SELECTING THE RIGHT PACKAGE

Corporate Users Face Difficult Choices

BY HANK BANNISTER, INFOWORLD STAFF

A

s more and more vendors target their programs specifically to the business world, selecting the right word processing program for the corporate environment is becoming a highly complex task. "It was a difficult decision, and there isn't a perfect package," says Steven Rush, of Merrill Lynch Capital Markets Investment Banking Division, in New York, of the evaluation process he undertook.

After looking at a large number of word processing packages, Rush's division eventually decided to standardize on Word Perfect and to purchase approximately 600 packages through a site-license agreement last fall. "We looked at the whole range from MultiMate, Sansa Word II, DisplayWrite, Microsoft Word, Wordstar and Wordstar 2000, Volkswriter, Officewriter, and even Framework," he says.

As vendors fight to improve the features of their word processing programs, corporate buyers are faced with the dilemma of trying to standardize their software while at the same time remaining open to new technology. "In some places a word processor is just for secretaries, but here the package is in the hands of accountants and power users as well as professionals just dabbling with memos," Rush says. "Additionally, we had to account for the fact that some users had a floppy drive systems, some had IBM XTs, and some had IBM ATs."

Rush says that three factors influenced his decision to select Word Perfect: speed, efficiency, case of use, and full features. Nevertheless, he emphasizes that a number of people will continue to use Wordstar and MultiMate, despite the fact that the majority of users will standardize on Word Perfect.

-Micro Managers See Open Market

An informal survey of corporate micro managers makes it clear that MultiMate is the most widely used package in the corporate environment, but that the market is still open to a wide range of alternatives. At the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, the organization's document production facilities are designed around Wang minicomputers, according to a source at the institute. Although the organization has a less formal approach to software and hardware purchasing than many corporations due to the independent funding of different projects, microcomputer word processing is almost completely dominated by the MultiMate word processor. According to the staff member, the major reasons for choosing MultiMate were its interface, which is similar to the Wang system, and file compatibility. Almost all official documents need to be archived in the Wang system and outputted in their final form through the Wang system.

A neighboring but very different organization in Atlanta, the Turner Broadcasting System Inc., has also standardized on the MultiMate package, in spite of the fact that the company does not base its word processing operations around a Continuum frame of

Top Packages Differ On Important Features

BY JOHN LOMBARDI, REVIEW BOARD

Evaluating word processing programs can take more skill, time, and energy than learning how to use them. Selecting word processing software for an office involves a careful consideration of software performance and user preferences and experience of the staff, type and volume of work to be performed, and preferences of users.

Selecting a word processing program works best through a process of elimination. As you survey the vast array of excellent programs, you should try to find good reasons to eliminate programs from consideration. When you reach a point where you can't find anything wrong for one program, consider using about two or three programs, then you can begin evaluating and testing these programs.

Although all word processing programs have the same general purpose — taking words into the computer, permitting their change and rearrangement, and printing them out on paper — they use one of two different models that involve fundamental differences in approach.

Page-oriented word processing programs organize entire words, sentences, and paragraphs into pages. The user works with page-sized chunks of text. When we want to move from one part of the document to another part, the program retrieves pages from the hard or floppy disk and stores others. When we reach the end of a page, we are used to the program where to make the page break. This model of word processing fits neatly into the mind set of the accomplished typist who is used to rolling one page into the typewriter, typing the text, flushing the page, and rolling in another one. When something needs to be changed, the typist finds the appropriate page, reinserts it into the typewriter and makes the corrections or additions. This works faster and better with a computer word processing system, but the basic procedure is the same.

Document-oriented word processing systems, unlike their page-oriented brethren, envision the document as a single ongoing roll of paper, scrolling from beginning to end through the computer screen window. The focus is on the document, the model, the typewriter and make the corrections or additions. This works faster and better with a computer word processing system, but the basic procedure is the same.
Top Packages

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(meaningful and elegantly phrased text)

VoiceVax

Page-Oriented

Word Processors

One sample of quality page-oriented word processors includes Multivariate, OfficeWriter, and DisplayWriter. Each of these programs has been tested in various offices, revisions, and levels. As mixture products, they have received strong character
test results.

