Professional Write Brings More Devices, Features

Version 2.2 includes better font management, unique grammar checking.

BY JOHN LOMBARDO REVIEW BOARD

Among executive word processing programs, Professional Write has long held a position as an effective, low-end alternative to programs with many features and capabilities. But the competition grows more competitive with each update. This new version, V2.2, brings more devices and better font management for users, a new spell checker, a nitpicky grammar checker, the capability to handle larger documents, and hyperphrasing in preview mode.

FEATURES:
Long known for its carefully constructed user interface, which makes this one of the easiest word processors to learn and use, Professional Write has all the basics. You can edit, spell, format, print, and do mail-merge chores. Not designed to compete with the heavyweight office and professional programs, Professional Write has no footnotes or endnotes, no special features for newspaper columns, and minimal graphics integration and few of the word publishing features characteristic of office and professional programs. However, the program reaches the high end of the spectrum. Nevertheless, the program has a good page preview and does fonts with reasonable fidelity, including a transparent decompilative capability that is as seamless as the best font management in Windows.

PERFORMANCE:
Professional Write's basic editing has full cursor movements, traditional cut-copy-paste functions, good search-and-replace capabilities that maintain capitalization, regular and decimal tabs, and a stand-alone feature that includes font information as well as cursor location. While the program has added hyperphrasing in this version, you do the hyperphrasing along with page preview or when printing. Hyperphrasing can be turned on and off, and previously hyphenated text can be restored without hyphenation.

This program also supports keystroke macros with a macro recorder that captures the keystrokes as you enter them. Although Professional Write does not support multiple windows, its basic editing nonetheless earns a very good rating.

The spelling checker offers several suggestions, maintains capitalization, and supports user dictionaries. While there is no thesaurus, the program includes a synonym finder. The elaborate grammar checker has multiple styles, a customizable format that allows you to identify which of several grammatical faults you want identified, and several readiness indices. We rate the spelling checker and thesaurus very good.

Professional Write has a mail-merge module that will work with the Field/Field Address Book program (a field) and its address manager that is part of Professional Write) or with ASCII delimited files. If the data come from the Address Book, the sort and select criteria are extensive, including conditional and approximate matching. You can append an ASCII file to the Address Book, then your ASCII file benefits from the same selection criteria. The Address Book has a limit of about 1,000 records, but longer lists must be broken into parts. The mail merge also handles labels and envelopes. You rate mail merge very good.

Font support includes the capability to change fonts during the preview process and in the printout. Fonts are easily changed and selected, and the printed text looks the same for the character under the cursor. In addition, fonts are changed from the default, showing up in the page layout, and the user can specify a headline or other management of graphic images. There is a line draw capability. Though tedious, you can bring in other images, we rate graphics handling satisfactory.

Compatibility with other programs is strong, with the translations for most common programs being included. The program can also import Excel (Lotus 1-2-3), Microsoft Word, Windows, Multimate, and other word-processing programs, and other programs from the Professional Write family. Professional Write also imports spreadsheet files from Lotus 1-2-3 (WRK1) and maintains a warm link to the original spreadsheet file — the word document will find and use the latest version of the WRK1 file. We rate compatibility very good.

EXECUTIVE WORD PROCESSORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Write version 2.2</th>
<th>ANSI version 1.0A</th>
<th>Beyond Word Writer+ version 1.1</th>
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<td>Load</td>
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<tr>
<td>Save</td>
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<tr>
<td>Append file</td>
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**BENCHMARKS**

**PRODUCT SUMMARY**

Company: Baler Software Corp., 1-400 Hicks Road, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008; (708) 508-9700; List Price: $79.50

Requirements: IBM PC, PS/2, or compatible; 640K of RAM, DOS 2.1 or later; hard disk recommended.

Price: $19.50

Cost: Does not support WKS format in Lotus 1-2-3, Release 3.0; cannot generate seven-number random numbers, some incompatibilities with DOS Share and Windows 3.5.

Summary: An advanced compiler that converts Lotus 1-2-3 worksheet files into separate files. Also includes extensive customization capabilities and the capability to incorporate high-level language functions.

**SUPPORT**

Baler Software provides unlimited free telephone support from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Central time. The product is not sold live. Support policies are satisfactory.

**VALUE**

Baler Write is the most expensive spreadsheet compiler we've seen — but it's also easily the most comprehensive. Since you can distribute the run-time program and compiled workbooks with no royalties, Baler can custom-build any utility for itself. If you can do without linking external functions and some of the other advanced features, you can save some money by purchasing the 1995 Baler 5.0 program. But if you demand the ultimate spreadsheet compiler, you'll find Baler Write to be a very good value.

Consulting editor John Wainker is a consumer research manager for a toy company and loan association in Southern California.
A reasonably speedy performer, Professional Write allows you to type as you would a page preview, even on a 386 with a VGA monitor. Overall, however, this version rates a good score on our speed test.

