

February, 2000

ADVANTAGE

BUSINESS COMPUTER SYSTEMS

(903) 636-5200 Fax (903) 636-4674

featuring: *Timberline Builders Supply*

Sixty-five miles from the nearest traffic light or McDonald's, in a town of 800 residents, you will find Timberline Builders Supply. Surrounded by 12,000 foot Rocky Mountain peaks, they are ready to supply the local ranchers and home owners with hardware, lumber and feed. In 1996, Mike and Melanie Leaverton purchased Timberline Builders Supply, moving from the busy west coast to the slower pace of Walden, Colorado. Mike was formerly with Witts Home Center in Cottage Grove, Oregon. Witts Home Center was the first Advantage user in Oregon.

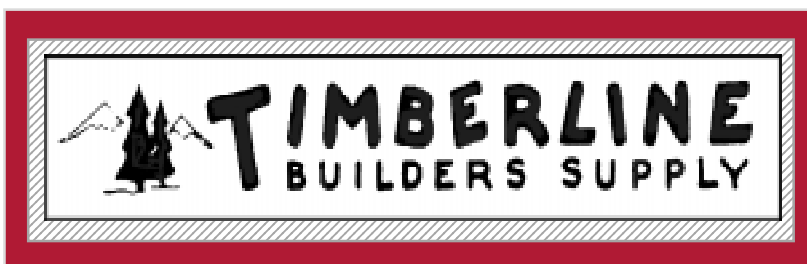
Timberline was established in 1973 as a small lumberyard and snowmobile dealership. Things have changed over the years, and Timberline has become the hub of Walden through the efforts of Mike, Melanie and their dedicated staff.

Mike was first exposed to the Advantage System while attending a show in Tacoma, Washington in 1989. Although he wasn't actually looking for a computer, he stopped at

a booth where this computer salesman from Texas was demonstrating his system while drinking a Dr. Pepper. The Basic System that Greg Matatall showed Mike that day impressed him with all of its features. But he was more impressed with a man who believed his word and a handshake had far more meaning than a written contract.

He was so impressed that shortly after the show in Tacoma, Mike made a trip to Big Sandy, Texas. He wanted to see just what kind of operation Advantage was. He stayed for several days and went home with a new computer system. Mike says, "I've been using Advantage for so long that I can hardly remember using anything else."

The staff of Timberline has an exciting vision for the future and they are happy to have Advantage on board. If you are ever traveling through northern Colorado, Mike, Melanie and their team invite you to stop by Timberline Builders Supply to share the mountain views and a cup of coffee.



Newsletter

P O Box 421
Big Sandy, Tx 75755-0421

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HOW WAS YOUR YEAR-END?

Did your end-of-year closing go smoothly? Overall, our support calls indicate that most of you had an uneventful closing. We want to say “thank you” to all of our customers who took our advice and prepared for the year-end closing. Balancing your books and making sure you know how to do the year-end procedure is a sure reducer of year-end stress. Since this was the first year-end close on Database for those of you who converted this year, we know that it was a new experience for you.. There are several steps that seemed to be forgotten by more than one user, so we wanted to cover these while year-end was still current in everyone’s memory.

End-of-year Automatic Procedure

Year-end Closing Versus Month-end Closing Procedures:

Doing the End-of-month/year procedure is normally only done once each month, with the exception of those who close their Accounts Receivable early and their Inventory at the end of the month. In December or at the end of your fiscal year, you run either the [C]alendar or [F]iscal year-end, not the [N]ormal month-end. If you close your Accounts Receivable early, you will select a [N]ormal month-end procedure to close the A/R. On the last day of the month that is a year-end, you will select either [C]alendar or [F]iscal year-end procedure to close the inventory. You will not do both a [N]ormal month-end closing and a [C]alendar or [F]iscal year-end procedure at the end of any month. If you mistakenly run a [N]ormal month-end when you should have run a year-end procedure, do NOT run the [C]alendar or [F]iscal procedure. You will need to manually clear the yearly accumulators in the various databases that would have been cleared had you run the year-end procedure. Then you will need to call Software Support and have your month-end dataset renamed to the end-of-year dataset before the next month-end close. Running both the month-end and year-end procedure in one month copies the data files with already cleared monthly accumulators to the EOY dataset. Any reports printed from the EOY dataset that rely on those accumulators will not be correct.

