

## DMAC's New Products Provide Expected Feed-Back for Unibase

DMAC's new products Ace Contact Manager, NetBased Software and Project Budget Manager have provided the expected new ideas for making Unibase more user-friendly. Some ideas have already been incorporated into Unibase.

For instance, the download of Unibase by DMAC no longer has a thirty-day time limit. The new limit is ten records with no time limit. DMAC learned from its new products that many users take more than 30 days to understand new software.

The NetStaffTrakr and NetDirectri products have pointed a way to make web access available to Unibase by DMAC. Unfortunately web access is more complicated than most users can handle without a Wide Area Network administrator. DMAC is moving slowly in this area.

DMAC is developing full web site automation; enabling buyers to complete purchases and receive emailed program activation codes 24/7 for both new purchases and upgrades. On-line help automation is also being developed for all product lines.

Staying up to date with compilers and operating systems seamlessly is also a must. DMAC's people have seen the negative results of failing to do this. Support for database files (dbf) will come to Unibase by DMAC. Easy import and export of user data must be high on any list.

Adding new upgrades easily with complete assurance that the existing, related user data will not be changed has been tested and well received for Ace Contact Manager.

Ace now has a default data restorer capability that will never overwrite a folder (file), but if the folder is missing, the default data restorer will put out a new default folder.

At DMAC we are working hard to make our products easier to use. Stay tuned for a whole new set of user-friendly enhancements.

## User Chooses Unibase by DMAC For Scrolling Fields, Picklist, And Snippets

Unibase by DMAC was paid a great compliment by a new customer this fall. The new customer had spent five months trying to get a DMAC competitor's image entry solution to meet the needs of a new, and very important, contract they had been awarded. Under tremendous pressure because time was running out, the new customer turned to Unibase by DMAC. Two weeks later they were keying the job and couldn't be more satisfied.

Some of the new customer's comments and observations:

First, the new customer liked the smooth integration of Unibase Imaging with Unibase by DMAC. Describing Unibase Imaging as, "just Unibase on steroids," the new customer recalled how he had to purchase a separate, additional product in attempting to use the competitor's solution and it still wouldn't work properly.

Next, the new customer wanted to use two monitors because his images were wide and short. Although Unibase by DMAC can do this, Tina showed him how he could cut the image into snippets and then paste the snippets on the screen. The user could use the red line feature to move the keyer's eye through all the snippets at once. Back at the user's shop he showed both approaches to his people. They chose the snippet approach over two monitors. "Less head movement," they said.

Then, the new customer addressed a large list of possible choices which could change on the fly. The user set up a pick list and away he went.

Somewhere in the training class, Tina showed the new customer the scrolling fields of Unibase. This feature allows multiple similar records to be displayed on the same screen with complete scrolling back and forth in the records. The user made this work one night when it rained after class. "Great," he said.

We're happy at DMAC when a new user is happy with Unibase by DMAC. What a nice Thanksgiving present this user brought to DMAC! We all hope his new project goes well.

## Old Fogies Have Their Value; They Understand Old Software

Snowstorms cause problems. Bad storms, early in the fall, cause old computers to die. Or at least for one new Unibase by DMAC client this is true.

Recently, DMAC received a call on a Tuesday that an old computer running a 1990 version of Unibase had died during a snowstorm. Not only was this an old version, it was a Unix version. The caller said that if DMAC could help them out of this unexpected bind they would be grateful.

Jon came to this old foggy (that is me, Fred) and explained the problem. Told me that since I was as old as the hills and probably could remember when this system was installed, I could probably get it running faster than any one else. The gauntlet was thrown; I rushed off chasing the windmill. Mixed a few metaphors too.

What a happy ending to this story. The new DMAC client had the old computer running when Fred arrived. Fred just tweaked it a bit. The user's technical support was fantastic. In three days a LINUX version of Unibase was running with at least one program moved over from the old UNIX correctly. Also, all the old UNIX version programs were moved to the LINUX box in ASCII format for the user to check out and start up at his convenience. Once the user was "out of the woods," Fred was declared to be a "third foot" and sent on his way. Happy is this old foggy who can be of assistance to DMAC clients.

## DMAC Looking for Ways To Improve "Questions And Answers" on Web

"Questions and Answers" (Q&A) sounds boring; but it is not. Another way of titling this subject is "knowledge transference infrastructure."

