IMPRESSIONS

Word for Word vs. Software Bridge: A Conversion Contest

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I recently looked at two strong general-purpose word processing file conversion products: MasterSoft's Word for Word and Systems Compatiblity Corp.'s Software Bridge. Both are stand-alone products with multiple file formats and many options to improve ease of use and the accuracy of file conversion.

A conversion program must be capable of converting a large number of word processing file formats into two standard formats: ASCII and DCA/RFT. ASCII format is the least sophisticated; DCA/RFT is an IBM standard for document interchange that has more information about the document but lacks refinements such as fonts.

The evaluation of conversion software offers some difficulty as, almost by definition, an accurate translation isn't possible between sophisticated word processing systems. However, several characteristics do distinguish these programs.

SUPPORT, EASE, ACCURACY. First is the coverage of word processing programs. That is, the number of different word processors handled by the programs (see accompanying list). Second is ease and flexibility of operation. Third is the accuracy of translation and the arrangements for handling unexpected results. Fourth is automatic error correction.

Software Bridge has the advantage of a comprehensive conversion routine for Macintosh word processing file formats, which means it's of significance for users who work in both PC and Mac environments. Both programs have multiple ways of handling ASCII files, either by their own design or by allowing users to specify defined file input. This means the programs can be read back into their original documents instead of displaying blank text. The programs also allow the user to specify characters to be converted at their discretion.

Word for Word has a feature that will insert a code into the target file that identifies the source of the conversion. This feature is useful for tracing the conversion process. The software also offers the option to insert comments at the beginning of the text. This is helpful for keeping track of changes made during the conversion process.

The performance of both programs is comparable, with each offering a high degree of accuracy and ease of use. However, Software Bridge offers more flexibility in terms of handling unexpected results and has a more comprehensive error correction routine. Word for Word, on the other hand, offers better control over the conversion process and provides more options for customizing the output.

Both programs are powerful tools for converting word processing files, but Software Bridge offers more flexibility and ease of use. Word for Word is a good choice for users who require more control over the conversion process. Overall, both programs are highly recommended for their accuracy, ease of use, and flexibility in handling unexpected results.