

May, 1999

ADVANTAGE

BUSINESS COMPUTER SYSTEMS

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featuring: Duncan Builders Supply

For 35 years, Duncan Builders Supply has been serving the needs of the community and the surrounding area. The company, owned by M.J. Lewis and Robert Davenport, includes four stores in Oklahoma. Each store is run independently with its own manager and staff. Duncan Builders began using Advantage in 1992. They found the Advantage system at a trade show and were impressed because the Advantage program could be customized. They purchased Advantage to streamline the stores' operations and use all of the program modules to maximize the efficiency of the software. All four locations use the Advantage system.

The Duncan Builders Supply in Duncan, Oklahoma was the first store in the company. The 10,000 square foot store, managed by Bobby Mobley, employs about 35 people. This store is unique because it is not just a hardware store and lumber yard. It has a separate flooring department and a contractors' service center with knowledgeable salespeople to work with the contractors. Located in a mid-sized urban area, Duncan competes closer with "big boxes" than some of its sister stores; therefore, they continually endeavor to find the best merchandise at the best prices to satisfy customers' needs. According to Donnie Pruitt, purchasing manager, "Our success is all about service, and giving our customers a better option."



M. J. Lewis and Robert Davenport

The second store on the list is Ardmore Lumber Company in Ardmore, Oklahoma. Managed by Kenneth Mathes, the 7,500 square foot location employs 14 people and offers basic hardware lines and a full lumberyard. "At any given time, anybody can meet or beat your price, so the only thing better we have to sell is service," says Kenneth. The store's customer base breaks down to about 60 percent contractor and 40 percent walk-in trade, and each customer is treated as a V.I.P.

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Newsletter

P O Box 421
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Inside News.....

Advantage Academy...

*Sales and Marketing
Update...*

*New Release 9904 -
Software
Enhancements...*

*Timely
Connections...*

*Request for 9904
Software
Release...*

(cont. from pg.1)

Chickasha Lumber Company, in Chickasha, Oklahoma, is the third location owned by M.J. Lewis and Robert Davenport. It boasts over 14,000 square feet of showroom and warehouse space, plus a full lumberyard. "Personal attention and service in a hometown environment makes this store so successful and keeps customers coming back," says Steve Smart, the manager. "We try to get to know our customers' names and strive to make them feel important." In addition to normal services, the store also uses their Advantage software to do job estimates and other tasks necessary to serve its large contractor business.

The newest store of the group is Tish Lumber Company in Tishomingo, Oklahoma. The store is located in a town of only 2,600 people, but does business with customers from a thirty to forty mile radius. The newly constructed Tish Lumber Company is a clean, well-designed store that employs eight, very friendly people. Sam Combs manages the 6,000 square foot store and full lumberyard. They carry a wide range of items, and, if they don't have it, they will be more than happy to special order it. "I'm always looking for something new," Sam says, pointing to the work clothes, work boots, and welding products that he recently added to inventory.

The company M. J. Lewis and Robert Davenport have built is based on customer service and having the products their customers need. Even though the stores are run as individual businesses, they all operate on these same principles.

ADVANTAGE ACADEMY

We have just completed another session of the Basic to Database conversion classes. These sessions are designed to prepare you for the conversion to the Database version of Advantage Software. In March we conducted the largest Advantage Academy session we've had in the last few years. These classes are free and are conducted several times a year. If you have never been to a class, or have not been to one lately, make plans to attend the next session. Future sessions will be announced in the newsletters. Watch for them.

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

The Ethernet Option

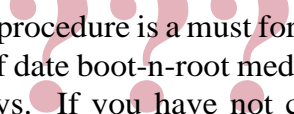
Last month I talked a little about the rapid pace with which our industry improves on technology. This month I'd like to tell you about a new option that is now available for all of the new systems that we sell.

In the last few months, we have installed systems using ethernet that have full PC file sharing capability and TCPIP dumb terminals. The most notable feature this provides the end user is that you can now have multiple screens running simultaneously on the same terminal, just like the system console. We can now do this for all terminals without third-party software which can limit the number of users or terminals.

In converted systems that reuse all of the customer's original equipment, it may not be possible to use ethernet. We have recently upgraded some customers when they were adding or replacing a terminal while upgrading the operating system. Now they have some of their old equipment and some of the newer, faster, multi-screen color terminals also.

Going the ethernet route, in most cases, requires an upgrade to the operating system. Then as you add or replace terminals, you can incorporate the ethernet technology into your system. As you are planning upgrades to your equipment, call me at extension 222, so that we can discuss what makes the most sense for your system.

DO YOU HAVE A CURRENT BOOT-N-ROOT BACKUP?

The boot-n-root procedure is a must for all system users. Missing or out of date boot-n-root media can cause time consuming delays.  If you have not created a boot-n-root backup in the last 30 days, do it today! Create more than one set for an extra safety margin.

New Release 9904 -Software Enhancements

There is a new, enhanced version of Advantage Software that will be ready for release in mid-May. If you would like to have a tape of the 9904 version, you must request it. Use the enclosed form to request your copy. Below are some of the new features of this new version.