After The Automatic End-of-year Procedure

Access To Year-end Data Set:

The year-end closing creates a data area called either “eoy99cal” or “eoy99fis.” The default path for this dataset would be similar to /work/companyname/eoy99cal/userdata where the “work” drive varies according to your hard drive setup. It maybe work, work2, work3, etc. Individual users who will need to have access to this dataset will have to be configured in User Administration> Maintenance menu> User access to datasets. Press [Insert] to add a new entry. Enter the user’s ID number and then the eoy company number from the “Company dataset list” also known as the “clist.” You may use the F7 query key on each of these fields to find the appropriate information. Press [Insert] to save the information. When the user logs into the system, the eoy dataset will then be on his or her “Company dataset list.”

Paths For Purchasing Locations In EOY Dataset:

Purchasing locations are not copied from the live dataset to the EOY dataset, because we do not want the EOY dataset pointing to the live data. To print reports from the EOY data area, you will need to create the purchasing locations in the EOY area. Go to System Administration> Company configurations> Purchasing Locations on screen 2. You need to set these up exactly as they are in the live area with the exception of the “local work area” field. Enter the path to your EOY dataset instead. It will look something like “/work/companyname/eoy99cal/userdata.” Do NOT enter paths that point to your live data.

Using Year-End Datasets

Update General Ledger Beginning Balances After Adjusting Entries:

After you have completed your year-end adjustments to your General Ledger in the EOY dataset, you need to update the beginning balances in the live area’s General Ledger. There is a document in the General Ledger> How to reference files entitled “Update General Ledger Beginning Balances” that will outline the steps needed to complete the updating of the live data beginning balances. Keep in mind that any General Ledger reports printed before these beginning balances are updated will not include adjusting entries made in the year-end area, therefore creating incomplete or possibly misleading financial reports.

Did You Remember To:

Update your General Ledger period titles, if necessary, and enter the period closing dates in the General Ledger> Administrative menu> G/L header configuration> Screen 2.

FP	Fiscal Period Title	Closing Date
1	JAN	closed: N locked: N on 01/31/2000
2	FEB	closed: N locked: N on 02/29/2000
3	MAR	closed: N locked: N on 03/31/2000
4	APR	closed: N locked: N on 04/30/2000
5	MAY	closed: N locked: N on 05/31/2000
6	JUN	closed: N locked: N on 06/30/2000
7	JUL	closed: N locked: N on 07/31/2000
8	AUG	closed: N locked: N on 08/31/2000
9	SEP	closed: N locked: N on 09/30/2000
10	OCT	closed: N locked: N on 10/31/2000
11	NOV	closed: N locked: N on 11/30/2000
12	DEC	closed: N locked: N on 12/31/2000

There are a number of applications that use the period closing dates to set date ranges for qualifying records. If these are blank or not the actual last day of the period, these applications will not report the correct information.



Month-end Procedural Reminders

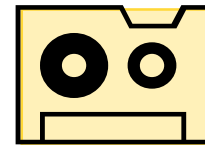
System administrators and anyone else responsible for running the End-of-Month procedures should know how to avoid month-end problems. If you follow the proper procedures, you will find that you will have successful month-end closings. Being on the newest versions of the software also gives you access to enhancements designed to provide more ease in these routine procedures. Using the month-end closing on 12/31/99 as an example, those using the 9904 version of the software had few or no issues compared to those on earlier versions.

The End-Of-Month/Year> How to reference files menu has a number of documents that will help you with the actual month-end procedure. There are also "suggested procedures" documents for each module of the system on their respective "How to reference file" menus. Read these documents. They are there to help you. You may also print them if you wish.

Computer software should be a comfortable tool for you to use in your business. Learning how to use it properly is the key to making software a "comfortable" tool.

Backup Tapes for Year-End

Keep the end-of-day tape on the last day of the year as a permanent record of the year's activity. If you closed the A/R prior to the last day of the month, you need to keep that EOD tape also. Backup your EOY area until all final adjustments have been made. Configure your system to automatically back up the EOY area with your daily backup. Go to System Administration> System configuration> Company dataset maintenance. Highlight the year-end dataset and press [Enter]. Change "Backup this dataset" to [Y]es. Press [Insert] to save the change. After all adjustments have been made, keep the last daily backup tape as part of your permanent record. You may then turn off the automatic backup of the EOY dataset.



Sale Laser Forms and Supplies

See the enclosed circular for special prices on your cut-paper, laser printer supplies.

This includes check stock, invoices, statements, letterhead and envelopes.

You can call the Forms Department for more information at Ext 204 and 246.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

As expected, Y2K has come and gone with very little disruption. The total number of unforeseen Y2K incidents numbered seven. These seven were due to old machines with motherboard issues and very old versions of the "Basic" software. These issues have now been addressed and everything is getting back to normal. Preparation paid off.

