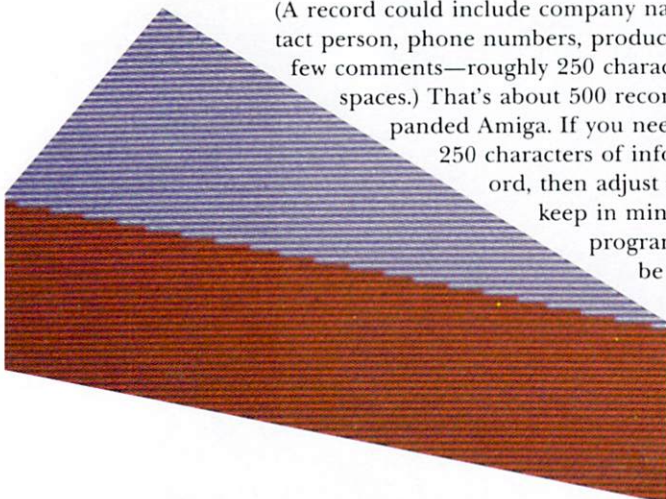
#### Pick Your Printer

No matter what you plan to do with your Amiga, you will eventually want a printer. There is no easy solution to the printer problem, either. First, decide how much work the printer will be doing. For occasional letters or memos, an inexpensive printer might be all that you need, but if you plan to send bulk mailings, then it would be worth your while to look into a more expensive industrial-quality printer. If you will be printing graphics, then you will need a dot matrix, thermal transfer, ink jet or laser printer. Black and white or color, near letter quality and amount of usage should all be taken into consideration when choosing one of these printers.

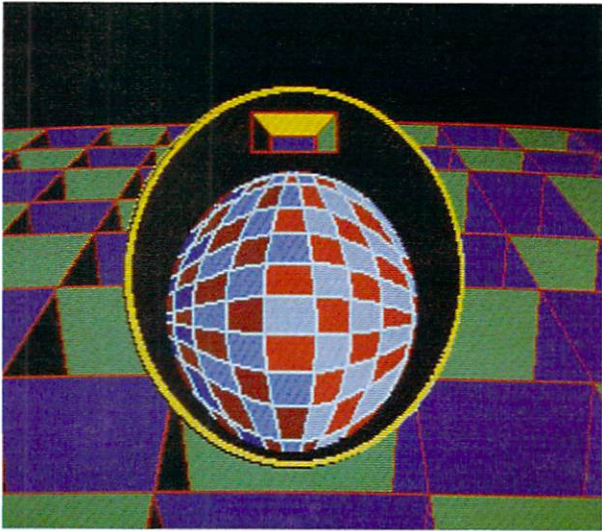
The Amiga can interface with most printers on the market, but not all software may work with all printers. (Just because your printer can do graphics, it doesn't mean that your graph-making program can send the right codes.) What's your top priority—speed, letter quality, price, color, versatility or durability? Again, buying a printer deserves an article all by itself.

#### Putting Amiga to Work

You can get dozens of other peripherals that you may feel you need for your particular business, and these are only the basics. Depending on what you want your Amiga to do, you may feel that a wide-screen monitor is a must for business presentations. Or, you may be using the Amiga as a sequence controller and MIDI in-







◀ interface. If you are designing music videos, then genlocking devices and frame grabbers may be more important to you than modems. If you are using the Amiga for security or remote measurements, then remote-sensing peripherals are what you will be shopping for. Whatever the project or task that you are asking your Amiga to perform, you should bear in mind the total cost of the peripherals when you are tallying up the total price. The computer can handle the job, but you might find that with the extra costs of add-on devices and software that it is going to take a few years to make up the initial investment.

You can always offset that investment by optimizing the use of the Amiga. You might have bought the Amiga just to print out invoices, but think about some of the other ways that the computer can help out. The Amiga is a powerful and versatile computer; locking it into one job is a waste of valuable resources. Ask yourself, what areas of the business are repetitive, calculation intensive or graphically oriented? What do you do that involves the printed page in almost any form, storing, sorting or sending information? Most of these things could be done by the Amiga with the proper hardware, software and some common sense.

### Software Shopping

The second major mountain to climb when thinking about putting an Amiga to work for you is picking the right software. Choosing software is not an easy job. The package may look great and the description on the back of the box might make it sound like this software will solve all your problems, but if the people who wrote the software didn't think that it was the best thing to come along since flip-top cans, then they wouldn't be trying to sell it.

It is also easy to be impressed by a demonstration if it is done by someone who has worked with the program for weeks. Read through the manuals, get a hands-on demonstration, talk to people who own the program (or others like it), read reviews in magazines, talk to the company (if possible), and then cross your fingers and hope for the best.

Fortunately, there are a number of good software developers who are producing software for the Amiga,

and with a bit of careful research, you have a fighting chance of getting what you are looking for. The Amiga's IBM emulation capability also greatly enhances the range of titles available to you initially, but these IBM software packages won't take advantage of the Amiga's special features. Be prepared to get burned at least once. That is an unfortunate fact of computing life. No matter how careful or knowledgeable you are, you *will* eventually end up buying something that will be a disappointment. If you are shopping for expensive software, take your time, but also build the price of a piece of bogus software into your total computer costs. It is not unusual to spend as much (or more) money on software as you did on the computer itself.

When you do find that "perfect" software package, remember that no software will do absolutely everything you need it to do unless you hire a programmer to develop a custom program—and even then it is going to take a while to get it right.

### Easy Does It

Once you have everything you need to computerize your entire operation, you should take a half a step backward before you transfer all your records over to the computer and throw away your ledger books. Think about what would happen if the computer crashed and all your files were lost. Keep thinking about that every time you enter new information, and you'll realize the importance of making backup copies of everything! Over and over! This is not a waste of time—it is insurance. Also, you should ease into things one step at a time. Don't try to convert everything over to the computer all in the first week. Do one thing first and see how it goes for a while before gradually giving the Amiga more responsibilities.

### A Little Reassurance

The Amiga isn't going to make each step a snap, but it will save you some headaches. It is expandable up to eight megabytes, which means that you should be able to do quite a bit without ever worrying about memory. (If you need more than that, then you should be looking at a minicomputer or a mainframe.) Almost all the peripherals that you can think of are available for the Amiga, and some are designed specifically for the Amiga and no other computer. It will work with almost any printer that you care to buy. The IBM PC emulator software opens up a world of business software programs that have survived the test of time.

The Amiga is easy to use, which is going to save you considerable time and effort when you are ready to start putting the computer to work for you. The Amiga is less expensive than most of the other computers in its league, and it's built for future expansion, so your investment will not be obsolete in a year or two or five. The company is strong, so you won't be left with a computer that no one is supporting. Since the Amiga is such an easy machine to develop software and hardware for, there will be lots of products to choose from in the future.

GSW

*Address all author correspondence to Guy Wright, c/o AmigaWorld editorial, 80 Pine St., Peterborough, NH 03458.*