

Microsoft *Windows* Applications
METZ Software

Windows 3.0 is chock full of tricks for everything from memory management to disk management to creating an environment optimized for your particular needs or those of your colleagues. Arguably, though, there are times when they simply don't do **enough**, or aren't always easy to learn, or use, or both. File Manager comes to mind immediately; it's a tremendous improvement over the MS-DOS Executive that served similar functions in earlier versions of *Windows*, but getting to it isn't always easy. Even if you organize your desktop to include a running copy of File Manager, making it accessible via a simple <Ctrl-Esc> and then arrow key driven key sequence, the tool is still too slow for many users' liking.

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Microsoft Windows Applications, from Art Metz' METZ Software, address some of the shortcomings in *Windows*. A collection of utilities that are also available separately from the publisher or can be located as shareware on many bulletin boards, the collection is made up of *Task Manager*, *Desktop Navigator*, *Desktop Manager*, *Phones*, and several subsets of those tools also available a la carte: *Dialer*, *Freemem*, *Lock*, *Runner*, and *Time*.

At the price, purchasing the sliced up items would be silly; they carry price tags of ten to twenty dollars, and since *Navigator* and *Manager* each cost just thirty dollars and provide all the individual pieces' functionality (*Phones* costs twenty dollars, and is a more powerful and feature laden version of *Dialer*), go for one of them. *Task Manager*, a direct replacement for (and more powerful version of) *Windows*' Program Manager, also sells for just thirty dollars.

Under *Windows 3.0*, RAM usage is virtually a moot point. In the case of storage issues, the METZ products are as inconsequential; none occupy more than 120 kilobytes of disk space. Interestingly, *Desktop Manager* and *Desktop Navigator* both include versions of *Freemem*, a utility for measuring the largest contiguous block of memory currently available. As alluded to above, the results are inconsequential under *Windows 3.0*. Both *Desktop Manager* and *Desktop Navigator* also include functional near-equivalents of *Lock* (password security for your system that, once invoked, steadfastly refuses to allow access), *Time* (a configurable clock and calendar), and *Runner*, which instantly provides a pop-up box in which you type the path and name of the program you want to run. There's nothing extraordinary about any of these abilities, but they are indisputable improvements over their equals in an unadorned *Windows*.

Besides these ancillary services, *Desktop Navigator* and *Desktop Manager* serve as file and directory managers. Faster than File Manager, they also provide better window control, adding a more powerful cascading feature and several other innovations to *Windows*' abilities in this area. Unlike Program Manager, however, *Desktop Navigator* and *Desktop Manager* are text based; icons are not used to represent applications. The two programs differ from each other in that *Desktop Manager* is a user customized "desktop" from which you can choose any programs and options you want to provide instant access to, while *Desktop Navigator* uses a directory tree structure for its operation.

Dialer, a part of *Phones*, is an auto-dialer that uses a graphical keypad resembling a touch tone phone for input. *Phones* excels over its little brother in that it provides easier management of phone numbers via the ability to create multiple directories, and to look up numbers by clicking on the first letter of the desired party's name from a graphically represented phonebook.

They're cheap, fast, and well behaved, and they **are** improvements over their *Windows* counterparts, where parallels exist. Nothing flashy, *Desktop Navigator* and *Desktop Manager* are able tools, nonetheless.

PowerPoint

Microsoft Corporation

We quote from *PowerPoint*'s box: "Microsoft *PowerPoint* software will literally transform the way you think about presentations. It's specifically designed to let you, the presenter, create professional-looking, high-quality overhead and 35mm slide presentations, quickly and easily."

Fact is, we agree. Combining the ease of use of the *Windows* environment in its intended implementation with a few tricks not seen anywhere else, *PowerPoint* is simply the most intuitive, easiest to learn presentation graphics program we've ever seen. It's likely to make you wonder aloud, "why didn't anybody ever do **that** before?"

That's the bottom line, and we'll say right now that we're happy to give *PowerPoint* a check-rating. Is it perfect? Not nearly. *PowerPoint*'s deficient drawing tools make owning a separate program for the task all but a necessity unless you plan to use text and clip art exclusively in your presentations (the accompanying library of several hundred 256-color images is lots of fun, but when other packages in the category

include offerings numbering in the thousands, it's not enough, and it's too cartoon-like). The presentation templates and background screens, though, are very good. There are none of the special effects for screen changes so common in other packages, nor can you flip, invert, or mirror images. Once an image is in *PowerPoint*, you can move and resize it to your heart's content, but that's about it. Loading the program and first-time screen draws are agonizingly slow (redraws are much better), and EVERY file - samples, templates, even the help system - distributed as support for *PowerPoint* is formatted as a presentation. This last point has its good elements, but the fact that the help system is not even minimally context-sensitive represents a disturbing departure from Microsoft's usual practices effecting *Windows* applications. In this regard, *PowerPoint* is too close a clone of its MacIntosh ancestor. *PowerPoint*'s font handling is also