

June, 1999

# ADVANTAGE

BUSINESS COMPUTER SYSTEMS

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featuring: Sun Building Supply

Sun Building Supply opened in 1983. At that time Clarksburg, New Jersey was a relatively undeveloped but growing area. Originally the company supplied the needs of the company's owner, who operated one of the largest roofing and siding installation companies in south-eastern Pennsylvania and central New Jersey.

Being a small, two or three person, business in the beginning, Sun operated on the principle of doing whatever it took to get the job done. This often meant flying by



the seat of their pants when it came to selling, ordering material and managing inventory. As the company grew and attracted new customers, a second facility was opened in Pennsylvania. Growth brought the realization that the manual systems being used were not adequate to manage a thriving company.

Sun concluded that a computer system was a necessity, but their computer knowledge was limited at the time. Added to this was the fact that software designed for their industry was still in the formative stages. The only thing they could do was try to adapt a system to meet their needs. For several years Sun worked with a system that was not integrated, which meant that Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable and General Ledger were done on one system, and Purchasing, Point-of-Sale, and Inventory were done on another.

A change in management brought a search for a new and practical computer system. After researching the capabilities and benefits of various systems, Sun Building Supply had decided to go with another system until the Advantage Business Computer Systems people convinced them to give the Advantage system a chance. As it turned

(cont.)

# Newsletter

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out, Sun is very glad they went with Advantage. They have been very impressed with the user friendliness of the system, especially when most of their employees had little computer experience in the beginning. They have been very happy with the support Advantage has shown them in the four years they have been using the system. A recent system upgrade which allows them to use the capabilities of the system more efficiently, went smoothly despite delays caused by their long distance vendor.

According to Sun Building Supply, "A definite strength of the Advantage system is their willingness to listen to our suggestions and consider ideas to improve the system. The free upgrades and reasonable maintenance fees are another area where Advantage stands above their competition."

OYO OYO OYO OYO

## COMPUTER SHUTDOWN

Your computer should be shutdown weekly as a part of your regular maintenance routine. It will help keep your system running at top speed and prevent anomalies. Follow the steps below to turn off your computer.

1. Make sure you have a good backup.
2. Log out all terminals and all console screens, except screen 1. Always bring the computer down on console screen 1.
3. In SCO 4.0 at the # prompt, type in the word:  
takedown

In SCO 5.0 at the # prompt, type in the word:  
shutdown

You can add the parameter "-g0" to skip the warning time before shutdown, and the parameter "-y" to skip the confirmation that you want to shutdown.

The command would look like this:  
shutdown -g0 -y

## IS JUNE 30 YOUR FISCAL YEAR-END?

At the end of the calendar year, we always spend a lot of time going over the procedures for closing the year. If December 31 is not your corporate year-end, you may not have taken the time to review closing. Since that was six months ago, we wanted to remind you again of the procedures to close a fiscal year. In the October, 1998 Newsletter there is a detailed article on what to do in each module to prepare for year-end closing. Detailed Year-end Procedure instruction sheets and Year-End Frequently Asked Questions were included in the December, 1998 newsletter. If you do not have these newsletters, call us and we will fax you copies.

If you have a fiscal year closing in June or some other month coming up and have not started preparing for the year-end, now is the time. Below is a summary of the steps to prepare for year-end. The preparation you do now will make your year-end closing less stressful for all of us. Don't wait until the last minute to begin.

Year-end closing preparation:

- + The General Ledger needs to be balanced to the corresponding subledgers or detail.
- + Reconcile your bank statement to the G/L bank account balance.
- + Clean up Accounts Payable vouchers and voucher distributions.
- + Clean up Accounts Receivable accounts of unapplied payments and credits.
- + Clean up customer job accounts, closing and/or deleting completed jobs.
- + Clean up open inventory transfers.
- + Complete a physical inventory count.
- + Clean up open sale orders, quotes and estimates in Point-of-sale.
- + Clean up open purchase orders and backorders.
- + Confirm YTD payroll information and tax liabilities.

## KEYBOARD DEFINITIONS

Keyboard commands are consistent within the Advantage System. Below is a listing of various key uses. For additional keyboard commands, see the top of each screen within the software for the active function keys.

