

PRODUCT REVIEWS

► Windows word processor

Word Pro excels at 'team' work

By John Lombardi Lotus Development Corp. (now owned by IBM) has taken a gamble with its office suite strategy. If Lotus has guessed correctly, we will all soon be computing in teams. In this world, we no longer will have documents produced by

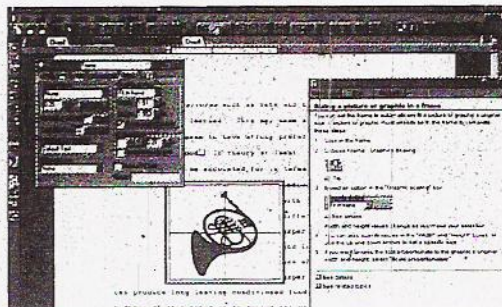
individuals but instead will have them produced by groups of people, each of whom is an editor and contributor working on a computer. Lotus further assumes that we will need different methods.

One of these new methods is the ability to focus our attention on documents rather than on applications — because we will use several applications as tools to construct documents. And because we are focused on documents, we will want all our tools to be compatible. Thus we will, the theory goes, want to buy integrated suites.

Lotus Word Pro 96 Edition for

Windows 95 is the word processing element in Lotus SmartSuite, and Word Pro offers a host of features for implementing this model of team computing. Word Pro 96 is an excellent word processing package for people with a need for multiple editors, close integration with other applications, and complicated document preparation requirements.

The key to team computing is that any document needs to include all the versions in one structure, rather than having different versions as separate elements. Word Pro lets you create a group of editors, each



WORD PRO OFTEN EMPLOYS a live dialog box, which makes changes as soon as you enter a new value. The limited frame command, however, can wrap text around a graphic only on one side.

with different editing permissions (some to read only; some to comment but not edit; and some to read, comment, and edit) — to signal the author of each change as the document circulates among the members of the team.

When the document is done, it comes back to the originator, who reviews the editorial changes, additions, and comments and chooses what to leave, what to reject, and how to consolidate all of this into the final product. This works best in a networked environment, where the document exists on a central server, but it could also work as members of the team pass the document from one to another via "sneakernet" or file transfer over the Internet.

In line with this approach, Word Pro also includes superior tools for managing large documents. Taking the notion of tabbed sections from spreadsheets, Word Pro creates tabbed sections of documents to divide them easily into chapters or sections, permitting easy management of these units. You can move the tabbed sections or reorder them, all within the same document. I built a large document of almost 1MB of text using multiple tabbed sections and found this worked well.

In addition to these special features, Word Pro has the normal complement of tools for a professional-level word processing program. It has graphics, charts, tables, and mail merge; and it has a sophisticated scripting language for automating applications. Following the tradition of high-end products such as Microsoft Corp.'s Word or Novell Inc.'s WordPerfect, Word Pro has a

host of automated helpers to assist with tasks such as mail merge. In addition, the application uses live dialog boxes for setting text attributes, frame size and placement, text alignment, and other characteristics of the document so that every change you select in the box appears immediately on-screen.

Also following a trend, Word Pro comes with a mostly inadequate printed manual, good only for beginning users. All other help exists in the on-line files available through the indexed help system familiar to Windows 95 and Windows NT users. This works OK, but it isn't as good as a real technical manual. Still, the on-line help is generally

THE BOTTOM LINE

Lotus Word Pro 96 Edition for Windows 95

NOT Word Pro is a fine word processor, though a step behind Microsoft Word. If the future is cooperative document creation with multiple tools (team computing), then Word Pro has the edge.

PROS: Team computing features; reads and creates Hypertext Markup Language documents; nice graphics and frames.

CONS: Slow performance in some areas; limited frame wrap.

Lotus Development Corp., Cambridge, Mass.; (800) 343-5414, (770) 391-0011; fax: (770) 698-7653; E-mail: info@lotus.com; World Wide Web: http://www.lotus.com.

Price: \$105 estimated retail. SmartSuite costs \$399 estimated retail. **Platform:** Windows 95, Windows NT 3.51. Windows 3:1 version also available.

► Windows network diagramming tool

NetSuite strong in design

By David B. Pickens

NETSUITE Development's NetSuite Professional Design brings some improved, if not new, features to the network diagramming tools category. The most useful of these features is network validation.

Network validation provides some assurances that the design will actually work. Currently, the product validates Layers 1 and 2 of the Open Systems Interconnection model, as well as Electronic Industry Association/Telecommunications Industry Association standards. What spelling checking is to word processing, network validation is to network diagramming. NetSuite provides the information on how a particular piece of equipment can and cannot be configured along with a realistic representation of the item. Updated and new equipment information is available by subscription for \$295 per year.

NetSuite operates by generating work order logs and bill of materials based on the desired change in the network. This is on top of the other predefined reports the pack-

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THE BOTTOM LINE

NetSuite Professional Design, Version 1.0

NOT NetSuite Professional Design makes a strong entrance into the network diagramming tools market. It offers some new features that will prove to be very useful.

PROS: Design validation for Layers 1 and 2 of the Open Systems Interconnection model; work order and bill of materials features are very useful.

CONS: Windows scrolling and sizing feature could be improved; licensing key requirement somewhat annoying; lacks fully functional report writer.

NetSuite Development, Wayland, Mass.; (800) 638-7848; (508) 647-3100; fax: (508) 647-3112; E-mail: info@netsuite.com; World Wide Web: http://www.netsuite.com.

Price: \$495 through Jan. 31, \$995 thereafter. \$295 for annual subscription to the NetSuite Library.

Platform: Windows 3.1, Windows 95, Windows NT.

THE FINE PRINT

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