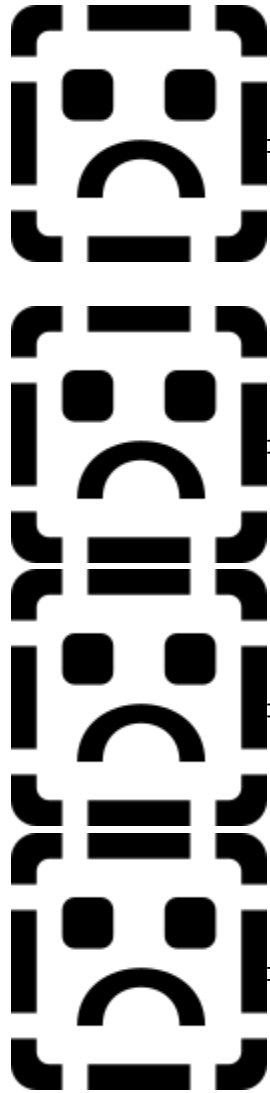


The Shareware Authors Resource Guide™ Version 4.4.1

Copyright© 1995-2005 NorthStar Solutions ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

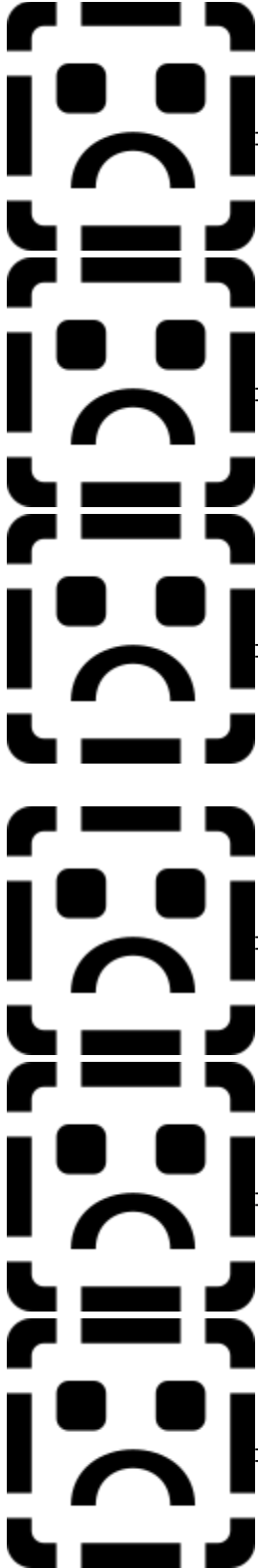


Introduction / Overview

Steps to Success - An Overview

Research the Potential Market

Program for the Shareware Market



*Pull in the Payments*

*Distribute to Key Places*

*Run Your Shareware Business Like a Business*

*The Business of Shareware*

*How Much will I Make?*

*What will be my download to registration rate?*



*How Much Should I Charge?*

*Theft Prevention*

*Copyrighting Your Programs*

*Adding a Trademark*

*The Internal Revenue Service (IRS)*

*The Small Business Administration (SBA)*



*Small Business Success*

*National Association of Self Employed*

*Product Support*

*Other Business Resources*

*Distribution*

*Writing Program Descriptions*



Internet Distribution

Commercial Information Services

License Example

Shareware Description

file\_id.diz

vendor.doc



Increase Orders!!!

More Orders = More Profit

NorthStar Solutions' Services

Many new and established businesses alike are turning to NorthStar

Solutions for their order processing needs. We are confident that we have

the best combination of low fees and essential services you need to ensure

you keep your profits as high as possible while also ensuring customers can

easily make their purchases.

Please visit our web site for a list of all the features we offer.

## Introduction and Disclaimer

### DESCRIPTION

The Shareware Authors Resource Guide™ provides shareware authors with valuable information, resources, and contacts important to the success of their shareware business. The SARG and the information contained in it can be used absolutely free. You may not modify or sell it directly. If you see information that needs to be added, removed, or updated, please let us know.