[F1]	Help Screen
[F7]	Database query, lookup of predefined items or codes to select from
[F9]	Go back one screen
[F10]	Execute this command or save changes to this screen and move to the next
[Del]	Delete this line or the highlighted record
[End]	Go to the last line
[Enter]	Selects the highlighted field and enters that record, or enters past the field you are on
[Esc]	Escape, exit this screen, do not save changes
[Home]	Go to the first line
[NumLock]	The num lock key on the key pad must be on to use the number key pad
[Ins]	Insert, to add a new record, or save changes to an existing record
[PgDn]	Display the next full screen
[PgUp]	Display the previous full screen
[Tab]	Moves one field to the right
[Ctrl]+[a]	Shifts the cursor to the first character of the field
[Ctrl]+[f]	Shifts the cursor to the last character of the field
[Ctrl]+[y]	Clears an entire character field
[Shift]+[F1]	Prints the screen
[Shift]+[Tab]	Backs up one field to the left
Arrow Keys	Arrow keys move the cursor or screen to the left, right, up or down

## FROM THE DESK OF GREGORY CUKE VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES & MARKETING

I just got home after spending the weekend in San Antonio, Texas, at the LAT show there. As usual it was a busy time for us, and it was good to see those of you that came by. To those members that couldn't make it this year I look forward to seeing you next year. Organizations like the LAT work for you every day as they try to improve things in the industry. They look to you for support so that they can continue to work for you in the future.

I just read a newsletter from one of our competitors. Don't ask; it just fell off the back of a truck! I was amazed that they were quoting statistics on their support log and some "industry averages." According to their statistics, the industry average call back for an emergency call was 122 minutes. They are targeting emergency responses of 12 minutes during working hours and 20 minutes after hours. I don't know where they are getting their statistics, and I can't believe that they are proud of targeting a 20-minute call back for an emergency situation. Here at Advantage, while we may not always be perfect, all emergency calls are taken immediately all of the time and just over 85% of our calls are answered when the call comes in without the necessity for a call back. Your Advantage support staff is here everyday working to help you make better use of your computer system.

In closing, I would like to welcome our newest customers. Many of you have had our competitors systems in the past and have decided to join the ranks of the Advantage network. I look forward to working with you all for many years to come.

## STORM WARNING: EQUIPMENT INSURANCE

**Replacing your computer equipment due to a lightning strike, flood, tornado, etc. can be expensive. Check with your insurance agent to be sure your equipment has adequate insurance coverage. This is particularly important if you have recently upgraded your system or added new equipment.**



Not another Y2K article! We know that you are tired of hearing about and seeing articles on the “Y2K bug.” Here at Advantage, we have made our database software compatible with the year 2000. (See the April, 1999 Newsletter, “From the President’s Desk” for details.) However, your computer software is not your only chance to be “bitten” by the Y2K bug. Vendors, customers, banks, insurance companies and many others can have problems which in turn will affect you. In an effort to help our customers be prepared for all contingencies, we are going to be doing a series of articles on the things you should be looking for and doing in your business to be prepared for the year 2000. We will be researching the latest data to compile information and tips that will help all of us through what could be a trying time.

The Internet provides a broad range of information, more than one person can look at in one session. Recently we did a search for “Y2K” and found 297 news articles, 7 categories, 2,188 sites and 182,317 web pages. We found people who think the “Y2K bug” is mostly media hype, people who think that the world as we know it will practically cease to exist, and people in between. It is no surprise that we are all unsure about how to handle the situation.

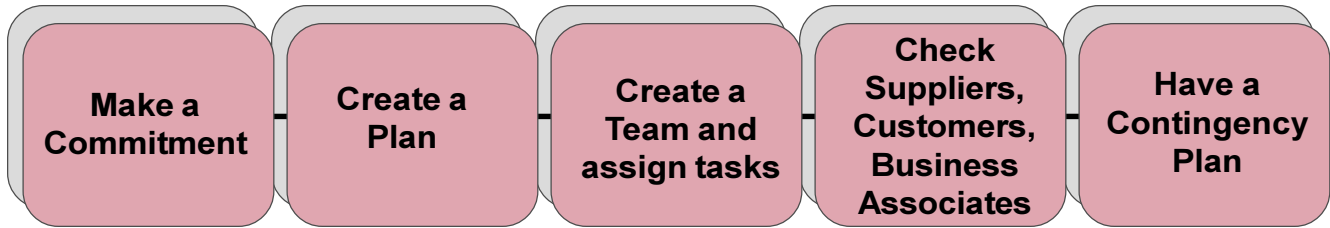
The concept that the Y2K bug will manifest itself as the clocks roll over to January 1, 2000 is simplistic and unrealistic. Problems have already started and will continue to escalate. The Gartner Group, a U.S. technology researcher, says that five percent of the Y2K problems happened before January 1, 1999, 25 percent will reveal themselves during 1999, and 55 percent won’t happen until 2000. Another 15 percent that will not come to light until 2001. They estimate that eight to ten percent of the problems will bunch into the two weeks after January 1, 2000.

There are several dates that have been noted as potential problems. September 9, 1999 could cause problems, because the “9999” string that designates the date is sometimes used as a default string causing some programs to fail. January 31, 2000 is another potential problem time, because some programs may not rollover to February correctly. Since 2000 is a leap year, February 29, 2000 could also cause problems. All of these date related issues affect not just our computers, but any equipment that uses dates.