And in 2004 DMAC will be significantly upgrading its Q&A. Our users should be able to find answers to questions DMAC has answered in the past for other users. Sounds simple, but it is not.

Right now various commercial products are being evaluated. About three years ago DMAC installed Bugzilla. This is a nice product for tracking bugs but does not make the results available to others in an easy way.

So, DMAC has dropped the requirement of tracking bugs; we just want a good Q&A system. Some of the features that are a must are as follows:

1. Keep track of most popular questions at any time and make access to them the quickest and easiest.
2. Allow searches of all types; both questions and answers.
3. Let DMAC know which questions arise most frequently so DMAC can eliminate the cause of the questions.

This is an ambitious project; so, if you have any good examples on the web, please send us the link.

## When Holes Occur In Systems, The Tough Do What They Must

Anyone who has ever worked with Tina Kay knows she can succinctly define a problem and make the solution look easy. It never is. This is a story bragging about a DMAC client that took Tina's comments to heart.

The client is a new one this year. They were converting from a competitive product. Somewhere in the conversion process Tina found that the other system allows special treatment of blank fields. Tina went orbital. She raved for about a week here at DMAC that no wonder data capture has such a name for low accuracy. Then she told the client she thought the treatment for blank fields allowed a tremendous number of errors to go through the client's system. She even drew upon her masters of experimental statistics education to "beat" on the client.

That is the background. This is the story. The client sorta became quiet for a while; Tina feared she had insulted the client.

Then lo and behold (holiday cheers!) Tina received a request for help with a problem the client was having with the particular project. "Wow," she said. The client sent her one of the best-written, most complete, best documented, superlative-in every-way-program. Two-dimensional arrays were correctly used. Multiple file output; multiple pass processing. The program sets a new high in understanding of the Unibase by DMAC AID language. Not since Ceridian's John Hollohan and Dick McGrath has DMAC seen such power and glory in AID programs!

Needless to say, the client took to heart what Tina had to say about plugging holes. DMAC expects we all will hear about the success this client will enjoy this coming year. Our collective hat's off to the client.

## Incentive Systems Based on Net Keystrokes Work; Using Gross Strokes Requires Extra Care and Concern

For fifteen years DMAC has been pushing Unibase. Finally, one client has found that if he pays keyers incentive pay based on Gross Keystrokes rather than the recommended Net Keystrokes bad things happen. The keyers in his shop have learned they can exaggerate the gross keystrokes on very fast machines.

At DMAC we have been patching "holes" in recording gross keystrokes which appear on these super fast machines. We will keep patching until no new exaggerations appear.

These exaggerations are easy to spot by eye. But they can slip by if the client is not careful. Any time a keyer's total gross strokes are more than a given percentage above net strokes, the client started looking. Bingo.

The latest Unibase by DMAC 8.0 has the patches included. Ain't life great?

## Unibase on LINUX Requires Experience; But Oh How Great When It Works Well

Unibase by DMAC on LINUX has received poor reviews at times. DMAC's developers scratch their heads, cannot come up with an explanation. But this past month, I had the privilege of watching a LINUX installation in a UNIX shop firsthand. I thought I might report to you all about this install and why it went so smoothly. I did not touch a key on the users keyboard. I watched and kibitzed.

First, the LINUX box was going into a UNIX shop; the experience was present to solve problems as they occurred.

Second, the Gnome user interface would not work on LINUX because the GUI interface had been disabled on the LINUX hardware box.

Third, the user previously had observed every problem that occurred during the install. This problem had occurred on either the user's UNIX or other LINUX systems.

Fourth, the user understood about the differences between UNIX, LINUX and Microsoft. For instance, wild cards characters on the command line were considered a "No, No."

Fifth, permissions were set aside until after the install was complete. Everything was installed as "root."

Sixth, Kermit was used on the Microsoft client computers. Three other packages were available, but since DMAC knew that Kermit would work, the user installed with Kermit and will experiment with the other products later.

Seventh, the issues of upper and lower case file names were understood.

Eighth, the user put off bringing up Samba and WebBase by DMAC until the system was stable and used for a while. (A long while, neither has been attempted yet.)

Ninth, the user had many hard copy LINUX manuals for reference during the LINUX startup.

