

Softwords

A&L Computer Software Limited

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◆ The Future Is Now...

Talk To Your Computer - It Understands!

In last April's issue of *Softwords* we updated you on the recent advances which have occurred in computer voice recognition technology. It has come a long way since it was introduced to the market place several years ago.

Not only is the software much less expensive today, having been reduced in price from many thousands to as low as a hundred dollars or so, it has also improved to the extent that continuous speech is now possible, rather than having to pause between each word while dictating, as used to be the case.

One such software package which is gaining favor with the medical profession is IBM's *ViaVoice*. *ViaVoice* gives you the capability to command and dictate to your computer in normal continuous speech, the same way you would talk to another person. And if you are a user of Microsoft Word '97 you can even use natural language commands to tell it to do exactly what you want.

For example, when using Microsoft Word '97 you may create documents, insert tables, change fonts, move paragraphs and print documents with simple verbal commands. Saying "Insert a table with three rows and four columns" will do just that. You can even highlight, bold, underline, italicize and fix errors without stopping your dictation.

Those of you who are short of time (and who isn't these days!) will appreciate the capability the software gives you to create macros which allow you to insert previously created blocks of text or even entire documents into reports that you are preparing.

The *ViaVoice 98 Executive* edition comes complete with a 64,000 word active base vocabulary and allows you to increase this by up to an additional 64,000 personal words.

ViaVoice Executive also supports multiple users sharing the same computer and provides the capability for each user

to establish several different working environments. There is even an additional module that can be purchased, *ViaVoice Outloud*, which allows you to proof your work by having the computer read your documents to you through your computer's speakers.

Of particular interest to physicians is the availability of *ViaVoice's Medical Vocabulary* of over 25,000 terms derived from examining thousands of actual patient records. This will allow you to dictate:

- ⇒ Patient history
- ⇒ Patient symptoms and complaints
- ⇒ General examination findings
- ⇒ Radiology, pathology and laboratory test results
- ⇒ Course of action taken
- ⇒ Follow-up therapy

Other useful documents that *ViaVoice* will help you quickly produce include:

- ⇒ Letters to patients
- ⇒ Letters to insurance companies
- ⇒ Follow-up therapy forms
- ⇒ Report templates
- ⇒ Referral letters

Learning to use *ViaVoice* is made easy with the use of a set of 'help' tools that guide you through installation to regular 'how to' support. With *ViaVoice Executive* you can even ask the computer "What can I say?" to list the commands you can use in a particular application.

For those who don't like keyboarding, *ViaVoice* can certainly make life easier.



The User's Corner

Check Your Win95 Operating System It May Not Be Y2K Compliant

Until recently we had been under the impression that all versions of Windows 95 were Year 2000 compliant. Imagine our surprise when we discovered that this was not the case.

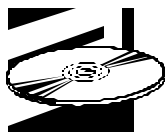
If you are currently using Windows 95 and not planning to upgrade to Windows 98 prior to the year 2000 you should first determine which version of Windows 95 you are using.

In order to do this you need to go through the following simple steps on your computer:

- ⇒ Click your mouse on 'Start' at the bottom left-hand corner of your screen.
- ⇒ On the menu that appears, position your pointer on 'Settings'.
- ⇒ On the menu that appears, click on 'Control Panel'.
- ⇒ Find the 'System' icon in the drop-down window that appears and double-click on it (you may have to scroll down using the drop-down window's right hand scroll bar to find the 'System' icon).
- ⇒ The 'System Properties' screen that will then appear will contain information about your operating system, including the version of Windows 95 you are using.

Your version number may be followed by the letter 'A' or 'B' or no letter at all. If it is followed by letter 'B' your version of Windows 95 is Year 2000 compliant. But if it is followed by the letter 'A' or no letter at all it is not. If this is the case you would be well advised to either upgrade to Windows 98 before the end of 1999 or download a patch from Microsoft's Internet site to ensure your operating system will work as it should come January 1, 1999.

When Does
Win95=Y2000?



A?

B?

*** We're Moving! ***

After almost 10 years in our current location, A&L's Head Office is moving to new premises just a short distance away. As of January 25, 1999 our new address will be:

**175 West Beaver Creek Rd., Suite #6, Richmond Hill,
ON L4B 3M1**

Annual Seminar

Teach & Train '98

Saturday, October 3, 1998 was a fun filled learning experience for over 100 of A&L's clients from across Ontario. This year the Sheraton Parkway Toronto North hotel was the location of our popular annual event.

The morning sessions covered a wide variety of topics, led off by **Peter Berwick**, Director of Practice Advisory Services at the OMA. You have been hearing a lot about the Y2K (Year 2000) issue lately and Peter covered the topic thoroughly, pointing out the many areas of daily life that could be impacted by the so-called 'millennium bug.' It could effect any facility controlled by computers, or any piece of equipment that contains a simple computer chip. The worst case scenario could see such utilities as hydro, heating, telephones and even elevators being adversely effected come January 1st, 2000.

On the other hand, much has been done and is being done to minimize the impact of the millennium bug, although in some areas there is still much more to be accomplished. In the medical field the OMA has a solid program in place to help physician's offices, clinics and hospitals survey their computers and other equipment to detect what needs to be done to ensure everything will work as it should come the beginning of the new millennium.

