

# PerfectOffice

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From the looks of our beta of PerfectOffice 3.0, Novell is indeed training it to go the distance against Lotus Development Corp.'s Lotus SmartSuite. And with a little more training, PerfectOffice could eventually displace Microsoft Corp.'s Microsoft Office Professional as the current heavyweight champion.

PerfectOffice comes in three configurations: Standard, Professional, and Select. The Standard pack includes the new WordPerfect 6.1 word processor, the spreadsheet Quattro Pro 6.0, Presentations 3.0 for presentation graphics, the personal information manager (PIM) InfoCentral 1.1, workgroup publishing tool Envoy 1.0, and the E-mail, scheduling, and calendar program GroupWise 4.1 (once WordPerfect Office). The Professional pack adds the Paradox 5.0 database and AppWare 1.0, an applications development tool. (For a First Look on the beta WordPerfect 6.1, see story at right. For our review of Envoy, see Oct. 10, page 110. Our review of Quattro Pro 6.0 will appear next week.)

Novell is also offering a bundle called PerfectOffice Select. This package can include all the applications in the Professional suite and lets you add various Novell groupware and third-party applications according to your needs. Novell claims you will be able to select only those applications you expect to use, and the installation program will create your own personal suite. This is supposed to eliminate the "shelfware syndrome," where you end up using only a couple of the products you buy with the suite. This is a very interesting approach, because if they deliver on these claims, it could reshape the way all office suites are packaged.

## MOM AND POP SUITES

Every suite also has a central control application that binds all the applications together. Microsoft, for example, has its Microsoft Office

### Opinion: ☹

#### PerfectOffice

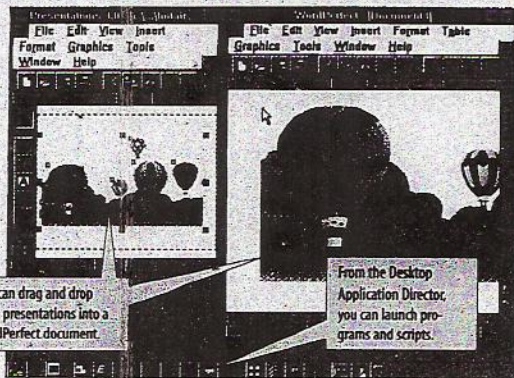
Version 3.0

WordPerfect, the Novell Applications Group, Orem, Utah  
(800) 451-5151 or (801) 225-5000; fax: (801) 222-5077

Price: \$659 for Standard version, \$859 for Professional version; both to ship by year's end.

Pros: WordPerfect, Quattro Pro are solid applications; highly customizable; may soon challenge Microsoft suite.

Cons: Some OLE beta bugs; resource hungry.



You can drag and drop from presentations into a WordPerfect document.

From the Desktop Application Director, you can launch programs and scripts.

Manager (sometimes referred to as MOM). PerfectOffice has the Desktop Application Director (DAD), which works the synergy between the applications. It provides a toolbar from which you can launch all the various applications. The quick tasks, which are macro scripts that can work across applications, are a really good idea. The general ones, such as the expert that guides you through creating an invoice in a WordPerfect document, really save time and effort. This is one place where PerfectOffice shines and Microsoft Office is lacking. Microsoft Office is simpler and easier to use at first, but is not as flexible or customizable as PerfectOffice. The investment in learning the simple procedure to make new quick tasks and to customize DAD pays off big in ease of use and productivity later on.

By default, DAD may have too many options and buttons. DAD can launch all the various applications and quick tasks, start the coaches, get help, and pop up various unrelated things such as a DOS prompt. You'll probably want to pare the toolbar down to include only what you find useful to have within a click's distance.

The heart of any suite is the functional integration of the various applications. I pasted, embedded, and linked various objects, including spreadsheets and graphics, into a WordPerfect document to test PerfectOffice's OLE 2.0 support. There were a number of erratic problems with OLE and drag-and-drop operations across products, but these were probably due to its beta state.

## NETWORK APPS

The version I looked at is the standard one. It has the workgroup applications, Envoy and GroupWise, but they offer limited functionality when there's no network. Envoy publishes documents across the network, allowing recipients to view and comment on, but not change, the original document, even if they don't have the original application locally. Lacking the network versions, I couldn't test those functions

of Envoy.

GroupWise is intended to be integrated with the PIM InfoCentral. Of all the applications in the suite, InfoCentral seemed to be the most unfinished.

The network versions of PerfectOffice—Select and Professional—are clearly aiming to capitalize on Novell's expertise. Network functions are accessible from within applications and it's easy to install and manage PerfectOffice across a network. PerfectOffice's Object Exchange technology, which allows dynamic access to live data across a network, addresses a need that Microsoft doesn't seem to have considered.

