

HandyWork Newsletter

Winter, 1996

New Directions for HandyWorks

A brief history

HandyWorks was conceived over 13 years ago by Dr. Steven Schram, who at that point was directing research at Life Chiropractic College and simultaneously completing his second doctorate (his first was in Chemistry) in Chiropractic. Personal computers had just begun to hit the market, but there was very little professional software to run them.

HandyWorks was completely rewritten in 1985 when Dr. Schram opened up his practice in Manhattan, and many of his fellow chiropractors, who saw his system, wanted it for their offices. This marked a turning point because what was at that time a very personal system started growing into a professional venture. Manuals, on-line help systems and promotional literature needed to be produced to handle the burgeoning word of mouth referrals.

HandyWorks slowly grew, those first few years, mostly in New York, and mostly among doctors who had seen the system in Dr. Schram's office. Then, in 1992, with the program getting wide acceptance among its New York users, Dr. Schram began advertising in a number of journals, including Chiropractic Products. The response was enthusiastic and over the next several years, hundreds of copies were sold all over the United States.

Then came Windows

Throughout the ten years preceding the introduction of Microsoft Windows, HandyWorks evolved to keep up with the constant changes taking place in the chiropractic and computer world. But with the release of Windows, HandyWorks was at a disadvantage because the language it was written in was unable to fully evolve into the Windows environment. So a decision was made to write a new HandyWorks, but this time in a Windows language, Microsoft Access.

Almost 4 years of efforts have gone into making HandyWorks for Windows. This included the actual programming, as well as writing the manual and help systems. And during this time, Dr. Schram continued to have a full-time practice.

In the summer of 1995, when Peter Henderson, the HandyWorks support person left to work for Reuters News Service in Moscow, a decision was made to stop advertising HW-DOS. The main reasons for this were that, while still an excellent program, able to meet the 99% of the needs of most offices, the DOS version was no longer technologically up to date. Also, the efforts involved in handling the hundreds of inquiries and requests for demos were making Technical Support handling increasingly difficult.

Where we are at now

In July of 1996, Dr. Schram's office switched over to HW for Windows (HWW). And after running it for 4 months, it was released to selected users. Now it is running in dozens of offices. But this brings us to the new directions mentioned in the headline above.

Supporting new users

The most difficult part of running a software business is in the support of new users. They have the most questions and the widest range of support problems. Existing users know the system well, and their support problems are often handled more easily.

In order to reduce our support time, which came mainly from our newer users, we decided to change the marketing direction of HandyWorks. We are now marketing the Windows system primarily to other developers, rather than end-users.

Important notes

We will continue to support both our DOS and Windows users indefinitely.

DOS users who are current in maintenance can still upgrade to Windows.

We will continue to improve and evolve the Windows system. The DOS system will change only slightly, mostly for changes in Medicare billing requirements.

Maintenance Time!

You'll find your annual maintenance bill enclosed with this newsletter. As usual, we give a grace period till mid February for payment. Keeping your maintenance current is important to both of us. First, it keeps us in business so we will be here to help you. Second, it keeps you in business should you have a problem requiring our help.

Maintenance is like insurance in that you hope you don't ever need it, but are happy to have it if you do. And like insurance, should you decide to forgo your maintenance, we will remove you from our support list and leave you fend for yourself.

Upgrade Policy: HandyWorks for DOS is a mature and stable system. Most users are very happy with how their current systems are running. We have found that minor changes we make for some offices are not needed or wanted by others. For this reason, we no longer automatically mail upgrades to everyone. Instead, we "upgrade on demand."

For those of you who want extensive changes, please switch to the Windows version. But please don't switch for the adventure of it, but because you need the special features of the Windows package!

Compuserve Support

We have convinced a number of our Windows sites to open up accounts with Compuserve. There are many benefits to doing this for both of us. First is that if you have a problem and need an update, you can get it e-mailed to your Compuserve account in about 15 minutes! You'll be able to test it immediately and if there are still problems, get them straightened out fast. On our end, it is easier to click and e-mail a file to you than it is to create a disk, its label and envelope, put on stamps and mail it to you.

Also with Compuserve is an Internet gateway. If you haven't been on the Internet, Compuserve offers an inexpensive route into the highway of the future. 1-800-Compuserve can get you started. If you have any questions, we'll be glad to answer them. Or better yet, e-mail us at 72772,2236@Compuserve.com.

Backup Horror, Almost!

What could be wrong?

Dr. R. a Handyworks user since 1985 decided to upgrade his computer. After all, he'd been running on an 10 year old AT, with 1 meg of memory, a small, slow hard disk, and an aging monitor. So he carefully backed up his hard drive and re-installed everything on the new computer.

However, the new computer came with different backup software, and wanting to keep up with the latest in technology, Dr. R switched from his old, yet reliable backup to the new, mouse driven, beautifully colored backup program that came with his machine.

The problem came after only a couple of weeks when his new hard drive refused to wake up one bright and sunny New York morning. "So what, I'll get a new drive and restore from my backup." said Dr. R in a tone filled with pride.

Well, the new hard disk came, but no one told Dr. R that you need to have a copy of the backup software first, in order to use its restore function. He had all the wonderful disks, nicely labeled and in good condition, but no restore software to use them with!

Fortunately, we were able to help Dr. R. and get him restored on his new machine. Which brings us to the moral of this little tale: Keep a separate copy of your backup program on disks. You never know when you might need them.

Electronic Claims

Many of you are using NDC for electronic claims. You get immediate verification your claim is received, and reimbursement times are diminished. HandyWorks is designed to facilitate the submission process and we encourage all of you to try electronic billing. If you want info on electronic billing, call NDC at 800-792-5256. Ask them to send you a new client application package.

Some users employ an outside billing service to send their claims for them. They use a print capture program to catch the billing output, and this is then sent by the rebiller to the various carriers. But if you consider the costs, sending directly to NDC eliminates the delay and gets you into the carriers within 24 hours. That's hard to beat!

Useful Tasks and Reports

Before you close your month out, go to Alt+V and update your accounts receivable data and patient accounts. Then, you'll have an historical reference on your A/R. The monthly report from Alt+V is also valuable. To get the report for previous years, use F9 or F2 to change to the year desired, then press F7 for the report.

The pre-billing report, found through F7 in ALT+7 is one of the most useful reports in HW. Why? Because it tells you what each patient has in unsubmitted claims. We run the report twice, first before we print bill, and then after. This gives us a birds eye view of our unsubmitted claims for all of our accounts.

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