

DISTRIBUTED DATA

Software to manage your business

Journal
of the
DDMS Family
of Companies

Resolve to upgrade in '99

December slips away into January, and so begins another year. It's been that way for as long as we've been using a calendar to count days. But this new year is a little different than most. This is the beginning of the last year in the millennium — a momentous occasion on many accounts, not the least of which is your computer's.

Unless you've been living in a cave for the last year or so, you know all about the Y2K problem. If you haven't started taking steps to address the issue for your company, you might just as well start calling that cave home.

The upgrade deadline may be looming closer than you think, especially if your fiscal year ends long before the calendar year. Depending on how your system is set up, you may need to have all upgrades in place before you

close your fiscal year.

In addition, the stampede to upgrade may cause order and shipping backlogs while manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers try to keep up with demand. Getting caught in the rush may delay implementing your upgrade plans.

Upgrading can be expensive. Some companies are charging businesses *thousands or tens of thousands* to bring their computer systems into compliance for 2000.

The Y2K bug can afflict both the software and hardware components of your system. Fixing one doesn't necessarily fix the other.



Software

Software programs let you interact with your system's (see **UPGRADE** page 11)

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Upcoming Meetings & Shows

DDMS Users' Meeting
Feb. 5 - 6 New Orleans

Le Meridien
NSSEA School Equipment
Feb. 18 - 20 Denver

NEOCON South Design Fest
March 1 - 2 Miami Beach

How efficient are you?

Take our Efficiency Quotient Quiz on page 4 to find out! The more you know about your operation, the more you'll be able to improve it.

The way you're doing things may be working great for you — or it may not. The EQ Quiz will walk you through some areas that you may not have thought of as being inefficient — areas like accounting, warehouse and delivery, receiving, file storage and purchasing. Even small changes can make big differences in your bottom line.

Once you've taken the quiz, if you discover your processes could use some streamlining, DDMS can help. Flip over to page 3 for some ideas about how you can cut overhead and boost your margin.



Crescent City site of next users' meeting

DDMS Users' Meeting News

The DDMS Users' Group is the most active users' group in the industry. Each year, DDMS holds meetings and training classes at locations around the continent.

Every DDMS users' meeting is a great opportunity for you to roll up your sleeves and dig into your system. But it's also a lot more. Attending a users' meeting is your chance to ask questions, learn about optional topics, visit with other dealers and shape the look and feel of the next generation of DDMS software.

When you combine all of that with the glitter of New Orleans at Mardi Gras, how can you stay home?

For only \$240 a person, you can learn about the Version 4 software, supplies, Furniture, Graphical, as well as the future of the industry.

While you're in New Orleans for the DDMS Users' Meeting, you'll be staying at Le Meridien, renown for its old world elegance. Located adjacent to the French Quarter, Le Meridien is within easy walking distance of Preservation Hall, the Riverwalk, Bourbon Street and the French Market.

General Sessions

Graphical DDMS

Review the next generation of DDMS software. The point-and-click-format makes the system easier than ever.

Version 4 Preview

Join us for classes covering the Version 4 software. Take an indepth look at the enhancements scheduled for the next version release.

Evaluating your Business

Join two long-time DDMS dealers as they share ideas and information about benchmarking. Then in the second half of this double session, you'll evaluate your utilization of the system for efficiency. You'll receive a checklist of features that will save you time and money.

State of the Independent Dealer

Industry experts discuss the future of the independent. Find out what the future holds for you in the marketplace of tomorrow.

Network Concepts

Setting up a network is not as difficult as you might think. Stop

wasting time and money copying files between PCs. Lower your overhead through networking.

Optional Topics

Furniture

Put the efficiency experts to work for you when you capitalize on the DDMS Furniture module. In this detailed three-session class, you'll cover the Furniture module flow, including TranSpec, Giza and Version 4's TBL enhancements. Say goodbye to double and triple data entry forever.

Database Marketing with Neil Saviano

Join marketing guru Neil Saviano for an all-day class on making the most of your business. Neil shows you an inexpensive and highly effective way to generate leads using Dunn & Bradstreet's software. Find out how to maximize them using marketing materials available through the Internet. Learn to manage your contacts using GoldMine. Put the power and versatility of your DDMS system to work for you in an easy-to-use Windows format with RoadRunner.



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Improving your bottom line through technology

Low unemployment rates make it an employee's job market, ballooning the cost-of-labor line on your P&L. Finding and keeping a quality workforce is more challenging than ever, and can seriously impact your ability to remain in business.