### DISTRIBUTION POLICY

Please distribute this guide. The shareware concept is an exciting one and



~~benefits both shareware programmers and end users. The more we can do to nurture it, the better. If you are a distributor, you may distribute the SARG in its original (unaltered) form to any place you wish unless you are notified otherwise. If you charge a fee for copying and distribution, the cost may not exceed \$9.00 per copy.~~

DISCLAIMER

~~Users of the Shareware Authors Resource Guide (SARG) must accept this~~

~~disclaimer of warranty: "THE SARG IS SUPPLIED AS IS. THE AUTHOR~~

~~DISCLAIMS ALL WARRANTIES, EXPRESSED OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING, WITHOUT~~

~~LIMITATION, THE WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY AND OF FITNESS FOR~~

~~ANY PURPOSE. THE AUTHOR ASSUMES NO LIABILITY FOR DAMAGES, DIRECT~~

~~OR CONSEQUENTIAL, WHICH MAY RESULT FROM THE USE OF THE SARG OR~~

~~THE INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN."~~

## Updating the SARG

If you provide a service to the shareware industry, particularly to shareware authors, we welcome your input. Please understand that we are not making any profit for compiling or distributing this guide. Admittedly, there is a motive: we use the SARG as a vehicle to mention our own services of accepting credit card payments for shareware authors via our secure Internet cyberstore, our 800 number, e-mail, and fax number. However, as you will see, there is a lot of valuable information packed in the SARG -- not just ours.

If you see information that needs to be added, removed, or updated, please

let us know. We try to keep it all as accurate as possible so everyone will

benefit.

[Click here to contact us via e-mail now](#)

Contacting NorthStar Solutions

Just click on any of the e-mail links at our web site to contact us.

## Research the Potential Market

### RECYCLING AN IDEA THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE

A great shareware program is going to enjoy little success if there are dozens of other fabulous programs of its kind already on the market. — Make sure there is a need for your program before you spend months writing something somebody else has already done and flooded the market with. — (Of course, don't let a little competition deter you if you think you can do better -- or the competition hasn't found its way deep into the market or you can add a new feature that would likely be in high demand.) — Search for the key words on the various places that distribute shareware.

## IDENTIFY IF THE PROGRAM WILL APPEAL TO A WIDE AUDIENCE

As you try to identify a void for your product type, also keep in mind that your program must be useful to a lot of other people for it to work in the shareware market. That is, even if you can't find another program of the kind you wish to write, maybe there's a reason. For example, you may have a great program that helps someone manage a worm farm, but not too many people will find that useful. If you can, however, make it general enough to be a management program for any kind of farm, kennel, etc. you have effectively altered it from being a product in a vertical market (where only a certain group of people would use it) to one that is in several vertical markets (where it would be useful to many more potential customers).

## A VERTICAL MARKET PROGRAM STILL MAY WORK

There are times when marketing to a vertical market may be advantageous and/or feasible. Naturally if you have already written a program for yourself and you think it would find a niche in a vertical market, the costs and time for you to do so won't be as great -- and you don't have as much to lose since much of the program has already been written anyway. Another exception is if the vertical market represents a lot of potential customers despite being useful to only a certain group of people. If this is the case and you can specifically target the people who would be willing to use (and eventually pay for) your program, you may enjoy a lot of success with your program. The key will be to advertise it in trade journals and selective



places online frequented by the people who would find your program of

some use to their hobby, occupation, etc.

## Program for the Shareware Market

Shareware users are getting more and more accustomed to great software at

affordable prices. Obviously, no one is going to pay for your program if they

do not find it useful and friendly. However, with that said, even a useful,

friendly program being used by a happy, somewhat honest user is often not

enough to elicit a payment.

Once your program is being used by someone, it is crucial that they know

how to pay for your product. This can effectively, and tastefully, be done via

readme files and reminder screens. I can not over emphasize the

importance of reminder screens. I'm not talking about obnoxious screens

that pop up every minute "nagging" the user to pay up or else. However, you should put information about how to pay for it in strategic places in your program. Because readme files get lost or deleted, you may consider adding the information directly into the program itself.