**DOCUMENTATION:** Documentation consists of a substantial manual that covers aspects of the program's operation. The explanations are generally good, although a few more examples would clarify some issues. In addition, there is a printer booklet with good data about the operation of the various supported printers and a discussion of the peculiarities of laser printers and soft fonts. On-line help is context sensitive and indexed. We rate documentation good.

**EASE OF LEARNING:** One of Professional Write's most cherished features is its ease of learning. This program can be up and running in the amount of time it takes to copy the distribution disks and type "FW" at the prompt. Everything else in the program follows easily. The screen shows a replica of the page (although not font spacing), and even margins appear. Focus is self-explanatory, setup boxes are easily resolved, and font management is simple. Fifteen minutes will be enough to begin producing business documents. Full mastery of the advanced features will take more time. Ease of learning is excellent.

**EASE OF USE:** The program remains easy to use. Its simple structure, full menu, and easy movement make most tasks within its purview very easy to accomplish. The on-line help included is more than enough to assist you with your work.

**ERROR HANDLING:** While Professional Write handles simple errors well, its undo is nothing short of trash-and-goskip buffer that works fine as a one-level undo but does not capture deleted work done with the delete key or the backspace key. The program does not have timed backup or automatic backup.

For a general-purpose executive word processor, this is still the leading product.

**PRODUCT SUMMARY**

**Company:** Software Publishing Corp.  P.O. Box 7710. 10171 Landings Drive, Mountain View, CA 94040-7452.  (415) 962-3100.

**List Price:** $249.  Upgrade from other versions of Professional Write is $65.  Network server plus one route is $449; additional nodes add $165 each.

**Requires:** IBM PC, PS/2, or compatible; 512K RAM (448K free); 64K EGA, VEGA, or Hercules required for preview; hard disk recommended; DOS 2.0 or higher: will not run under Windows.

**Pros:** Easy to learn and use; Address Book good for mail merge; good font handling for laser printers; good grammar checker and readability index; good compatibility with other programs.

**Cons:** No indexes, tables of contents, cannot do columns, columnar graphics.

**Summary:** Professional Write is a good choice for occasional use, the preparation of simple correspondence, or long papers not requiring columns or footnotes. Address Book capability makes it very useful for work environments that use letter writers and automated mailing.

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**Compaq N Establishes Thin-Profile PC Standard**

Network security is prime ingredient for Deskpro 286ni, 386ni.

**By Jim Zittlau, Test Center and Tracey Capper**

**September 17, 1990**

Having established itself as a power in the high-end network server market, Compaq Computer Corp. has now set its sights on network workstations. The Compaq Deskpro 286ni and 386ni offer low-price, thin-profile computers designed for use in stand-alone systems or as network workstations.

Because a number of vendors have recently started shipping thin-profile units similar to the Compaq "n" models, we have created a new category of thin-profile and adjusted our scoring methods, the number of slots and drive bays required for a satisfactory score has been reduced.

The Deskpro 386ni features an Intel 16-MHz 286 microprocessor; the 386ni is powered by a 16-MHz 386SX chip. Except for the CPU, the two systems are nearly identical. For that reason, we evaluated only the 386ni version, but included the 386ni's throughout our tests in our benchmark chart. Both systems come in three models: the Model 60 with a 40-megabyte hard drive and 1.4-megabyte 3.5-inch floppy drive; the Model 11, with a floppy drive, but no hard drive; and the Model 0, with no drive (the diskless workstation). Both systems come standard with 1 megabyte of memory and thin-profile case (only 4.25" high).

The Deskpro 386ni fitted well compared to other 16-MHz 386SX machines we've reviewed. See "Beasty-Beasts" (January 15, Page 57), for our latest product comparison of 16-MHz 386SX machines. The 386ni's CPU-intensive throughput time of 48 minutes and 2 seconds was about 22 percent slower than the 16-MHz 386SX 68040 (the fastest 16-MHz 386SX we've reviewed), and two seconds faster than the fast-seller Compaq Deskpro 386.

In our disk-intensive throughput tests, the Deskpro 386ni, with its 40-megabyte hard drive, took the third-fastest time. Compressing the test in just over 1 hour and 11 minutes, it was only three percent slower than the Everen Step 386s (our 16-MHz 386SX disk-throughput leader).

We had no difficulty running our software compatibility suite on the Deskpro 386ni. We were able to switch between Lotus 1-2-3, Release 2.2 and Microsoft Word 5.0 under both Deskpro and Windows. We tested it with under OS/2 and 1-2-3.22 in the OS/2 2.05 compatibility box. The only shortcoming of the Deskpro is that this category is speedier than line drivers. It does not let you switch to a slower processing speed for better compatibility with older software (both in Windows and OS/2). The Deskpro 386ni was flawless in our hardware compatibility tests.

The Deskpro 386ni was flawless in our hardware compatibility tests. It is a capable performer and exceptionally well constructed. It would undoubtedly be the standard in this new category of thin-profile, diskless desktops. The only drawbacks are its price and limited expandability.