"The labor crunch is not going to end any time soon," said Butch West, owner of A-Z Office Resource, Inc., in Columbia, Tenn. He points to the power channel as an indicator of things to come. "Look at Boise Cascade, which I consider to be the premiere national dealer right now. They've got a tremendous advantage over the rest of the field in that they're the most efficient operator out there. They can afford to buy market share because their costs are so low. That's what we're competing with.

"In order for the independent dealer to survive, we've got to leverage the technology available," said West. "Where we can make the largest impact to our bottom line is in the area of efficiencies. We've got to use the DDMS system to help us get there."

Using your DDMS system to accomplish routine tasks that are currently being handled by employees can save you both time and money.

Pioneer Office Products in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has grown steadily from \$4 million in revenues, to almost \$7 million in only four years. While Pioneer hired additional sales people to bring in more business, their administrative staff of one has not changed in over 10 years. John Wasta, Pioneer's owner, said business automation made that possible.

Automate what?

No doubt your employees spend blocks of time every day on tasks your DDMS system could be doing, allowing them to handle more pressing matters. The system is designed to handle the repetitive tasks bogging down your workforce. DDMS gives dealers a lot of options when it comes to automation.

Proc Files for Period End

"Manual day-end processing, what a waste of time," Bob Rosa said. Rosa owns Rosa's Inc., in Richmond, Ind.

Period-end, especially day-end, is something you do over and over, keystroke after keystroke. It's a procedure that never varies and must be done exactly right every time.

A procedure file or "proc" file is a macro that lets you program your system to do certain repetitive tasks for you, ensuring accuracy and consistency.



When you use the launcher with a proc, you don't even have to remember to initiate a procedure — the system remembers for you and carries it out.

"We used to be here every night for an hour and a half — it was either me or the key op. We'd spend hundreds of hours here every year performing this single task. At month-end, we might spend all night. Now at 5:05 we're out the door. Automating day-end with a proc file puts money in your pocket every day."

Automated Short-buy

The automated short-buy creates and transmits purchase orders for you automatically. It also pre-receives the purchase orders, and can transfer backorders to another P/O.

Bob Buettner, a consultant with Gardenville Business Services in Baltimore, believes in the value of ASB. He said, "Virtually every dealer I work with I try to move toward auto short buy."

Buettner, a seasoned veteran of the office products battlefield, said some dealers are reluctant to surrender the old way of doing things.

"Sometimes it's hard for a dealer to understand the monetary savings. So I ask them what if their buyer calls in sick tomorrow? Everything gets messed up because someone else has to do it."

Automated short-buy doesn't just save time and money; it also makes your business run more smoothly by allocating the appropriate resource to the job. Why waste the time and talent of an employee on a task a machine can do cheaply and effectively for you?

(See *AUTOMATION* page 6)

**"In order for the independent dealer to survive, we've got to leverage the technology available."
— Butch West
A-Z Office Resource, Inc.
Columbia, Tenn.**

Always A	Sometimes B	Never C	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	On a quarterly basis, we maintain correct department classification on items.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We load our O/PUS updates correctly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Credits are entered into the system for pickup using the GX Credit feature.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We designed a custom credit pickup form.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Using the new Vendor Credit Return module, we do returns to vendors daily.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Morning receiving from wholesalers is done at a rate of at least 50 packages/man/hour.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Picking is done using the Picking Manifest program.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We use split lines so costing is always correct and we know who the product vendor is.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We use a Wrap & Label or a Wrap & Pack program.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our drivers deliver at a package per hour rate consistently.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Warehouse flow is not congested due to space problems.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The warehouse is set up in hit order.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We use floating bins for bulk products.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We create the shipping manifest using barcodes or mass-create it.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We use barcoding to receive merchandise in the warehouse.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We use barcoding in our retail POS environment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Using the automated short-buy, we send multiple orders every day to our wholesalers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We designed a custom short-buy for furniture and direct buys.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We update pricing from direct buy vendors regularly using the (E) screen.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We maintain our contracts file and have a listing of all contracts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Utilizing specialty contracts, we currently use variable margin pricing.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We protect our margin by using the Minimum Margin by Customer or Item.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our inventory usage reports are sorted by margin dollars.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We use recurring journal entries for General Ledger posting.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We post COGS to G/L monthly through (WE) G/L Reports.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We fax copies of invoices and statements to customers during collections.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We fax acknowledgements through the system to customers who request it.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We fax purchase orders through the system to vendors.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We use the launcher and proc files to automate processes as much as possible.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Using a proc file, we back up daily, rotating five tapes a week, and saving a monthly tape.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Using a proc file, we perform a system compression weekly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We re-index all database files after quarterly updates.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We rename history archive files using the (M) Operational Procedures screen.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Our sales history file names are numeric (for example, 01-98, or 0198-S).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We have the Journal Index set up in the (LA) screen so that we can inquire on past journals.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We perform month-end from the (M) screen.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We reboot with the reset button only as a last resort.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We use Report Writer to customize reports.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We have a consultant review our business at least every two years.