As an enhancement in communication between Advantage and our customers, we will begin sending out all correspondence via fax. This will include the statements and invoices that go out at the end of the month. Hard copies of these documents will be available upon request. The Newsletters will be added to the documents being faxed to you beginning with the February issue. If you have multiple fax machines within your business and would prefer that these documents be forwarded to a specific number, please contact Donna Reed at Ext. 216. She will update the fax number database with this information. This feature will be available to you in the next release of our software. This feature requires the use of "Digifax" which is the fax software that has been integrated into the Advantage software. Other uses of this feature are faxing point-of-sale documents when printing and the faxing of purchase orders to vendors.

Our goal in moving into electronic communication is to keep you informed with more timely information on the happenings here at Advantage. We believe that providing you with information like: what's happening around Advantage, new product information, helpful software hints, reminders, etc., will enable you to become more proficient in your business.

The New Year is bringing us many opportunities to expand and grow. Let's go forward together.

Scott Stanford

Sales and Marketing News From Gregory Cuke

I would like to begin by wishing all of you a happy and prosperous New Year. I trust that the roll over into the new century was as uneventful (problem-wise) for you as it was for us. I believe that the biggest challenge some folks will have is to get rid of the "catastrophe supplies" that were stockpiled for the New Year!

1999 was a good year for most, and I am excited by the prospects for the New Year. Advantage has again grown in terms of structure and volume. I appreciate the help that many of our customers give us by encouraging other people to join the Advantage family, and I look forward to your continued support.

In the tradition of staying a few steps ahead of our competitors, we are developing new features and functions daily. We will shortly be in a position to fax statement runs to customers. Also we are working on newer workstations that run on a Linux network. This will provide Internet access from all workstations and file sharing compatibility without the additional expense of a complete PC at each workstation. Recently we hooked up a remote store using the Internet rather than the generally more expensive dedicated phone lines. As this technology becomes more reliable and available in wider areas, I am sure this will become a more common way to run several locations from a central server.

The Trade Show season is upon us, so I anticipate the opportunity to spend some time with many of you there. Again, best wishes to all of our friends and customers for the new millennium.



MAINTAINING QUALITY SUPPORT



Our commitment to you has always been to provide the best possible service at the lowest possible price. Our ability to do this lies in your hands. Keeping our support fees down means we must be able to do our jobs with the same criteria you use in your business...efficiency and effectiveness.

As an example, you have always provided free delivery as a service to your customers. Imagine that one day you realize that more and more of your customers are not being organized in their ordering because they know you will make trip after trip, delivering what they need when they think of it. In addition, they are allowing any of their employees to place orders, so you are taking multiple orders for the same job because they are not communicating among themselves. Sometimes several different people are ordering the same thing. In addition, they want what they want, today. They have deadlines. Now you know that if they had made the effort to organize their ordering and talked to their people before calling, they would have eliminated the need for you to make all those extra trips. But your policy is free delivery, and you provided the service. Now they are calling to complain that you delivered duplicate items. Not only that, but they want you to come and pick up the extras.

If this type of thing becomes a major issue, what are you going to do? Are you going to charge the offenders for delivery? What about charging for more than one delivery trip a day? You could raise your prices to offset the offenders lack of planning. Whatever you decide, you are faced with a dilemma that is not easily resolved. You really don't want to penalize those who don't abuse your services for the ones who do.

This is similar to the dilemma we find ourselves in. We need your cooperation to allow us to keep our fees at our low rates. We all understand that there are occasional "exceptions" to the rule, and at those times we try to go above and beyond normal services. But if those "exceptions" become the rule, we will be unable to rise to "exceptional" service. Following the guidelines below will help us offer you the support you need while keeping our fees at levels that also serve you well.

- 1 LIMIT CALLERS TO DESIGNATED CALLERS ONLY:** As a rule, there should not be more than two designated callers for each company. These callers should be your key computer personnel. They should be the first level of support for your employees. Even on weekends, your employees should make their first call to those who know your system and your policies and procedures.
 - Our policy will not allow us to give "root" passwords or menu access to your employees. Many times unnecessary delays are created because your employees cannot or will not call your computer staff on off times. This ties our hands and theirs.
 - For us to have to train your staff over and over on the same issues is costly. Please take responsibility to train those you leave in charge of computer tasks.