Is DMAC recommending a LINUX based Unibase by DMAC system? No, not right now. The skill sets are not available in the general run-of-the-mill computer world at this time. Will DMAC sell LINUX systems. Sure, if the user can convince DMAC that they can handle LINUX.

The rewards are many; the risks are many.

## Purchase of Unibase by DMAC Online; Soon To Be Available

A year ago DMAC paid money to consultants to enable prospective clients to purchase DMAC products over the web on a 24 by 7 basis. The project failed. For the past year we have studied the reasons for the failure. Slowly we have approached that wall of ignorance and uncertainty again and again. Each time we find new reasons to go slow.

Now we think we are getting close. Let us review some of the issues that we have had to resolve.

First, we had to come up with a new method of authorization for product and for adding number of users to a

Unibase by DMAC, Unibase Imaging and WebBase by DMAC license. We settled on an RSA based public key, private key approach. Naturally, the older approach had to still work also.

Second, we had to find a secure site to process the payment. After much thought and investigation, we settled on "PayPal." As part of our investigation, Fred opened a PayPal account. Then to see how it worked, he had to buy "stuff" on eBay. Actually had to learn how to bid; but he did it. Tough job Fred does.

Third, DMAC had to redesign its web sites to actually do the processing. Wow, that took work. We think we have the authorization codes going out automatically when the payment clears PayPal. No human intervention. If we had allowed a human to send the authorization code, we could have had this process up and running in May.

Fourth, we had to build new databases to track the sales. Naturally, DMAC plans on using DMAC products for the databases. These databases will be automatically populated as part of the payment process.

Finally, we have to test and test and test the process. That is where we are now. So soon, you will have more convenience in the acquisition cycle.

### Washington's Space Needle Attracts Fred; DMAC Welcomes New Seattle Client

Ever since it was built in 1963, Fred has wished to eat (Fred loves to eat!) in the Space Needle's restaurant in Seattle, Washington. Finally, a prospective client's presentation and demo brought Fred to the Needle restaurant. Food and view were great!

Now you all who think Fred is slightly daft, remember that Fred's a mechanical engineer and the Space Needle is a wonderful engineering feat. First in 1963 it shocked the world with its one horsepower revolution system (puny?). Then the complete refurbishment in the 1990's was also a great feat.

DMAC also achieved some wonders while Fred was there also. A sixteen user system was up and running in just seven minutes. Tina accomplished this. The install speed was not bad at all. Also, against a great competitive field, Unibase by DMAC was chosen as the product to be installed early next year.

### Tightwads Can Learn New Tricks; XP Professional Has Its Place

Microsoft Windows XP Professional has reversed Fred's tightwad instincts. XP Professional is worth the extra cost when compared to XP Home on a network with a domain server.

Sorting through the hype on the Windows operating systems, especially with Windows XP has been difficult. For at least the past year DMAC has purchased E-machines with XP Home as the operating system. Every time a new one was installed on DMAC's network, DMAC's users complained how slow the system was. So much finger pointing made Fred think of a puppet show. Sorting through the proposed solutions was tough.

After trying every tweak DMAC people could find, XP Home did not run faster for long. Finally, DMAC's people noticed that Microsoft said that XP Home uses NetBios for networking while XP Professional uses true TCP/IP protocol.

DMAC found that XP Professional could be used to upgrade XP home. Finally Fred broke down and bought a copy of XP Professional. No speed improvement happened when XP Professional was first installed. But quick investigation showed that the new XP Professional computer was still a member of the workgroup. When moved to the domain, by golly, the speed jumped forward, just like Microsoft said it would.

Of course, the full-speed-ahead approach had its "gotchas." Had to get on the E-machine web site and obtain the display driver. XP Professional had lost the display driver and reverted to 640x480 default generic driver mode.

And all the desktop icons disappeared. Don't know where they went. Was able to create new shortcuts; so just a small pain.

And don't forget, you can only install one copy on one computer with XP Professional. DMAC must buy a copy for each E-machine. Oh well, DMAC will get used to immediately upgrading a computer when it is purchased. Just add the software to the cost of the new machine. Of course if low cost vendors were to sell machines with XP Professional installed instead of XP Home, we would all win.

Definitely worth the money, inconvenience and effort. The speed makes one proud to have a computer again. This XP Professional over XP Home becomes a minimum requirement for network based XP Windows operating systems.