Remember that efficiency is a journey, not a destination. There's always room for improvement.

How'd you do?

Time to tally up your score. Give yourself three points for every A box you checked. B answers are worth two points and Cs are worth one point.

- 100 + Congratulations! You're in great shape. The Navy could take lessons from you. You're not only efficient, you're profitable, too. You're doing everything right.
- 99 - 80 You're a progressive dealer with an eye on the bottom line. Now that you've found some of your problem areas, you're ready to roll up your sleeves and get to work. With a little fine tuning, you'll be in great shape.
- 79 - 60 You might be stuck in a rut. It's time to update your processes. Take a look at *Improving your bottom through efficiency* on page 3 for some ideas about how you can increase your efficiency and hit new levels of profitability.
- 0 - 59 Yikes! Have you converted your business to computer yet? All is not lost, but we have lots of work to do!

AUTOMATION
continued from page 3

Buettner said, "One of my dealers asked me to implement ASB for their business. However, the buyer was against it. He said he could do it faster. And he was right; he could do it faster. But every day at 4:00, whether he was with a customer or not, he had to drop whatever he was doing to go back to his desk. With ASB, he doesn't have to worry, no matter what he's doing at 4:00 the short buy kicks off."

You want to make ordering office supplies from you as convenient and easy for your customers as possible — even if that means someone has to stay late every night to get in a final order for the day to your wholesaler. That doesn't have to wreak havoc on your overtime budget.

"I just worked with one dealer who can order from United until 6:00. He was letting his customers order right up until 5:30 and one of his girls was staying late to place the order. So I taught him the short-buy and he does it at 4:30. For the next hour, he continues to put orders in and at 5:30 he locks the door. At 6:45, ASB kicks in and buys that one hour's worth of material from United. When they come in the next morning, they final receive that one P/O and flush that small batch of tickets. So they're able to take care of their customers' orders right up to closing without doing any ordering. It's working great," Buettner said.

Buettner also sang the praises of Version 3's Matching on Purchasing Vendor feature. "It has helped a lot," he said.

When you create a call number, you can match on the vendor number to limit the items to those with a specific vendor number. The system displays the vendor with the lowest cost for an item in the Purchasing Vendor Record in the (E) Inventory Master screen. By matching on the purchasing vendor rather than the wholesaler's vendor number, you can take advantage of the lowest cost.

Buettner said the feature gives his dealers the flexibility to shop multiple vendors to find the lowest cost. "I have one dealer that first matches on purchasing vendor for Daisytek. He transfers the items to a P/O and holds it. Then he matches on purchasing vendor for lowest price for OHenry. What OHenry doesn't have, he sends to United. What United doesn't have, he sends back to OHenry for a second shot. From there, he goes to SP Richards. At the end of the day, when the dealer runs his last manual short-buy, he looks at the Daisytek P/O to see which items he needs to deliver the next morning. He pulls them from the P/O, since Daisytek requires two-day delivery, and moves them to his manual United. He transmits the remainder to

Daisytek."

A/P Purchase Order (DO) Screen

Using the (DO) Accounts Payable Purchase Orders screen, you can match purchase orders generated from the (F) Purchase Order Entry screen to the vendor's invoice.

"The (DO) screen is a great time saver," said West.

In spite of the time savings, Buettner said that only a few of his dealers use it. "I feel more should use it. It's a whole different attitude toward posting invoices." Buettner said that difference is perhaps one of the reasons some opt to bypass the (DO) screen.

"That mentality is going to put some dealers in the poorhouse," West said. "Sure, it took our people a little time to learn it, but now, even through our growth phase, we haven't had to add anybody to Accounts Payable. In fact, our A/P clerk is handling some other duties."

"The biggest pitfall a manager can fall into is thinking he can do a task faster than he can teach someone else to do it. With a one-shot deal that may be the case, but for repetitive tasks, you need to delegate. It's the same way with the system. A/P invoices are here to stay. We need to find a way to live with them," West said.

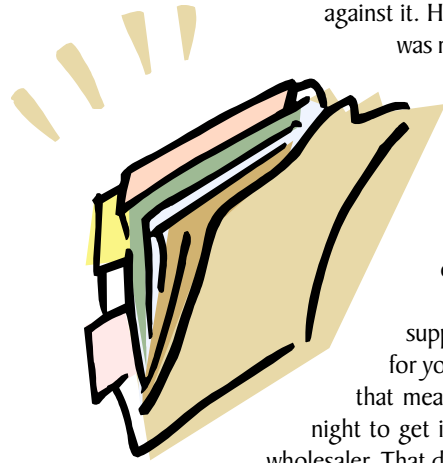
Buettner said, "The (DO) screen makes the process of posting A/P invoices a lot more efficient and accurate. It gives dealers an easy way to compare receipts to invoices."