- 2 PLAN AHEAD FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS OR PROCEDURES YOU ARE NOT COMFORTABLE WITH:** Too often we are all put in crisis mode because of lack of planning. If you wait until the last minute to begin an unfamiliar project, you are under stress, and problems only increase the stress level. Your crisis becomes our crisis, and we all know that during a crisis situation training is not what you want. You want answers and solutions.
 - Our agreement with you is to provide training in the use of the software. Software and system maintenance training means teaching you to find your own answers. We are not financial counselors or CPA's. We are trainers. We will teach you to use the software and its data so that you can find your own solutions. It is your job to analyze your data.
 - Practice the procedures. Make time to learn new tasks in advance. Take time to learn to read the reports. The tools are available. "Play areas" are an excellent source for "what if" practice sessions.

- 3 DO YOUR SYSTEM MAINTENANCE AS RECOMMENDED:** Not following the recommended guidelines will only cost you time and money. It's guaranteed. Those who have been caught short are now firm believers in root-n-boots, backups, cleaning their machines and other peripherals, etc. Experience created our recommendations. Lower your risk by spending time instead of money.
 - Dirty machines are the number one cause of failures. CPU fans, type drives, printers, keyboards and cards that get dirty will fail. Preventative maintenance will save you money.
 - Systems that must be rebuilt without current root-n-boots are billable.
 - Recovery of data due to improper procedures is an unneeded expense.



ADVANTAGE

BUSINESS COMPUTER SYSTEMS

ACADEMY

TRAINING CLASSES

What will you gain by attending Advantage Academy:

- *Learn about new features in the software.*
- *Find out about what's coming in future releases of Advantage.*
- *Meet other users and learn from each other's experience.*
- *Bring a data tape of your data and work with your own data.*
- *Get one-on-one help with your own specific needs.*
- *Put "faces" to the voices you talk to on the telephone.*

Advantage Academy classes are designed for the user who has some experience with the software. It is assumed that those attending have at least a basic understanding of how the program works. These are not training classes for the inexperienced or the new employee. The classes will be of the most benefit to your company if you send users who come back and teach the rest of your people about what they learned.

At Advantage there is no charge to attend classes. Many of our competitors charge \$125.00 or more per day for training. Training increases your knowledge of the software and enhances your ability to access the full potential of your system. While all of us are very busy in both our professional and personal lives, making time to come to Big Sandy, Texas for the Advantage Academy is an excellent investment. Past sessions have demonstrated that the knowledge gained here will save you time, money and energy when you get home. You have made a significant investment in your future by choosing Advantage Business Systems, and being able to improve your use of the system through further training is time well spent.

***Begin the new millennium with
Training Classes at Advantage Academy***

ADVANTAGE ACADEMY - WINTER SEMESTER

March 20 - 23, 2000 Monday - Thursday

Free Classes for all Advantage Users

Tape recorders are welcome. All users will have computer terminals to use during the classes.

To be held at the
Advantage Corporate Offices
Big Sandy, Texas

REPORT GENERATOR CLASS

This class is designed for System Administrators and other **knowledgeable** computer staff. **Report Generator is not recommended for new or inexperienced users. Each day's class builds on the previous day's training, so you must attend each class beginning on Monday.** This class is truly for the experienced user who has a good working knowledge of the complete Advantage System.

REPORT GENERATOR SCHEDULE

Monday - March 20, 2000

8:00 - 10:00 AM -Beginning Level

10:15 - 11:00 AM -Beginning Level

Tuesday - March 21, 2000

8:00 - 9:00 AM -Report Generator

(prerequisite: Monday's Report Generator Class)

Wednesday - March 22, 2000

8:00 - 9:00 AM -Report Generator

(prerequisite: Monday's Report Generator Class)

Thursday - March 23, 2000

8:00 - 9:00 AM -Report Generator

(prerequisite: Monday's Report Generator Class)

SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION AND DATABASE MAINTENANCE

History archiving, setting up terminals, printers, users, forms, reorganizing data, and other routine maintenance procedures will be discussed. **A must for all new users.** End-of-month and end-of-day procedures will also be covered.

ACCOUNTING APPLICATIONS

Designed for bookkeepers, owners and system administrators, the accounting classes will provide additional insight into routine procedures. New users and existing users should plan on attending these in-depth classes to gain a well-rounded understanding of the system as a whole. These classes will assist in implementing new applications of the system and to improve the accuracy and efficiency of routinely used applications.

SALES, INVENTORY AND PURCHASING

Purchasing agents, receiving clerks, inventory control managers, bookkeepers and store managers are all excellent candidates for this session. You're using these applications now, but can you be getting more benefit from them? Accuracy, efficiency and effectiveness are the reasons most computerized. Learn tools that will allow you to get the maximum usage from your Advantage System.