Use the following steps as a guideline for assessing the potential for Y2K problems in your business. Identify what needs to be fixed or replaced and make a definite plan to do what must be done. Following through with your plan and completing the work will give you peace of mind that you are prepared. If you can not verify or complete certain parts of your plan the first time you try, keep trying. Companies everywhere are doing the same things you are, and it will take commitment to complete all of the parts of your plan.

Y2K

# Y2K CHECKLIST



**Many businesses, especially small ones, aren't planning to do anything about potential year 2000 problems. There are steps you should be taking to be ready for the new year. Below is a compilation of suggestions from various government agencies on things to do to prepare.**

1. As an organization, make a commitment to do what it takes to get prepared for the year 2000. Promote awareness in your company of what is involved. It is important to create a communication strategy to keep everyone informed and to make sure that management has the information they need to make decisions. Part of awareness is to have a clear standard for Y2K readiness. The Federal Reserve uses the following definition: "Systems (e.g. software, hardware, firmware) are defined as ready if they can demonstrate correct management and manipulation of data involving dates, including single-century and multi-century formulas, without causing an abnormally ended scenario within the system or generating incorrect values involving such dates."
2. Assess the problem. List all of your systems. Be sure to include other equipment besides computers; such as alarms, heating and air conditioning units, copiers, and services. After you have created your list, prioritize fixing them. Determine the items most critical to your business and those that are date sensitive. A date-sensitive system is one that performs any kind of forecasting or projections through time, or retrieves data based on date. Remember that some systems could fail before the beginning of next year because they perform forecasting or future processing. Create a plan to fix the most critical systems first and then move down your list checking each item.
3. Without assigning specific tasks to specific people, it is easy for this kind of project to get lost in the details of everyday business. Create a timetable for each team member to report back on the progress that has been made.
4. Check with your vendors regarding their readiness. Even if their products or services are not sensitive to the year 2000 problem, their company operations probably are. You will need them to keep supplying you with products and services after December 31. Check your insurance coverage. Insurance companies are working hard to limit their liability. Make sure you know how this would affect you. Also look into the Y2K readiness of your major customers. If they have problems, it could delay their payment for your goods and services. You should also check out your legal exposure to see if you have any legal obligations to your customers or others that can cause problems. Check out your bank and anyone to whom you owe money.
5. Make a contingency plan. Line up alternate suppliers, stock up on important items, and make hard copies of important records.



# TIMELY CONNECTIONS BY HERB MATATALL

## SCHEDULING REGULAR HARDWARE MAINTENANCE:

I have been extremely surprised at how many people are not taking care of their hardware systems. When we ask, “When was the last time that you took the cover off of your CPU and cleaned it out,” frequently there is a pause on the other end of the phone. The other person then says something like, “Oh, we haven’t touched the system since our installer was here.”

Not doing regular maintenance on your CPU can have the following effects:

- / Your system will probably last about ¼ the time that it should.
- / Your system will probably perform (speed wise) to about ¾ its potential.
- / Your power supply will probably fail at the most inopportune time.
- / Your processor fan can stop functioning, which will cause your processor to overheat and die.

Our work environments are not always the cleanest of places. We are not in hospitals or professional offices. We do have dust, and lots of it. We have to be committed to a schedule for cleaning the various media devices that we want to utilize. Hardware crashes can be avoided by keeping our equipment clean. This includes the CPU, keyboards, monitors/terminals, printers and tape drives. Below are recommendations for regularly cleaning hardware.

**CPU** - Take the system down, power off and then remove the cover. Canned air may be used to blow out the dust. NEVER vacuum a CPU.

Check the fan regularly to make sure it is working. Overheated processors fail.

**KEYBOARDS** - Turn the keyboard upside down weekly and shake out any paper or lint. Canned air may be used to blow out particles. Avoid spilling liquids on keyboards.

**MONITORS/TERMINALS** - Turn off terminals, and use canned air to blow out dust through the vent holes. Do not take the cover off.

**PRINTERS** - Canned air may be used to blow out paper and lint. A buildup of lint, dust and pieces of paper will clog the gears.

**TAPE/FLOPPY DRIVES** - Use “wet” floppy cleaning kits and cleaning tapes for your Dat Drive. Try to clean them several times a week. It only takes about one minute each time to eliminate many drive problems. We stock these cleaning kits, so order one today.

## Tape Drives and CD Writers:

Although it is not ready yet, we are working on a CD-Writer that we hope will make data storage and retrieval a lot easier. We are presently in the development stages, and will keep you informed of our progress. In the interim, we are also testing a SUPER fast Dat Drive that we hope to produce in the very near future.



If you've been looking for a 32 page-per-minute (ppm) printer with HP quality, innovation and reliability, your search is over. The HP LaserJet 8100 DN printer offers users unrivalled performance, versatility and manageability.