The (DO) screen also allows you to easily make changes to your invoices and automatically posts information to your AP-MASTER file in one easy step. Through the (DO) screen, you can:

- Split invoice costs among departments and change a department total
- Post freight costs to location 01 as well as multiple locations
- Limit items by acknowledgment number and received date
- Change the cost on an item and reflect the cost change on the customer's invoice.

If you split invoice costs between departments, this screen can greatly reduce the amount of time you spend calculating department totals and entering information in the (D) screen. Using the manual method to split invoice costs, you must first review the vendor's invoice and calculate the amount each department owes toward the total invoice amount. Then, you make a separate line entry in the (D) screen for each department's total. Instead of manually calculating each department's amount, you can also use the (DO) screen by simply entering the P/O numbers from the vendor's invoice and letting the system calculate the department totals for you. The system then spreads the totals to the various departments and posts the information in just a few steps.

In the (DO) screen, you can also easily change department totals. This feature comes in handy if you accidentally



"That mentality is going to put some dealers in the poorhouse," West said.

charge the wrong department for a purchase, or if you want to spread item expenses among separate departments. It's also a time saver for P/Os with multiple locations so you can split the freight cost among them.

When you receive a shipment from a vendor, the shipment is compared to your purchase order as well as the vendor's invoice. If the vendor does not ship all the items listed on the purchase order, you should only post the items you receive. The (DO) screen lets you limit the items by acknowledgment number and receiving date when you post the payment.

Occasionally, the cost of an item varies between the ticket and the purchase order. You can change the item's cost through the (DO) screen to reflect the cost change on the customer's invoice, allowing you to correct the cost in your sales journal. This eliminates researching the item cost and manually changing the information in the (G) Order Entry screen.

A/R Quick Pay

Posting customer checks has never been faster or easier than with the DDMS A/R Quick Pay function. Once you retrieve the account record, enter the check number and payment amount. The system displays all the open invoices. You can select invoices by P/O number, cutoff date or some other date range. The system applies the payment automatically. You can also mark specific invoices for payment. When you have allocated all of the money, you can post the payments or make changes. Quick Pay also lets you post one check to multiple accounts.

Picking Manifest and Shipping Manifest

Rising labor costs have made it more important than ever to maximize an employee's time. One dealer said that because he's nearly doubled the hourly wage he pays his drivers and order pullers, he has to use the system to help them be more productive.

"An inefficient driver at \$6 an hour doesn't hurt nearly as bad as it does at \$10 or \$11 an hour," he said.

You can automate the process of pulling and verifying orders using the picking manifest feature. You can build a picking manifest limited by route, salesperson, customer or order status and specify the number of lines to include on each pick ticket for easier pulling. You can also verify pulled orders with verification limited to the tickets included on a specified manifest.

Buettner said, "I've used the Shipping Manifest with a lot of dealers. I even had one dealer who went so far as to put in the stop numbers, but every new customer who didn't have a stop number was winding up at the top of the report. I developed a custom report for him of customers in route order first and then in stop number order, leaving three blank numbers between every customer. When the driver comes back, he checks the list to see what number is available so we don't reassign numbers already being used.

Every week we reprint the report with the updated information."

Buettner told of one dealer in a tourist-intensive area with traffic so heavy at times that crossing the road to make a delivery was impossible. To fix that problem, he used the shipping manifest to organize the route so that drivers deliver to all the stops on one side of the 17-mile road, before turning around and making deliveries to the other side.

Version 3's Shipping Manifest allows for customization and some dealers have moved to it for that very reason. The previous format listed a customer name and address, an invoice number and a signature line. If there was a second invoice, the same information repeated. Buettner said some like to have the customer name listed only once on the manifest, with all the invoices listed with a single signature line.

Credit Card Module

Double data entry is a waste of time and money. The Credit Card module makes that a thing of the past.

"Even though we have no retail stores, our credit card volume has increased five fold," West said. "We're finding more and more of our customers are going to a procurement card. We brought the credit card module up about three months ago. It has freed one person about four hours a week. Previously, that person was collecting all the credit card tickets then entering them on a PC. With the credit card module, the information flows straight through."

OPUS

"Manual pricing updates take days or weeks. By the time you get it done, it's time to update pricing again," Rosa said.

