HandyWork Newsletter

The Horror, the Horror!

Backup Apocalypse Now

What most HandyWork literati don't know, is that Joseph Conrad lost the very first version of the ending of Heart of Darkness when a power surge zapped his word processor. In the immediately subsequent version, his hero (?) Kurtz died exclaiming, "The backup horror, the backup horror."

A certain upstanding, heartland clinic probably couldn't put it better. These fine patriots installed a new backup system, which seems like a great idea. "Seems, Madam? I know not seems!" as the Bard once put it.

For low and behold, the kiddos who put in the new backup somehow managed to destroy HW. And when our loyal HandyWorkers asked, these New Frontiersmen (that's Cyberspace lingo) couldn't (or perhaps wouldn't) set up the old backup so that HW could be restored.

"Gah-ah-ah-lly!" as a more recent pop icon was want to say. There's not a heck of a lot to criticize in this office's performance. The best laid plans go awry, you know. But there is something to be gleaned here: if the wrath of the Computer God can strike down the prepared so well, what's She got in store for you? As Scar in the Lion King proclaims... "Be prepared!"

What to Do

1. Do backups many times a week on different sets of tapes/disks.
2. Restore a backup once in a while to make sure your software is working.
3. If somebody is going to play around with your computer, make sure they know what they're doing and can reverse it.

Windows Preview

Psyche!

HandyWork is proud to announce the release of HandyWork for Windows. True, we're not actually shipping for a few weeks, but that never stops Microsoft, so why should it stop us?

The bottom line is that HWW is in beta testing at a few stalwart offices. That means they are running their offices with HWW, reacting to the look and feel of the program, and are on the prowl for any last-minute bugs that we haven't caught. After we get the go-ahead from our Beta sites, Eager Beavers will get the program next. (You know the number to call if you want to be an E.B.) These rodents will help us work out state-specific kinks, if any exist, while we send the rest of you invitations you to switch over. So if you're not chomping at the tree to get going, don't worry that you'll be left out.

The Goods

It's easy: we've structured HWW to mirror most of HW-DOS, so your conversion should be fast, furious, and painless. You'll learn added features, not relearn old ones.

If you have ever been frustrated by getting HW to correctly figure out insurance patient figures complicated by specific co-payments and cutoffs, HWW is for you. Group different arcane plans under different fee schedules (up to 20 from the current 10). Put your patient on the correct fee schedule, and sit back.

If you want beautiful reports with more flexible criteria, try HWW. Our new program lets Windows do most of the printing dirty work, which means that reports can come out in swanky types on different printers. Your letters will look tons better, and you won't waste paper getting longer reports than you need. Plus, since HWW is written in Microsoft Access, you could buy a copy of the database program from your local software dealer and manipulate the data yourself in ways that HWW programmers can only vaguely promise!

If you like finely detailed screens with the professional Windows look and mouse support, well, HWW has that, too. That means you can use ALT+5 to switch to the Transactions screen, or just press a mouse button. Heck, you can pull it down from the GoTo menu, if that's your taste. Windows simply allows us to make screens cleaner and perform better.

What You Need

To run HandyWork for Windows, you should have at least a 486/33. (That's a 486 processor running at 33 Mhz. Don't worry, we barely understand what it means ourselves.) A Pentium is better. Set aside a good bit of hard disk space, say 50 Meg to begin with. And don't plan on running HWW with less than 8 Mb of RAM, which is short term memory.

As for a new computer, we think the best buy for the money would be a Pentium 75 or 90, with 16 Mb (or more) of RAM, a hard drive with at least 500 Mb and 10 millisecond or less access time. Don't get anything less. This system should run you around $2100 from big mail order companies, such as Dell or Gateway.

New and Improved

Deductible figuring has changed. Lots of folks asked us to take the deductible off before calculating insurance portion rather than after. So that's what we've done. Check out the screen under Insurance Calculations in Alt+3 to see how it works now.