Additional Year-end closing configuration:

An additional screen has been added to configure the year-end clearing of A/P vendor YTD totals, A/R customer YTD totals, inventory item YTD totals, inventory daily databases, payroll, and sales rep YTD totals. Now you can tell the system when you want to close these databases, either at the calendar year-end or the fiscal year-end. When you select either of these year-ends during the month-end procedure, the system will automatically clear the databases you have configured. For example, you can configure your system to clear the A/P vendor totals and the Payroll at the calendar year-end, and the rest at your fiscal year-end. If your fiscal year ends on December 31, then you can configure the system to clear all of them at the same time.

A/P Archiving at End-Of-Month:

Additional options have been added to the Accounts Payable archive on the EOM header configuration. You can now specify additional days to subtract from the standard system closing date when running the voucher archival through end-of-month processing. This can give you an extra margin of safety so that items will not be moved to history before they have cleared your bank. If you are using the Check Reconciliation program, a second field will allow you to have the system check to see if an item is reconciled in the Check Reconciliation module before archiving.

A/P Tracking of Voided Checks:

When you void a check and leave the vouchers open, the system now tracks the voided check. It creates a new voided voucher for a zero amount, paid by the voided check. The original voucher becomes available for editing and paying with another check. You can distinguish the void checks with vouchers left open from the void checks with vouchers voided by the letter in the "VC" column in voucher entry. You will see a "V" in the "VC" column when the check has been voided and the voucher reopened. You will see the familiar "Y" for checks that were voided along with the vouchers.

General Ledger Detail Account Listing:

This report has been enhanced to print a MTD or YTD running balance. If you select MTD running balance, the report has a zero beginning balance and only totals the entries you have selected to print. The YTD running balance has a beginning balance and add to that the entries you have selected to print.

Booked Deductions in Accounts Payable:

There is a new flag in the A/P header configuration that allows the storing of multiple deductions per voucher in a special "booked deductions" database. The records in this database are used to reduce the net amount of the check by crediting the accounts on the deduction codes assigned to the deduction amounts. These credits are not made until a check run is posted.

Auto-Accrual of Multi-Cost Center Entries in Accounts Payable:

Another new flag in the A/P header configuration automatically creates the "payable to" and "receivable from" entries when a voucher is distributed to multiple cost centers. The A/P location code configurations will have fields to enter the appropriate G/L numbers for these entries, when this flag is turned on.

"Place All Lines on PO":

This F2 option on Point-of-Sale item entry now can be used to place all lines of the sales order on a purchase order without tying the two together. When using this option, you answer "Yes" if you want to make this a special order. This is the way this option has behaved in the past. Answering "No" allows quick placing of more than one line to the PO without connecting the PO and the Sales Order. You can use this option instead of the familiar "Place this line on PO" when you have more than one line to place on the purchase order.

Is it time to upgrade?

We are now testing the quality of the new Pentium III 500 processors. These are *fast* machines. Larger and faster hard drives and less expensive, more durable RAM can make a workhorse computer that will make your life much better. We can also create a machine with a dual-ready motherboard. These boards allow you to expand to dual capacity when your business dictates the need. With these boards you can put yourself in a position to be ready for growth.

If you are thinking about upgrading your computer, call the Sales Department, extensions 222, 229, 216 or 242 to discuss these new options in computers.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR TAPE DRIVE

We are still running into a few tape drive issues. Tape drives can last for years if they are handled properly. For the maximum use from your tape drive, follow these recommendations:

- Never force a tape into the drive.
- Clean your tape drive regularly. Tapes are dirty, and they cause buildup on the drives. I recommend a weekly cleaning to keep your drive at peak efficiency. Make this a part of your regular computer maintenance.

DETERMINING YOUR MEMORY (RAM) REQUIREMENTS

Has this happened to you? You've just added a multi-session Spotline or multi-screen software program to your machine. Now your system appears to be a bit sluggish. A shortage of memory (Random Access Memory) could be creating your problem.

Memory, according to Webster's dictionary, is the capacity for storing information, such as four megabytes. For the majority of our customers, the following information can be used as a guideline to determine your system's memory requirements. Remember that each screen on a multi-session configuration counts as a workstation.

- Each workstation screen, and/or each multi-screen session on a workstation requires a minimum of 6 MB of RAM to function at its potential in Point-of-Sale. For example, if you have a Spotline that has three screens logged into POS, you need 18 MB of RAM for that workstation.
- Other workstations (screens) using other modules of the program need 2 MB of RAM each.
- Each operating system requires approximately 16 MB of RAM.

To calculate how much RAM you need, total the number of screens (not just terminals) that will be logged into POS and multiply by 6. Add 2 for each additional screen and 16 for the operating system. Then determine how much RAM is on your system, by going to System Administration > Operating System Utilities > System > Display hardware information. The first item on the list is your memory size in bytes. To arrive at the megabytes, divide the bytes by 1,000,000. Compare the size of your RAM to the total you calculated that you need. If you find yourself short, you need to add more RAM.

When adding RAM to your computer, you need to be aware that new RAM chips may not be compatible with your existing RAM chips. Incompatible chips can cause system lockups and panics. When a customer orders more RAM for their computer, it is our standard procedure to ship enough chips to replace the existing chips and add the new RAM. This gives you chips from the same lot that will be compatible and prevents unnecessary disasters on your system.