Loading price updates from vendors one at a time is time-consuming and complex. There's a better way: the O/PUS OPdb database. Subscribers receive quarterly updates that include item files, flyers and promotions from one or all of the wholesalers and buying groups on the OPdb database with *no duplicate items*.

"What would we do without it?" Rosa asked.

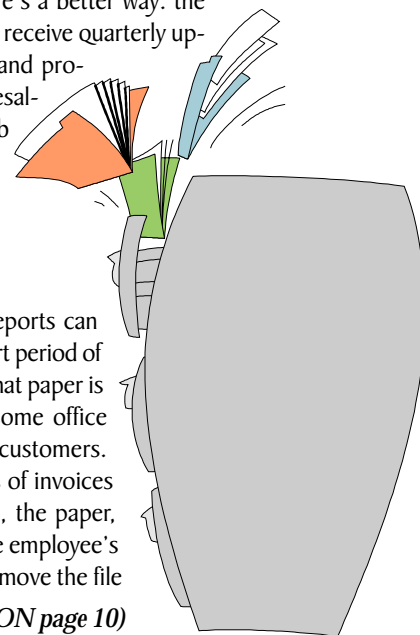
And then there's the paper

Printing scads of invoices and reports can run into thousands of dollars in a short period of time. Retaining and maintaining all that paper is another huge expense. Rosa said some office products dealers are their own best customers.

"Dealers who keep paper copies of invoices have the expense of the file folders, the paper, the file cabinets. And don't forget the employee's time to file all that. Then they get to move the file

(See AUTOMATION page 10)

**"Manual day-end processing, what a waste of time."
—Bob Rosa
Rosa's Inc.
Richmond, Ind.**



Automation gives furniture dealers edge over competition

Lowering your overhead adds dollars to your bottom line. With the nation's jobless rate plummeting, labor costs are rising. The fewer people it takes to operate your business day-to-day, the bigger advantage you have over the competition.

Employing the DDMS system to do repetitive tasks frees your staff for more important jobs — like taking care of your customers.

John Wasta, Pioneer Office Products, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, said, "In the last four years, we've grown from being a \$4 million dollar dealership to being a \$7 million dollar dealership, so our needs are growing quickly. One of the reasons we've been able to grow so rapidly is through automation.

"We've still got just one person as our sales administrator. When she started with us over 10 years ago, it was a full-time job to keep up with three salespeople and \$3 million dollars worth of sales. We've still only got that one person and now we have more than four sales people doing almost \$7 million in sales," Wasta said.

Every minute an employee spends entering duplicate data into your computer system is a minute wasted. Those minutes add up over time and can wind up costing you.

The DDMS Furniture module is designed to address the specific needs of furniture dealers. It eliminates double and triple data entry.

"Using the Furniture module, you can create your purchase order at the time of order entry. I use it to enter quotes and then release the quotes to orders. I know you can do that in the (G) Order Entry screen, but with the furniture module, you can create P/Os and tag projects," said Julia West, owner of A-Z Office Resource, Inc., in Columbia, Tenn. "If you create the order through the (G) screen, you have to go through the short-buy. The Furniture module does it all in one step. Plus you've got the pricing matrix where you specify the margin you want on a job. You can load that in right there instead of having to figure it, then enter it.

"It definitely saves us a lot of time. With furniture, there's just so much more detail. I like the fact that you can put in a longer model number. When you're dealing with a special finish or a chair with COM yardage and it's not all going to go into that magic model number, you're going to need some more lines. The furniture module takes care of that."

West said A-Z will do about \$23 million this year, with about 30 percent of that revenue gleaned from the

furniture division. She and her husband, Butch, bought A-Z about 13 years ago and closed the retail stores to focus on the commercial business. The company employs 80 in five locations.

Stuart Hoda, executive vice president of Bluestein's The Office People, said his Malden, Mass., company relies heavily on automation to run his business.

"We use the DDMS system for quote preparation and tracking, and for order entry. Creating a SIF file makes the system single-entry from design to order entry, to quotes, to processing and billing. It's very efficient," he said.

"We're online with Haworth, our primary furniture wholesaler. We electronically send them the SIF file directly, and also import the SIF file directly into DDMS."

West concurred. "I find it very useful that I can create my orders and send them, rather than having them go through the short-buy. That's really important to me."

TranSpec, an easy-to-use Windows utility program from DDMS, automates the transfer of SIF files between your specifier package and your DDMS system. This program was developed to work with the DDMS Furniture module but works with any program that uses SIF files.