Learning what these applications are about, how they are used, what you can hope to gain from them, etc. will be addressed in these classes. The more you use of the Advantage System the more benefit you will receive from your investment.

SESSION SCHEDULE

Monday - March 20, 2000

11:00 - 12:00 PM -Database Maintenance

1:00 - 3:00 PM -System Maintenance

3:15 - 4:00 PM -System Maintenance

4:15 - 6:00 PM -General Ledger

Tuesday - March 21, 2000

9:15 - 10:30 AM -General Ledger

10:45 - 12:00 PM -General Ledger

1:00 - 2:15 PM -General Ledger

2:30 - 3:30 PM -Accounts Receivable

3:45 - 4:30 PM -Accounts Receivable

4:45 - 6:00 PM -Payroll

Wednesday - March 22, 2000

9:15 - 10:30 AM -Accounts Payable

10:45 - 12:00 PM -Accounts Payable

1:00 - 2:15 PM -Purchasing

2:30 - 3:30 PM -Purchasing

3:45 - 5:00 PM -Electronic Purchasing

5:15 - 6:00 PM -Inventory Counts

Thursday - March 23, 2000

9:15 - 10:45 AM -Inventory Control

11:00 - 12:00 PM -Inventory Control

1:00 - 2:00 PM -Quotes and Estimates

2:15 - 4:00 PM -Point of Sale

4:15 - 6:00 PM -Point of Sale

**FOR MORE INFORMATION
CALL EXTENSION 242 OR 216**

HANDS-ON HELP

Support reps will be available at the end of each day to assist you in any issues specific to your company. If you plan to take advantage of the one-on-one help, please bring a data tape and any needed specifics.

What Will The 21st Century Bring?

Predictions about what we can all expect in the 21st century are plastered throughout the media. From predictions of doom to a promise of time travel, the only certain fact is that the world will continue to change. Our finger on the pulse says that businesses will continue to be forced to run a tight ship to survive on narrowing margins. This raises the bar for us as your business partner. Providing solutions for efficiency are a challenge we take seriously. It is with that goal in mind, we will be modifying the software, as well as our office procedures to pave the way. Is a paperless office possible? We'll see, as we take another step in that direction and begin this month to communicate with you, our customers, via fax.

FAX STATEMENTS AND INVOICES

The Advantage Software has been enhanced to fax statements and invoices. We are implementing our system to begin faxing your statements and invoice copies to arrive on your fax machines around the 25th of each month. We have been diligently updating our customer records to make sure we have accurate fax numbers. Of course, hard copies of all statements and invoice copies will still be available when needed.

FAX NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters, sales alerts, etc. will be faxed randomly throughout the month, as a means in which to communicate timely information and updates. Year-end reminders and other timely reminders will be more easily communicated when a fax news brief can be sent on specific days as reminders of timely procedures. As a commitment to your success on the Advantage System, these news briefs will serve to keep you informed with the most up to date instructions. Watch your fax machines as we keep you informed with instructions, information, efficiency enhancements and progress coming your way. Newsletters, news briefs, sales information, etc. can be sent to the attention of a specific person if you desire. Let us know if you have any preferences.

FAX NUMBERS

If you have a specific fax machine to which you prefer our communications be sent, let us know. We can send statements and invoices to one fax number and other types of news briefs to another number. Also, if you have a multi-location operation and would like to have newsletters and new briefs sent to all locations, we can do that. *Please advise the Sales and Marketing Department, Extension 216, of any fax number changes or specifications.*

STATE PAYROLL TAX CHANGES

We need your help!

If there were changes in your state or local payroll taxes as of January 1, it is your responsibility to notify us. Fax us the annualized tax tables and exemption or dependant tables, so that we can update the system to accommodate the changes. We do not receive this information from state or local taxing authorities, and so we are depending on you to fax us the state documentation for these changes. We will not change tax tables or any taxing information without a copy of the taxing authorities official documentation. We only need the annualized percentage tables and any other documentation showing allowance amounts and standard deduction amounts.

Fax this information to Advantage to the attention of Payroll Programming. We have a turn around time of 48 hours during the business week (Monday through Friday). If you are unsure about changes in your state or local payroll taxes, contact your CPA or taxing authority.

Remember, these tax tables are not changed unless you notify us.

Used Serial Spotline Sale



\$199.00

Reg. \$325.00

We have a limited quantity of used serial Spotlines available. They are used, but we have checked them out and they have a 6 month warranty.

With 15" color monitor and keyboard

\$450.00

Call the Sales Department, Ext. 242 or 216