One example of tastefully placing payment information in your program is to make it a menu option. For example, if you have various options your user needs to select while running the program, make one of them something like "How to Purchase..." or "If You Like this Program..."

You may consider using the following method:

Don't immediately start "reminding" the user how to pay for it via pop-up

screens, etc. -- they need to try your program before they can decide to pay for it. However, if after a period of time they are still using your program, it is probably time to start "reminding" them of their obligation to pay for it proportional to the time they have evaluated the program and/or number of times they have used it.

For me personally, at first I don't display any reminders about payment beyond allowing them to choose reading the information from a menu.

However, I feel if the user has used the program for a certain period of time (say, 30 days), then they have been "evaluating" the program at least enough to warrant a screen explaining how to pay for it after performing certain functions. As the length of time increases, so do the type of

~~functions that invoke the message. Eventually, common functions will display the message and I feel this is certainly fair, and adheres to the shareware concept of trying before buying.~~

~~Some would argue that some potential customers delay paying for a long time, and therefore you're losing a sale. If you feel this way, then this~~

~~method is not for you. However, I think I'm pulling in more impulse~~

~~purchases than I'm losing from the ones that "delay" paying. These~~

~~procrastinators (if they intend to pay at all) are delaying, I might add, beyond~~

~~the 30-day trial period I (and many others) typically set for evaluating the~~

~~program.~~

One thing you do have to be careful of is if your program is such that someone might not use it often, then you will want to track actual usage rather than the time it has been used. If someone installs it and then does not use it for a couple weeks (or it only gets used a few times a week), then you will probably be better off tracking the number of times it has been used rather than the days it has been used.

If you have a program that stores data, then you have a fantastic situation wherein you can limit the amount of storage in the evaluation version.

Another program type that offers a nice situation is if it produces output, because you can "watermark" the output with an "Evaluation Version" stamp on it or something.



## Pulling in the Payments

Payments should be a quick, easy process -- both for you and the user.

Don't give them an excuse not to purchase the program! One way to do

this is to accept credit cards, especially through an 800 number, dedicated

fax, and securely via the Internet. NorthStar Solutions is a company that

will do this for you for a very modest fee.

Incentives are often what pull in payments. Even some honest users need

that extra "reason" (beyond the satisfaction of a good feeling) to get them to

pay for it. If they are in need of something, they are more willing to give

something: such as paying for the program. Coupled with a convenient way



~~to purchase (see above paragraph), this is an extremely effective way to pull~~

~~in more payments. For more information about incentive ideas, see~~

Incentives.

## Distribute to Key Places

Another crucial element in writing shareware is distributing it. I'm not going to spend too much time on this subject, because it only makes sense that a user has to be using your program before they can even consider purchasing it.

Distribution can be expensive if you elect to mail disks/CD-ROMs to vendors, etc. However, many of the organizations that distribute shareware are online. Today's shareware author can get a lot more distribution for his/her money now that online services and the Internet have become a major distribution channel.

See also:

Internet Distribution

## Run Your Shareware Business Like a Business

Treat your shareware business as just that -- a business. It's not enough to be a great programmer, you must be a good business person. You have to know how to market, be creative, research your market to make sure there is a demand for your product, constantly adjust to the changing market, and run your business efficiently.

We have included several resources here in the SARG that should help you.

Most importantly, if you keep in mind that your shareware business is a business and treat it as such, you will benefit greatly. In fact, you can even get several tax benefits for doing so.

## Commercial Information Services

### THE INTERNET IS 2ND TO NONE

By far the Internet is the best way to get exposure for your products.—

Getting listed with all the major sites that list (advertise) your programs is—

essential to getting downloads (which, of course, is a crucial step to getting—

customers and ultimately making profits).— See Internet Distribution for more

details.