TranSpec imports furniture quotes from a Windows PC and releases them to orders in one quick step. Once you finalize the furniture specifications, just import the quote into your DDMS system and release it to an order. Select the SIF file to transfer, specify a customer, order-writer, and salesperson (optional), and you are ready to go. To make this even easier, TranSpec retrieves customers, order-writers, and salespeople from your DDMS databases and displays them in standard Windows dialog boxes so you can make your selections. When the file is transferred, the system displays the released order with the pick number assigned by your DDMS system.

While TranSpec was developed for use with the furniture module, it can make life easier for anyone who imports SIF files and releases them to orders in their DDMS system. The program features a standard Windows interface with point-and-click dialog boxes; and a button bar.

Wasta said, "So much of the stuff our administrative assistant used to do like specification and loading in lineitem-by-lineitem no longer is necessary because of TranSpec. For years we did single line orders that said

"Now we can track individual items. And with the new Furniture module, we can track individual invoices within a project."
— John Wasta
Pioneer Office Products
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

"I find it very useful that I can create my orders and send them, rather than having them go through the short buy. That's really important to me."
— Julia West
A-Z OfficeResource, Inc., Columbia, Tenn.

'as per attached' and we'd attach the CAP specs to the order. There were some real disadvantages to that especially if you got split shipments. Now we can track individual items. And with the new Furniture module, we can track individual invoices within a project. That's one of our goals now that we have our NT server and we can track project numbers outside the DDMS system so that it's accessible to anyone in the office."

Like Hodas, Wasta said his company, which purchased the DDMS system in 1989, relies heavily on their DDMS system. "With the exception of quotes, we do everything with the DDMS system — everything from order processing through general ledger, posting accounts payable and accounts receivable, payroll, everything. Our quote process is done from the salesperson's laptop. We use the SteelCase Performance software. For larger projects, our designers become involved. They use CAP Studio. Once the order is ready, we use TranSpec to translate the order to our DDMS system and process it from there," Wasta said.

Pioneer's market keeps margin, efficiency and profitability on the front burner for Wasta.

"Cedar Rapids has been blessed the last four or five years with a strong economic base so anyone who couldn't make it somewhere else has opened an office here. Our financial comparisons indicate we are in a tighter competitive situation than other dealers in NOPA. Our margins have always been tighter.

"We're also in the unenviable position of have 90 percent of our business come from 10 percent of our customers every year. Between 70 and 75 percent of those customers change every year. We're very project driven. We always wonder what happens the year it totally shuts down and the projects go away, but we've been able to weather it to date."

With a 75-year history, weathering the storms of the marketplace is nothing new to Pioneer.

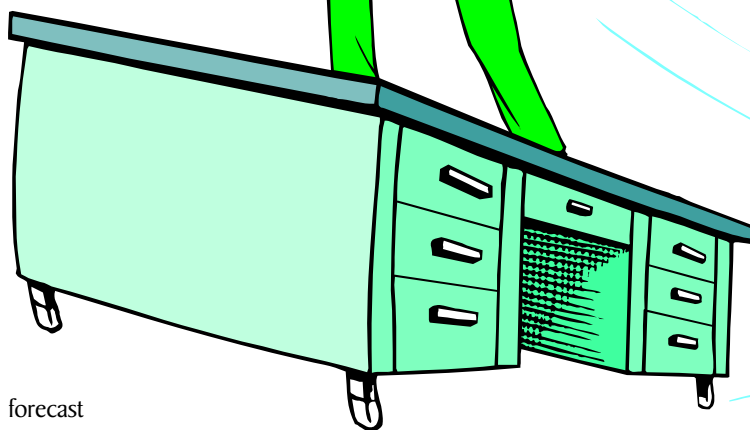
Wasta said, "My grandfather bought the business from the company he was working for. It was a division of a school supply company. Back in 1924 they started the division. In 1936, he bought it from them for \$1500 and started running it as a single proprietorship."

Wasta and his brother, Philip, have been running the family business since 1991. Their attitude toward automation has fueled the company's growth.

"No matter how well we're doing with what we currently have, we're always looking at what we're going to do next. We've always tried to figure out which investments will give us the best return, rather than which are the neatest, greatest little whiz-bang. It makes us behind in some areas, but lets us capitalize on the areas we're ahead in to keep us ahead of the game."

In addition to all the other features of the Furniture module, it also provides the reports necessary to give you an accurate picture of where your business is.

Hodas mentioned several reports that Bluestein's relies on heavily. "Quotes Outstanding shows me all activity sorted by salesperson so I can see all their quotes. Then I run another program DDMS built for us called Outstanding Projects Not Billed. It allows me to look at all the items that have been billed. It lists the bill dates and the ship dates, so I can




forecast when items will bill. I look at it frequently to see how we're doing, what's about to be billed and track the orders. Then I also run the normal monthly sales reports that tell me what's been billed.