#### FEATURES:

- 32-ppm engine with 166-MHz RISC processor reduces waiting time for output.
- 1,100-sheet input capacity (expandable to 3,100 sheets), 600-sheet output capacity (expandable to 3,600 sheets)
- HP Auto-Duplex Unit to print on both sides of the paper, saving time and paper expense
- 24 MB of standard RAM on HP LaserJet 8100 DN model makes it easy to print even large, complex documents.
- HP FastRes 1200 for 1200-dpi quality without the usual network congestion and speed penalties.
- Prints up to 150,000 pages a month. Flexible, customizable paper handling increases productivity while reducing trips to the printer.
- HP LaserJet C4182X UltraPrecise maximum-capacity toner cartridge produces 20,000 pages (based on 5% average coverage), at a cost-per-page of less than one cent.
- HP TonerGauge monitors toner usage to take the guesswork out of ordering printing supplies.

This printer sells for \$3,600, plus tax and shipping. Its features can recoup the cost in savings on paper, toner and time. To place an order or get more information, call Advantage and talk to Donna, extension 216, or Dian, extension 242.

## GENERAL LEDGER BATCH ARCHIVES

General Ledger batches may be archived to allow reprinting or viewing of the detail. This feature makes the need for printing batches in detail before posting in summary not as critical.

As always, we recommend that Accounts Payable and Payroll batches be posted in detail to give a more complete audit trail. Other than these batches, many users choose to post the balance of the batches in summary. The batch archives will store the detail from those summary postings for future reference. The batch archives may be reprinted or viewed from the General Ledger report menu.

The General Ledger must be configured to begin archiving. Go to General Ledger> Administrative menu> G/L header configuration> Screen 1. Answer [Y]es to "Archive General Ledger batches."

When closing the current fiscal period, the system asks if you want to clear batch archives. Answering [Y]es will delete the batches and eliminate your ability to reprint or view the detail. If space becomes an issue, call Software Support for assistance in backing up the detail before deleting the batches.

## SECURE YOUR SYSTEM WITH DIALUP PASSWORDS

Dialup passwords can protect your system from unauthorized access through your modem. We recommend that all of our users place additional password protection on their systems. Root passwords and dialup passwords can and should be customized for your system. Modem access should be limited to your key personnel and authorized Advantage technicians only. Discretion should be used when divulging your root or dialup passwords to anyone who is not your employee or is not an Advantage employee. The integrity and security of your system is at risk otherwise.

Determine what passwords you want and then call Software Support for assistance in setting them up. Passwords may be alpha and or numeric.

## **NEW RELEASE 9904 SOFTWARE ENHANCEMENTS**

- Additional charge codes at POS can now have up to two tax codes. These tax codes are used instead of the customer's tax codes to calculate taxes on the charge code amount.
- If a customer is on credit hold, the sales rep will now be able to save the order, but not invoice it. A manager will have to bring up the saved order at a later time and enter the password in order to invoice the order.
- Return codes have two new fields. The first field allows you to control whether the system updates the on-hand quantity field in inventory for merchandise returned under that code. The second field lets you enter a G/L account number to update if you are not updating the inventory item.
- Purchasing item entry now allows you to do an automatic item search by keyword by entering an accent sign ['] in the item number field. This works the same as it does in POS.
- An F3 hot key has been added to customer notes to take you to the bottom of the file to quickly add new notes.
- A new report has been added to the End-of-Month/Year->End-of-Year procedures. The "End-of-Year Balance Report" gives you all the necessary totals from the different modules to confirm a successful year-end closing. This report has been incorporated into the EOM/EOY procedures as a safeguard to give before and after totals.
- The POS module can now be configured to skip the validation of proper credit card number formats so that debit cards and store credit cards can be set up in the "POS credit card types" database.
- The time clock punch-in/punch-out screen has a new field at the bottom to display the "New total hours." When clocking out, this field will display the total calculated time as if the punch-out were completed at the current time.
- The Sales Register has been enhanced to print a tax summary that totals cash and charge for each tax code.
- The A/R credit information maintenance (promise to pay) has been changed to allow entry of new notes, but disallow the changing of old notes. Also a field has been added to display the last time the "promise to pay" date or amount was changed.
- An "A/R broken promise to pay report" has been added to the Accounts Receivable reports menu. This report uses the "promise to pay" information.
- Another new A/R report is the "A/R future due report." This lists customer amounts due in the future, broken down into aging periods.
- Optional General Ledger summaries by source code have been added to the A/R Totals and A/P Totals reports generated at End-of Day. These need to be configured to print in the EOD header configuration if you want them.
- Accounts Payable has a new report called "Voucher audit report." This report lists all vouchers within a user defined range. This report can be used to audit vouchers and changes to vouchers.

To request a copy of the new version of the software, fill in the enclosed form and fax it to the shipping department. The anticipated release is mid-May.