### DISTANT SECONDS

Large commercial online services are a very distant second in terms of a way

to get exposure of your products.— Here are the customer assistance—

numbers (voice) for the major ones if you wish to try out their services:

Service \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Web Site

America Online \_\_\_\_\_ 800-827-6568 \_\_\_\_\_ <http://www.aol.com>

CompuServe \_\_\_\_\_ 800-848-8199 \_\_\_\_\_

<http://www.compuserve.com>

Microsoft Network (MSN) \_\_\_\_\_ 800-386-5550 \_\_\_\_\_ <http://www.msn.com>

=====

See Also:

Some Distribution and Pricing Dilemmas

## Internet Distribution

NorthStar Solutions maintains a web page with information and links useful

to shareware authors. We actively maintain a list of Internet sites which list

(advertise) your software to potential customers. Visit our web site for more

details.

See also:

Writing Program Descriptions

## Writing Program Descriptions

### DESCRIBE BENEFITS, NOT FEATURES

When writing descriptions, you have to put on your marketing hat. It is very important that you write a succinct, error-free description of what benefits your program offers people. As the heading of this subtopic notes: describe benefits, not features. People want to know what the program will do for them, not necessarily what it does. Yes, some (perhaps even many) people will bridge that gap, but don't make them (because some will not bridge the gap between what the program does and how that will help them). For example, see how the first statement below, which describes the benefit, is better than the 2nd statement below, which merely describes the feature:



1) The program's built in backup feature will save your valuable data in case your computer fails.

2) The program has a built in backup feature written with a super fancy algorithm that implements [insert techno mumbo jumbo here]!!!

### AVOID TECHNO BABBLE AND HYPE

Notice how I make fun of descriptions that brag about the programming

effort or use technical jargon. Most users don't care how great the

programming effort is, how smart you are, or how long it took you to write

your masterpiece. All they care about is what it will do for them. Also be

careful about using too many exclamation points!!!! If the description starts

~~to sound like a lot of hype or techno babble, potential downloaders will likely be turned away.~~

### AVOID BLOATED OR SLOPPY WRITING

~~Your first impression is important, so be sure the description you write is free of errors and succinct. If you're writing has errors (or it's bloated), people will assume you have taken the same approach when writing code. One good way to sabotage your download rate is to have a poorly written description of the program.~~

### YOUR FIRST SENTENCE IS CRUCIAL

~~Another thing to remember (something you might have learned in a writing~~

class), is to lead with your most important sentence first. The first sentence should offer the most information about your program. Think of it this way, if a reader was only going to read one sentence in your description (and most likely it will be the first one), what should it say? Keep following that principle as much as possible. That is, the 2nd sentence should be the 2nd most important sentence and so on. This is true because 1) If the first sentence is good, readers will keep reading 2) people have limited time and might just scan descriptions and 3) sometimes descriptions get truncated (usually from the bottom up). In fact, you may find it necessary to do this when trying to fit a description into a character-limited field when submitting to online sites.



## Copyrighting Your Programs

Perhaps the biggest misconception about obtaining a copyright is that you

have to spend a lot of time and money to get one. Almost exactly the

opposite is true: unless you are working for an employer or otherwise have

some kind of contract that prevents you from owning sufficient rights to your

work, you own the copyright of the software you write the moment you copy

it to your disk/CD. There are no other formal procedures the Copyright

Office requires of you.

However, the Copyright Office does recommend you officially register your

copyright with them. There is a small fee to do this (currently about \$30)

~~and you will need to submit printed copies of your code, minus any trade~~

~~secrets. If you feel you need or want to do this, contact the Copyright Office~~

~~(described at the end of this document). Official registration may be~~

~~necessary to fully pursue any legal action should someone infringe upon your~~

~~copyright.~~

#### DISPLAYING A COPYRIGHT NOTICE:

1. Display your copyright notice as prominently as possible, an opening

screen would be appropriate.

2. Use all of the following three elements in your notice:

==

~~— a. The word "Copyright", the copyright symbol ©, or the abbreviation~~

~~"copr."~~

~~NOTE: If you can not reproduce the copyright symbol ©, it is~~

~~best if you spell out the word.~~

~~—~~

~~— b. The Year First Published~~

~~NOTE: This is the year in which you first distribute~~

~~your program to the public. In the case of upgrades,~~

~~it is the year you first distributed the upgrade to~~

the public.