"Our staff uses the P/O Tracking Report by Customer that allows us to track the status of a particular item when a customer calls so we can see when an item's on backorder."

Bluestein's, in business for over 50 years as Samuel Bluestein Company Inc., is still a family business. The Hodas brothers, related to the Bluestein family by marriage, purchased the company this year. However, Ken wasn't new to the business. He's been with the company for over 10 years, working in all aspects of the business.

The brothers changed the name to let their customers know that they are office experts. In addition to office furniture, the company carries all the necessities for an office, from paper and pens to computer diskettes, data products, janitorial supplies and filing systems.

Their contract furniture division, OfficeScapes, carries new and refurbished Haworth panel systems, seating and casegoods. Their comprehensive services include office design, space planning and redesign of existing office space.

Despite their differences, all three of these furniture dealers have one thing in common: they all capitalize on the efficiencies of the DDMS Furniture module. 

"We use the DDMS system for quote preparation and tracking, and for order entry. Creating SIF file makes the system single-entry from design to order entry, to quotes, to processing and billing. It's very efficient."
— Stuart Hodas
Bluestein's The Office People
Malden, Mass.

AUTOMATION
continued from page 7

to an archive box and a year later, they get to shread the file. That's real productive, isn't it?

"Why keep a copy of all the invoices for a particular customer when your computer system does it for you? If the customer needs a copy you can have the system fax them one. You save time, you save postage, you save the paper."

"Some office products dealers are their own best customers," Rosa said.

Should you automate?

Automation can require that you begin to do business in a way you never have before. As West pointed out, "It's in our nature to resist change." Is it worth the time and effort required? A little math can help you determine that.

Multiply the hours a day an employee spends on a particular task by five days a week, then by 52 weeks a year. Multiply that amount by the employee's hourly wage, including benefits. That number is the dollar amount you spend every year on that task.

If your staff spends 2 hours a day on purchasing and you pay \$18 an hour in salary and benefits, you're spending over \$9,000 a year on something you could accomplish using the DDMS automated short-buy.

Could you stand to cut \$9,000 from the cost-of-labor line on your P&L? That's just one example of how leveraging the available technology puts money back in your pocket. To find out how you can put the DDMS system to work for you, call us at 1-800-366-3367.

Cycle counting makes inventory easy

The best way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time.

— Ancient Proverb

Nothing inspires dread like an annual inventory count. It's a long, tedious job. There is a better way. Cycle counts are smaller, more manageable counts that are performed frequently. The Cycle Counts module provides the means for cycle counting your inventory, including count sheets, blank count sheets, count sheet page control, variance reporting, manual and bar-coded count entry, "snapshot" on-hand updating, and extended dollar reports. It also includes features to help prevent errors and to help you quickly correct those that do occur.

The Cycle Count module lets you organize to your specifications by offering you flexibility in your count sheet creation. You can create count sheets for a range of bin locations, stock classes, departments, vendors, or manufacturers. That way, you can count as much or as little of your inventory as you want at whatever frequency works best for your business.

The Cycle Count module is one of several features available through the DDMS Specialist Platform. It provides several innovative custom programs at prices for the masses. For more information, call the DDMS Specialist Division at 1-800-366-3367.

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10:21:34          (RC) Cycle Count Report Selection Rev. (06/05/98)          01/10/96
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A.Create Count Sheets File          Cycle Count Batch Number ?
B.Print Inventory Count Sheets      Cycle Count Volume Serial ?IN
C.Print Page Control Log
D.Enter Inventory Counts
E.Print Missing Page Report
F.Print Inventory Variance Report    Variance Type (D=Dollar, P=Percent) ?D
                                       Variance Amount ? 50.00 Percentage ?..
G. Print Blank Count Sheets And Blank Page Log      Print Page Log ?Y
                                       How Many Page Log Pages ?
H.Post Counts To Inventory          By Variance ?Y          Save File For Archive ?Y
I.Print Extended Inventory Report    Report Format (F=Full or S=Summary) ?..
J.Purge Cycle Count File
K.Update O/H In Count File          Bin Num. From ? ....      To ? ....
L.Count History Archive             Vendor From ? .....      To ? .....
Z.Cycle Count Parameters            Company From ? .....      To ? .....
                                       Item # From ? .....      To ? .....
Report Cost Y/N ?Y Method ?M (M,W,P)  I.Class From ? .          To ? .
Create Sort [I] # Of Records ? ....  I.Dept. From ? .          To ? .
(E=Exp,D=Sales,H=Hits,Q=Qty,0=0/H)    Page # From ? .....      To ? .....
=====Archive File ?JOUR-I          Volume ?IN
Request [.] Location? 1 Printer ?P1    Copies ? 1 Totals Only? . (Y/N)
    
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UPGRADE
continued from page 1

databases and applications. For DDMS users, all software upgrades are included in your monthly maintenance fees. For your software to be Y2K proof, you must have Version 3.C or later loaded. To get your Version 3.E software upgrade, complete the form below and mail or fax it to us.