Networks should run a bit faster thanks to some improvements.

Repairs of corrupted databases have new and better safeguards to insure you don't lose data and have to go to a backup.

The **Illinois Medicaid** form is now included.

In **New York**, the C4 form is now the official Workers Comp billing instrument. No need to run C4s and HCFAs separately any more - it's all on one form. Reprints will show up on the new form. If you have more than 6 visits on an older bill that needs to be reprinted, you will have to delete and rebill - sorry, that's WComp's preference, not ours.

Maximize Computer Performance

Even if you don't know squat about computers, you can run a couple of simple programs which will increase your computer's performance.

If you have DOS 6.0 or higher, you've got a program called MemMaker, which can streamline your computer's efforts. MemMaker rearranges the autoexec.bat and config.sys files, which your computer peruses at startup to determine how to organize itself. Messy startup files essentially create a crowded desk that DOS and Windows have trouble using. MemMaker straightens things up, which means your programs will run faster, and you may be able to run more programs at once.

MemMaker is explained in the DOS user's guide. There are novice and advanced user options. If you need any help, refer to the manual or call Microsoft.

Defrag is a program which straightens up your hard drive, where all your information is stored. As you change around information, bits of it get stored all over the hard drive, which takes a little bit longer to get to than if the information was all together. Typing DEFRAG at the DOS prompt tells the computer to put disparate bits of individual files together. Thus, you want to run Defrag regularly to keep up disk performance. Defrag is also a DOS program and is explained in the DOS user's guide and supported by Microsoft, not HandyWork.

If you're bold, you might want to look into the autoexec.bat and config.sys to see if there are any initializations that you don't need, such as loading modem info into memory when you hardly ever use the modem, or parts of old and demo programs that you don't need. Remember to save the files under different names before you fool with them, just in case ...

Ode to Peter

I think that I will never see,
a computer lovely as a tree,
And perchance was never heard
Equal to Peter's comfortin' word.

He's leaving now
On a jet plane.
Some may have a cow;
Their loss, Moscow's gain.

Ah, I remember when I came to HandyWork. It was a small operation, with a single driving force, a man with a dream: to make chiropractic office management software available to the masses. I leave the company a richer and slightly different institution: it's now a small place where people make wise cracks and occasionally give a straight answer to users' questions. I've tried to stop those stray straight answers, but now the tide's against me, I think.

Anyway, I'm off to Moscow to write for an English language daily newspaper, The Moscow Tribune. (Apparently they got hold of these newsletters and decided they had to recruit me.) Computers are a fun sideline I've picked up as I've wandered through life; I've enjoyed programming and helping people out of ruts. But I studied Russian in school, am a writer by nature, and think life in Moscow will be peachy. Watch out for my byline years down the line! I'll be off at the end of July, so say adios next time you call.

Low Cost Solutions

Here are a few cheap ways to improve your computer area.
1. Monitor stand. For about $30 you can get a stand with a flexible arm that your monitor sits on. Helps to put monitor at different heights, clean up precious desk real estate.
2. Clean the monitor. Buy a non-static cloth and some monitor cleaning fluid. Suddenly you can see!
3. Make a computer area. O.K.: take the bull by the horns and set up space dedicated to the computer. Don't leave it in some cramped area that is unpleasant to use; its a big part of your day.
4. Printer Switchbox. Connect two printers to a single port, then turn a knob to tell the computer which printer the data is going to. Low tech and $15-$30.

Have You Tried ...

1. Updating your Vital Stats screen? Hit F5 in your Alt+V screen to get an up-to-the-moment accounting of cool stats like Collections Percent and New Patients/Visits.
2. The HW Dialer? Attach a modem to your computer, and when you hit F5 in different screens, the patient, lawyer, etc. will be called.

HandyWork
132 East 29th Street
New York, NY 10016
(800) 255-0668
(212) 889-8878
Fax (212) 889-8830