==

c. Copyright Owner's Name or an abbreviation by which the name can be

recognized.

If you need or want more information, you can contact the Copyright Office

by any of the following methods:

INTERNET:

Click here to visit the Official U.S. Copyright Office Web Site

PHONE:

You can call them at (202) 707-3000 24 hours a day if you know of a



publication you want them to send you. I recommend you call them and ask

for circular 1. Circular 1 will get you well on your way (if not completely

answer your questions) regarding copyright information, how to display it,

etc.

ADDRESS:

Copyright Office

Library of Congress

Washington, DC 20559-6000

## Adding a Trademark

After doing some research to ensure nobody else has your product name, it is always a good idea to at least claim a trademark to the name. To do so, you just add the letters "TM" to the name in appropriate areas. Unless your program is geared towards business savvy customers, most of your customers (or potential customers) are not aware of the differences between a trademark and a registered trademark, so for purely presentation purposes, it adds a little "authenticity" to your product and is much better than no designation at all. Essentially it makes you appear more professional about your software business.

The HTML Code for the "TM" symbol is &#153; You may wish to make the

font a little smaller than the text it is beside. See

<http://www.nstarsolutions.com/pc> to view an example of how this can be

done.

To make the trademark official (where you can defend it better if someone

decides to use the same name you have), you need to register it with the

United States Patent and Trademark Office. This requires a small fee and

you need to file some official information (which can be done online). After

you have been officially notified that your trademark has been registered,

you may display the registered trademark symbol. See

<http://www.nstarsolutions.com/mm> to view an example of an officially

registered trademark notice.

## The IRS

The IRS publishes a LOT of information to help you with tax issues. You will want to keep your business legal, and you will certainly want to take advantage of any tax breaks your business may bring. You can call the IRS at 1-800-829-3676 to order the following publications. These general ones will at least get you started:

910 Guide to Free Tax Services - an index to hundreds of others

17 Your Federal Income Tax - help for your individual tax prep.

334 Tax Guide for Small Businesses - federal tax laws applicable to small businesses

*Visit The Official IRS Web Site for more information.*

*See Also:*

*Other Business Resources*

The Small Business Administration (SBA)

ADDRESS:

409 Third St. S.W.

Washington, D.C. 20416

VOICE:

800-827-5722

INTERNET:

Of course, the easiest way to get more information is to visit The Official

Small Business Administration Web Site.

See Also:

Other Business Resources



Small Business Success

Small Business Success, published by Pacific Bell Directory, is packed full of

great articles, tips, and resources for small businesses. All you have to do

is contact them to request a free copy:

PHONE

800-848-8000

ADDRESS

Pacific Bell Directory

Communications Dept. - CWS7

101 Spear St.

Room 429

San Francisco, CA 94105

INTERNET

They publish a copy online at their web site.

See Also:

Other Business Resources

## National Association of Self Employed

The National Association of Self Employed (NASE) is one of the most useful organizations I've found as a small business owner. There are a number of benefits, too many to mention, for being a member. They offer numerous discounts on various goods and services and affordable health insurance.

The NASE also does a great deal of lobbying in the Halls of Congress for small business owners. Visit the NASE web site for more details about all the benefits.

See Also:

Other Business Resources

## Other Business Resources

Of course, the Internet offers a lot (and that's an understatement) of valuable information related to starting and running a successful small business. The only real concern is that you need to be sure to filter for only reliable sources of information. We have a modestly good starting point at our web site.

Also do not forget to check out your local library and/or bookstore. There is also a lot of information formally published about starting and operating businesses, and some of these books are extremely useful. If you learn just a few general pointers, that can go a long way for a new entrepreneur or

someone wanting to better operate and manage their business.

How Much will I Make?

NO EASY ANSWER

This is a very common question, but there is no easy answer. The amount

each of our clients make varies greatly. Several of our 1 800hype or meone

wsom to dos)ck wer. —

How Meful. If yo(m is geareMake?laimookyed (neur or someone 90,,,,,,,rt

i

rtners/%//wwk Ofreaders wl,€