Some systems — even some new ones — may not pass the date rollover test. This isn't necessarily a

problem. When you load Version 3, which includes an update for the PGDOS or UNIX operating system, it corrects the date rollover. As long as your system passes the other three tests, you need not upgrade your hardware.

The upgrade deadline may be looming closer than you think, especially if your fiscal year ends long before the calendar year. Depending on how your system is set up, you may need to have all upgrades in place before you close your fiscal year.

Hardware

Your system's operating system may also be vulnerable to the Y2K bug. The Version 3 software general release includes a special utility program that automatically performs four tests on your system hardware. The results of each test — either "pass" or "fail" — appear immediately on your screen.

In order to be Y2K compatible, your system's hardware must be capable of:


- rolling the date over from 1999 to 2000;
- storing 8-digit dates;
- acknowledging that 2000 is a leap year;
- acknowledging that 2001 is not a leap year.

To be Year 2000 Compliant, you must:

- load Version 3.C or later software
- load Version C201 operating system
- test your hardware

Are you ready?

Cut to the chase

If you plan to be in business Jan. 3, 2000, you must load year 2000 compliant software and test your hardware. Don't be a casualty of the new millennium. 

Version 3.E Order Form

Documentation Type:

Basic Software materials (tape, diskettes, overview video)

Price	Qty	Total
\$27.95	1	\$27.95

Indicate 3.5" floppy drive 5.25" floppy type: combination floppy

System type: PGDOS Windows NT UNIX

*You need to order some form of documentation.

CD-ROM Documentation	\$35.95	_____	_____
Printed Documentation Update	\$59.95	_____	_____
CD-ROM and Videos	\$89.00	_____	_____
Printed Documentation and Videos	\$97.00	_____	_____
CD-ROM, Printed Documentation, and Videos	\$119.00	_____	_____
Additional Set of 7 Videos	\$69.00	_____	_____

Grand Total:

Your order will be charged to your DDMS account.

\$ _____

COMPANY INFORMATION

Company: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Current Software Version : _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Contact Name: _____

To order your Version 3.E software, complete the form at left and fax or mail to **(817) 431-8303 Attn: Version 3 DDMS P.O. Box 507 Keller, Texas 76244**



Attention IS Dealers: Simplify with EPIC

**“EPIC has enabled us to land a statewide supplies contract with a customer that has over a hundred buyers.”
—Michael Cudaback
Eakes Office Plus
Grand Island, Neb.**

Say goodbye to reams of paperwork forever while opening new customer service, sales, and marketing channels to give your customers a direct link to your DDMS system.

Working together, Independent Stationers and DDMS have created an interactive program interface that saves you time and money, enabling you to meet your customers' needs accurately and quickly.

Customers can check pricing on a real-time basis, enter new orders, and check the status of existing orders — all from their desktop PC. Since your customer is entering his own order online, you need fewer order-takers and purchasers.

Michael Cudaback, MIS manager for Eakes Office Plus in Grand Island, Neb., said, “EPIC has enabled us to land a statewide supplies contract with a customer that has over a hundred buyers. One of their criteria was that we have an Internet ordering site that was easy to use and intuitive. It had to enable them to use their pricing on an accurate, up-to-date basis. They wanted to be able to track the status of an order, get confirmation that it had been received by Eakes Office Plus.”

Cudaback noted the flexibility of EPIC as being an added ben-

efit for Eakes. “With EPIC, we can offer Internet ordering for any size customer. The statewide contract caused us to jump into the fray, but we've also added smaller customers, even single buyers. They need easy Internet access and an online item catalog for shopping, too.”

Using the IS EPIC electronic catalog, your customers build their own orders at their convenience 24 hours-a-day, using product descriptions, color photos and even special contract pricing that you set up. Since they can see what they're ordering, you have fewer returns.

The point-and-click format makes it easy for virtually anyone to place an order with no special training, although training is available. The special DDMS-EPIC interface pulls pricing and contract information directly from your DDMS system. Real-time access lets you implement promotional pricing immediately.

Getting EPIC is easy....

Call your IS representative and request EPIC. IS calls DDMS and requests EPIC authorization for you. It's that easy. Call today to get online with EPIC. **D**



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Jan. 3, 2000

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I told you we should have upgraded our system to Version 3.