

# Direct *from AIMS*

Fall 2007

## A Look Inside:

### Tech Talk

Improve PC Performance

### IT Corner

Windows Registry

### COMPAS Commander

Taxes on Sales

Multiple Forms of Payment

Export Feature

## President for a Day

If you were somehow to find yourself sitting behind the desk of AIMS' president, what would you find that was radically different from the business model you know?

First, human resources comprise nearly 100% of your "assets." If you think it is hard to find good people to work in *your* business, try to find enough people to staff a successful and enduring software business, where your product is complex, intangible and needs constant support. The saying, "At 5:00 each day, you watch your business disperse," is more true of the software business than maybe any other.

Second, when you're a software company selling a relatively high priced product to a very specialized vertical market with a fairly small number of players, you can't sustain yourself solely on sales. The proven practice for software companies is to assess between 15% and 30% of the new selling price of its software, annually. Without adequate recurring revenue, a vertical market software company will become desperate for new sales, which will result in predictable consequences. A vertical market software company that relies primarily on new sales will go out of business, and it will leave its customers abandoned.

Third, you never "get there." Your product is never finished, things never stop changing, and technology never stops pushing your horizon back. You have to reinvent your company periodically. The technologies for information and transaction processing—which is basically what computer technology for business is—show no signs of ceasing their evolution.

Fourth, the software business is a hybrid product/service business. It is true that most businesses require a certain level of customer service, but usually not to the degree required to support enterprise-level software. Another thing to consider here is that a software company's product is complex and offers

lots of opportunities for end-users to misunderstand it or misapply it.

Out of these four points, number two is the way in

which a software operation differs most from a petroleum marketing operation.

In competitive situations, we are sometimes asked why our maintenance fees are higher than Brand X Software's, even though our charges are on the low side of the norm. We usually turn the question around by asking, why is Brand X's rate so low? After all, if a software company does not collect a sustaining amount of money for its product, how can it fund new development (some of which might be legally required, e.g. tax assessment and reporting) and how can it pay its employees during periods of slow sales? Companies that charge less than the industry norm annually are either small "lifestyle" software operations, or their business model presumes that sales will never slack off. A low maintenance rate is just a come-on.

"Lifestyle" software companies are those with only a few employees. With few employees, the owner/president can live nicely off a shallow revenue stream. That works well for him or her, but when will that company's customers be left holding the bag? Of course, such companies have scant ability to reinvent themselves and develop new products or even further develop their existing ones. Support can be spotty from such sources. As jobbers' requirements continue to get more demanding, it is even more likely that more lifestyle software companies are headed to the bone yard.

(cont. on page 4)





# Tech Talk

## Improve Your PC's Performance

There are quite a few things you can do yourself that will boost your PC's performance. Over the next couple of issues, we will take a look at different ways to remedy that slow computer of yours. Keep in mind that these tips refer to Windows PC's and **not** to servers.

### Free Up Disk Space

A great way to make a computer run faster is to free up space on your hard disk. Windows comes with a disk cleanup tool for this purpose. This utility identifies files that you can safely delete without causing any problems, and then enables you to choose whether you want to delete some or all of the identified files.

How to use the disk cleanup tool—

- a) Click the Start button and go to All Programs> Accessories>System Tools. Select Disk Cleanup. If several drives are available, you may be prompted to specify which drive.
- b) In the Disk Cleanup dialog box, scroll through the content of the files to delete list. (If you have multiple hard drives, you will have to select which one to scan.)
- c) Clear the check boxes for files that you don't want to delete, then click OK.
- d) When prompted to confirm that you want to delete the specified files, click OK.

### Use Defragment Tool

When you add a file or a new program to a new computer, the hard drive is relatively empty so new data is saved to the hard drive in one whole block. When you need to use that information, the computer can quickly access it because it is all in one place. Over time, this information becomes fragmented, causing it to take longer to access and to occupy more disk space than is necessary. Defragmenting your system is definitely a way to make your computer run faster.

How to use defragment tool—

- a) Click the Start button and go to All Programs> Accessories>System Tools. Click the Defragment option. The disk defragmenter displays the hard drive(s) on your computer.
- b) Select the drive and click Defragment.

## IT Corner

### Windows Registry: What is it?

Your computer's registry is the operating system's central database, serving as a reference library. Your **workstation or personal computer** will only be as efficient as its registry. We recommend leaving server maintenance to your IT professional.

The registry stores all the information that the computer needs to operate. This information includes the computer's hardware information, the user information such as which user is allowed to do what on the computer, and all the reference data about the software that is installed on the system. The operating system of the computer constantly refers to this registry, which has to scan through its files and keys to locate the information and feed it back to the operating system. If this list in the registry continues to grow, it will take longer to locate the information, which means it will take longer to load programs. It will slow down the system dramatically, if the registry is too large. The registry needs to be compressed and cleaned with windows registry cleaner software from time to time to keep the system running smoothly.

Example: When you click on the Start button, Windows immediately refers to a registry key that determines what the current user is allowed to do. The registry knows this from its records by referring to the associated entries when the current user logged on with a username and password. The registry determines how the operating system should react when you access a file, open a program, etc. Each time you download something or refer to the internet, the registry is updated and it grows, bogging down your system.

There are many free PC registry cleaners available. Using one periodically will help your computer to run more efficiently.