## DEMANDING RESOURCES

Just remember that suite functionality comes at a price. As with all suites, PerfectOffice is resource intensive, particularly in regard to memory. On a 66-MHz Hewlett-Packard Co. 486 with 16MB of memory, I managed to run Program Manager, WordPerfect, Quattro Pro, Presentations, InfoCentral, and the workgroup functions of GroupWise and Envoy viewer, leaving 11 percent of memory available. Of course, performance degraded accordingly. Since users aren't likely to have everything running at once, the 8MB of memory that Novell recommends is likely to be sufficient. PerfectOffice does run with only 4MB, but only barely. Performance ground to a halt. If you don't have at least 8MB of memory, we wouldn't recommend you run this, or just about any other, suite.

Overall, PerfectOffice is a strong suite; it isn't "the Perfect Place to Work" as their marketing hype says it is. But in a perfect world, real ice cream wouldn't be fattening, the check would be in the mailbox, and all your favorite programs would work together seamlessly regardless of who built the individual applications. Until that breed of perfection comes along, PerfectOffice 3.0 will do nicely.

Executive editor Nicholas Petreley contributed to this First Look.

## Word processing

# WordPerfect 6.1 heats up Windows war of words

■ Potential is there to be No. 1

By John Lombardi  
Contributing Editor

THERE IS APPARENTLY NO end to the quality and features that can be added to word processing programs for Windows. The hot battle between Microsoft Corp. Word for Windows, Novell's WordPerfect for Windows, and Lotus Development Corp.'s Ami Pro for Windows continues with the latest upgrade for WordPerfect. I took a First Look at the beta for WordPerfect 6.1 for Windows, which should ship this week or next, and discovered that this war is far from over.

WordPerfect's upgrade is snazzier than its predecessor (Version 6.0), more stable, faster, easier to use, and filled with new features and enhancements of existing features. Depending on how well it survives InfoWorld's full suite of tests, WordPerfect 6.1 has the potential to take over the lead position in the rankings, now held by Word for Windows 6.0, and to leave Ami Pro 3.1 a somewhat distant third in the race.

WordPerfect has always been strong in word processing tools, and its spelling checker has been among the best for a long time. When it added Grammatik as the grammar checker, the integration of this stand-alone package with the word processing system succeeded only partially. Now, however, the highly sophisticated Grammatik is fully part of WordPerfect for Windows.

The speller, thesaurus, and find-and-replace systems use a technology that lets you find and replace the various forms of a root word. For example, you can enter "process" to search for "processed" and "processing." The WordPerfect indexer, which takes your files and

constructs a complete index to all the words in them, is fast and effective. As PC disks become larger, this tool becomes more and more useful in finding files. WordPerfect 6.1's implementation of its indexer is flexible, effective, and useful.

Some other tools include a rather neat Make-it-Fit expert that shrinks or expands margins, changes fonts, or otherwise manipulates the placement of elements to fit a document to a specified number of pages. This will be a boon to students who need a 10-page paper and have written either a 12-page or an eight-page version. This expert is pretty good, but in the beta, you do have to check the headers and footers to make sure they come out right, and you need to review tabs and other text elements to be sure they are where you expect them to be after the shrinking or expanding occurs. Another caution is that I got hung up with my beta copy by shrinking a complex document with many graphic elements.

Many of this version's enhancements improve standard features. Table formatting offers a host of standard formats you can apply to highlight columns and rows, apply borders, and the like. The much improved drop-cap feature works exceedingly well. A seemingly endless series of templates help users construct almost every conceivable document from business letters to complex folded brochures. Graphics integration and operations appear much enhanced over the WordPerfect 6.0 versions we have tested, and the help system has many more coaches to walk users through various operations. Indeed, Help has a much better hierarchical structure and many cross-references to related topics.

Not everything works as advertised yet. Some parts of the help system appear under construction in this beta. The undo/redo, while useful and adjustable to many levels, does not work consistently when you drag and drop a selection between two open documents. However, I expect WordPerfect will have these things fixed by the time the commercial version hits the stores.

WordPerfect 6.1 for Windows has a list price of \$395. Upgrades are \$99, and competitive upgrades are \$129. The product is also available in the PerfectOffice suite. (See First Look, page 1, for details.)

### Opinion: ☺

#### WordPerfect for Windows

Version 6.1

WordPerfect, the Novell Applications Group, Orem, Utah:  
(800) 451-5151 or (801) 225-5000; fax: (801) 222-5077.

Price: \$395; \$99 for upgrade; \$129 for competitive upgrade.

Pros: Now rivals Word for top spot; greatly improved standard features; integration with fellow suite members.

Cons: Some beta bugs with undo, file converters, drag and drop.