Seminar delegates also heard from **John Warus** of IBM who described the capabilities of the latest version of **ViaVoice**, which you read about on page 1 of this newsletter. John also gave a demonstration of the software, impressing everyone with its ability to immediately display on the screen what was being dictated, as well as its response to a variety of system commands. One lucky delegate now has the opportunity to see for himself how **ViaVoice** works. He won a copy of the software in one of the many lucky draws that were held during the day.

Bill Petrie, president of ITAC Ontario, updated delegates on the progress being made in the development of Ontario's Smart System For Health. This is a collaborative partnership between the Ministry of Health (MOH), ITAC Ontario and the Ontario Health Providers Association (OMA, OHA etc.)

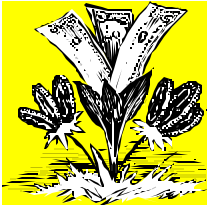
During the afternoon session delegates had the opportunity to see first hand some of the features of A&L's various software applications. Due to the MOH's objective to see more and more physicians submit their claims via EDT, the demonstration of A&L's modem transmission and Overnight Batch Eligibility Check (OBEC) proved to be very popular.

Also our Windows based software, A&L HERO*, and our document imaging software, A&L Document Console attracted plenty of attention.

At the end of the afternoon everyone left with some new ideas to take home to benefit their office operation.



Year 2000 CCA Considerations



Limited Time Government Allowance

Now, we all know that money doesn't grow on trees, or in flower beds. However, there are times during which we can take advantage of opportunities that will cultivate savings to help improve our bottom line. Such an opportunity has been provided to small- and medium-sized businesses by the federal government to ease their transition into the next century.

As we have reported in previous issues of *Softwords*, and as you have probably heard by now from several other sources, the media included, the Year 2000 bug, as it is called, is on its way. Very simply, this is a software design problem caused by a lack of foresight on the part of computer software developers who, over the past few decades, have allowed only the last two digits of the calendar year to be entered into most date fields when storing data in computer files. In their defense, system developers anticipated much of the currently used software would have been obsolete long before the end of the century, but instead, much of it has proved to be considerably more long-lived than expected.

As a result, the past couple of years have seen a world-wide intensive effort to replace or modify software to correct the situation so that when the year 2000 arrives, computers will be able to differentiate between it and the year 1900. The situation is further complicated by the fact that certain types of computer hardware and medical devices with embedded chips may also be affected.

As a client of A&L Computer Software Limited you have nothing to worry about when it comes to our software. It was written to be Year 2000 (Y2K) compliant right from the beginning. Unlike many software developers we anticipated the problem and wrote the software so that it would be able to distinguish between the years 1900 and 2000. The Ministry of Health is also making changes to its software to counter the problem. So where are *you* vulnerable? You need to check your computer hardware, networking and operating systems, as well as other medical equipment which might contain embedded chips that may be affected. The OMA currently has a program in effect to aid physicians in determining where your potential problems may lie. Contact them for advice if you haven't already done so.

At the beginning of this article we mentioned that the federal government has made allowances to help ease the financial burden you may face in upgrading your hardware and software. These are in the form of accelerated capital cost allowances (CCA) for qualifying computer hardware and software purchased by small to medium sized businesses during a specified time period. This allows a 100% write off of eligible expenditures in the year during which they occur. The normal tax depreciation rate for hardware and *system* software (e.g. your operating system) is 30% per year except in the first year when it is 15%. For *application* software (e.g. your billing system) it is 50% per year.

Eligible expenditures are those made to acquire Y2K compliant hardware and software to replace non-compliant hardware and/or software acquired prior to 1998. Maximum eligible **accelerated** CCA deductions that can be claimed amount to 85% of the hardware costs and 50% of the software costs for acquisitions between January 1, 1998 and June 30, 1999, up to a limit of \$50,000. The following example may serve as an illustration:

A physician spends \$30,000 on hardware and \$30,000 on application software. The **normal CCA deductions** on these in the first year are \$4,500 on the hardware ($\$30,000 \times 15\%$) plus \$15,000 on the software ($\$30,000 \times 50\%$).

With the new initiative the **accelerated CCA deduction** for hardware is \$25,500 ($\$30,000 \times 85\%$) and \$15,000 ($\$30,000 \times 50\%$) on the software. This makes a total accelerated CCA of \$40,500, all of it eligible since the total is less than the \$50,000 limit. Therefore, for this example the total CCA that can be claimed (normal plus accelerated) is $\$4,500 + \$15,000 + \$40,500 = \$60,000$. This is 100% of the doctor's initial expenditure. However, keep in mind that if, for instance, the initial software expenditure had been \$50,000 instead of \$30,000 the accelerated CCA on the software would have been \$25,000 ($\$50,000 \times 50\%$), making a total accelerated CCA of $\$25,500$ (hardware) + $\$25,000$ (software) = $\$50,500$. This is \$500 **over** the allowable limit of \$50,000, so all of it

To claim your deduction you will need to file a letter with your tax return specifying the details of what was acquired, when it was acquired, the cost involved, and a description of the non-Y2K resources being replaced.

To provide you with an additional financial advantage in acquiring new computer equipment, A&L has made an arrangement with IBM for special low prices on IBM hardware up to June 30, 1999. Please contact us for further details. ☒

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