# Commander Functionality



## Handling taxes on sales and multiple forms of payment using COMPAS Commander

If you have customers who pay some of their taxes on a deferred basis on certain products they purchase from your company, COMPAS Commander will let you handle this very easily. Deferred tax-handling is a standard feature in Commander.

Tax	ID	Qty	Sec	Rate	Qty	Amnt
FEDERAL EXCISE TAX-DIESEL	223-20	1	1	0.24400	500.00	122.00
MISSISSIPPI DSL TAXES	225-28	1	5	0.09000	500.00	90.00
MS SALES TAX	220-28	1	6	0.05000	175.75	10.54
MS COUNTY #2 TAXES	221-02	1	7	0.02000	175.75	3.52

You can determine the exact amount of a tax on a customer invoice by clicking the **Taxes** tab. In this example, let's say the customer was eligible for deferred payment of state diesel excise tax, which is \$90.00 on this invoice.

By clicking on the **Payments** tab, you can break a customer invoice into however many payments you want.

Just keep clicking on the **New** button and adding new payment dates and amounts. In this case, customer 1600 can have his payment of state diesel excise taxes deferred until the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the following month.

When you finalize this invoice, there will be **two entries** to this customer's A/R—both with the same invoice number, but with different amounts and different due dates.

A/P invoice-handling gives you the same capability.

Acct ID	Br	DiscDueDate	DiscAmnt	DueDate	Amnt
104-01...	1	9/1/2007 2:33 PM	165.02	8/22/2007	1786.74
104-01...	1	9/1/2007 2:33 PM	165.02	9/10/2007 3:34	90.00



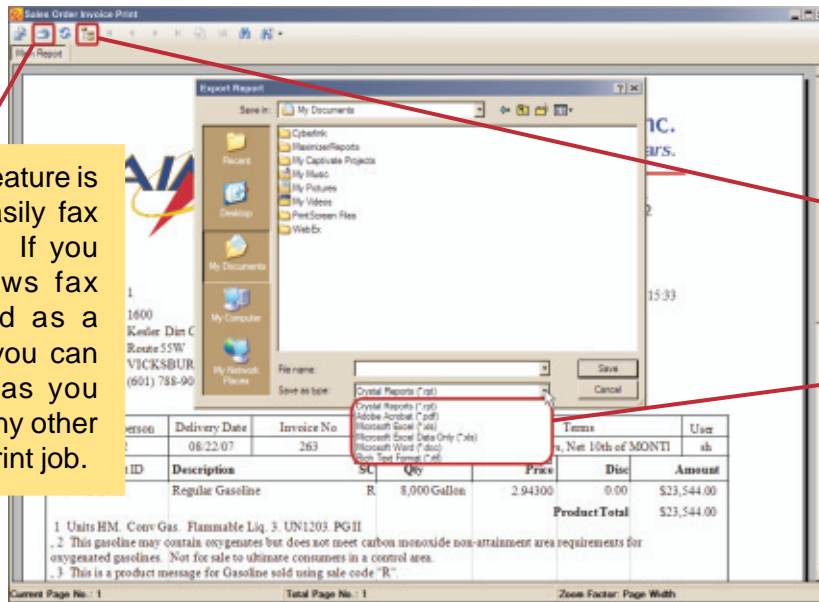
235 DeSiard St. • Monroe, LA 71201  
 (800) 729-2467 • Fax (318) 322-3472  
 www.aims1.com • aims@aims1.com

Presorted Standard  
 U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
 Permit No. 1045  
 Monroe, LA



## The Export Feature in COMPAS Commander Reporting *(cont. from page 3)*

Related to this feature is the ability to easily fax any document. If you have a Windows fax driver installed as a printer option, you can choose it just as you would choose any other printer for any print job.



Any document produced by Commander—invoices, statements, receipts, reports, and financials—can be treated in a variety of ways in the output stage with the **Export** feature. This example shows a customer invoice. By clicking on the Export button, you can choose one of several file **formats** in which to save the document. You can take any of the nearly one hundred standard reports that come with Commander and export them to Excel, Word, PDF or text format.

## President for a Day *(cont. from page 1)*

There are larger software companies that assess maintenance at rates lower than the industry norm, but there is no free lunch. For example, these companies charged their customers a lot of money for Y2K compliance. They didn't have enough software maintenance revenue to fix their systems for no additional charge—unlike AIMS. Without proper funding, a knowledgeable programming staff cannot be maintained. Even more minor events such as changes in how taxes are reported (electronically) or legally required changes to fuel load tracking can trigger hefty surcharges from such software companies.

Business people who run family businesses tend to be conservative. As your business probably is, AIMS is a

privately-owned, family operation. It has always been conservatively operated. We paid for the development of our new generation of software, COMPAS Commander, entirely from on-going revenues. At Y2K time, we didn't surcharge our customers at all, even though most software companies did. AIMS spent, conservatively, a quarter of a million dollars on this issue. Since 1990, AIMS has increased its software maintenance rate only twice.

So if you were AIMS' president for a day, you could feel good about running a company that takes its responsibility to its customers seriously. Not only does AIMS have a justifiably good reputation for support, but we also have a clean record financially. We look forward to continuing to set the standard in the jobber software business for product innovation and responsible partnering.