COMPUTER INFORMATION SERIES NO. 3

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After you've found the best computer for your needs at a price you could afford, it's time to read over the manufacturer manuals that come with your computer. Even if you can't understand them, at least spend time to peruse the information over once. This step is important in your learning process and to understand the particular computer and printer you purchased.

If you purchased a brand new computer, the manufacturer has probably already installed everything on your hard drive so all you have to do is turn the computer on and work through the on-screen learning tutorial to get you up and running quickly. If not _ and if you're still confused after going through the tutorial, simply enroll in a computer class in your area. These classes are not expensive and shouldn't cost more than $10 for a 1-day class. If you purchased a brand new computer at a computer store in your city or town, most of them will give you a free lesson or two. Or, perhaps you know a friend or relative that already has own of their own and can give you some one-on-one instruction.

Whatever method you choose to learn the basic operations of your computer system is up to you; but do dedicate the first week or so of your life with your new computer friend to learning how it operates. This basic training ground is essential in your growth and the growth of your business.

You Finally Got the Thing Ready to Go _ Right? So now you have learned how to turn the thing on and do a few things. Perhaps you have even advanced to the point of typing your first letter and have printed it out on your printer. Great! You are progressing fine.

But now we're up to the costly part of owning a computer _ purchasing additional software. As previously discussed, software is the programs that you buy in order to make the computer do what you want it to do.

If you want to write a letter, you have to have a word processing software program (e.g., WordPerfect or Microsoft Word.) If you want to keep records of your checking account, you will have to buy a separate software program to do that; and still another separate database software to maintain your mailing list.

Most beginners will ask: "Isn't there just one big software program I can buy that will do everything?" The answer is NO. This is how software manufacturers stay in business. Besides, a computer is customized to YOU and your particular needs. You may be an artist and want to purchase a software program for drawing pictures on your computer. I, on the other hand, would have no use for a program like this since I can't draw. Therefore, it would be impossible to have one great big software program that could do everything for everybody and meet every need that everyone would have.

There are some software packages that come as one entire package and claim to have most of the software needed by a generalized majority (small business owners, for instance.) One popular, well-known program is WordPerfect 6.0. Another one is AmiPro. Both of these are excellent packages

and if you can afford the $300 or so investment right now _ this would be the best recommendation for your initial software purchase.

However, if you cannot afford to buy the system and spend another $300 on software at the present time you can use alternative solutions. There are a wide variety of medium-priced packages in the under $100 range from such companies like Pro-Media International, (800) 998-2822 and MicroWarehouse, (800) 367-7080 or Windows Exchange, (800) 845-1900 to name a few.

You also might want to consider picking up a copy of Windows Magazine at the newsstand, or order one directly from the publisher at PO Box 5006, Pittsfield MA 01203-9951. Undoubtedly Windows was already installed by the factory when you purchased your system. Windows is an "operating environment" just like DOS is. An "operating environment" simply means the major software that other software programs need for them to operate themselves. DOS means "Disk Operating System" but it also performs maintenance and protection of your system too.

But an even lower-priced alternative is SHAREWARE and the little known FREEWARE. What is it? What are it's disadvantages and advantages?