Programs in this class copy the operations of dedicated word processing systems originally designed to replace typewriters in business offices. IBM and Wang have the honor of being the most widely used word processing systems, with IBM copying its DisplayWriter dedicated word processor with DisplayWriter and Wang's word pro-
cessing system employing the factory of its choice, Multivariate and OfficeWriter.

For this report, we tested at Multivariate Advantage 3.60 from Multivariate International Corp. of East Hartford, Connecticut. It is a powerful and flexible version of the Multivariate series. It comes with an address card file, data manager, and a sophisticated graphics printer that produces graphics images into a Multivariate-prepared text document for printing on dot-matrix or laser printers. Multivariate Advantage fully

copies the screen appearance and style of operations of dedicated word processing equipment, systems very popu-
lar in business offices before the microcomputer word processing revolution arrived.

Multivariate Advantage relies on function keys for most of its word processing operations and delivers an impressive array of features and tools. A massive number of function key combinations produce the impressive flexibility and power characteristic of the program, which includes:

- Effective document assembly, keyboard macros, alternate foreign language character sets, e-mail processing, and data file attachment storage, as well as traditional editing and formatting capabilities.
- It is a rigorously page-oriented program, requiring an almost constant re-arranging of page boundaries and features that the operator must make attention to page layout. Users find this program an ex-

The Top Packages - Continued

terminal for offices where operators switch between Wang equipment and microcomputer-based word processing. It is also an excellent choice where documents must be assembled from multiple files, but its high cost is a disadvantage. This is quite a good tool for those who are not as experienced in handling documents. Multivariate is less popular than the other programs.

In the category of extra capabilities, Multivariate allows multiline headers and footers, a maximum of eight characters in each section of the page, and automatic point-to-point positioning. There is a good spell checker and a thesaurus. Multiva-
te is a powerful document processor, and many users find it a useful tool. It can be operated from a variety of systems, including the IBM PC. Multivariate Advantage is in use across several industries, demonstrating the popularity of this program. Multivariate Advantage 3.60 is a powerful word processing tool that can be effectively used in various environments. It is an excellent choice for businesses that require flexibility, power, and ease of use in their word processing needs.

Because of its size and complexity, the program requires disk switching, a tedious process. We recommend this offering to departments and businesses with large overhead costs. Some involvement with dedicated word processors (WordPerfect, IBM, and Microsoft) can handle high data such as this. Under most conditions, the front orientation may be an advantage, especially when there is rapid turnover in personnel. All three of these programs perform excellent quality word processing, and a choice between them could turn on personal preferences or availability of a special feature.

Document-Oriented

Programs

In some ways, the document-oriented word processing systems offer greater advantages to more complex systems. Not being tied to a dedicated word processing machine, these programs offer a great deal of flexibility. Several different systems are available, each offering different approaches to the word processing task.

WordPerfect 4.1 from Lotus Development Corporation, in Newton, Utah, has garnered a remarkable collection of rave reviews from computer publications, and a

guaranteed the titles for this comparison. WordPerfect has a phenomenal range of editing and formatting features, even with a full complement of switchable capabilities. It can handle multiple text columns either in parallel mode or by columns of text. It has its own spell checker, a thesaurus, a large spelling dictionary, and a good set of utilities for converting word processing documents to and from other formats. Multia-

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**Special Capabilities**

A number of word processing packages that are not targeted specifically at corporate users have nevertheless acquired a significant market in the business world because of some special feature or capability. WriteMan 3.0, from Lightwave Software Corp. in Sunnyvale, Calif., evokes from a simple, fast, and effective word processing package, has gained of late, and now has more features and options than high-end packages. Although it lacks features -- such as windows, text columns, and footnotes -- its speed, powerful formatting, and ease of use are seriously compromised.

To project against document loss, the program consistently saves text, requiring constant access to the disk. On a floppy-disk-based system, this constant calls to the disk slow down operations considerably. Even on a hard-disk computer, the constant disk accesses and the elaborate prompting make this a powerful, easy-to-use, but hard-to-use word processing program.

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