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Newsletter/Post

A Die-Hard WordPerfect Fan Eats Her (Microsoft) Word

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AUTHOR: Christel Burris
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TechnoLawyer member Jon Calhoun asks:

>"I think for most of us that swear by WordPerfect it is the
>Reveal Codes feature that always puts it head and
>shoulders above Word. I've not worked with Microsoft Word's
>Reveal Formatting that Kim described as "similar to"
>Reveal Codes." I'd appreciate further comments from those
>who use Word 2002, who also are familiar with WP, as to the
>ease of use and other characteristics of the Reveal
>Formatting."

Lynda LaPan responded:

>"I would like to go on record as being "FOR" the
>proposition that WordPerfect is much more cost effective
>that Word -- because complicated tasks can be completed in
>about 1/3 of the time, and edits of the document likewise
>take about 1/3 of the time. Please refrain from
>attempting to prove to me Word is better...."

Christel Burris wrote:

>"I could not let the opportunity pass to comment on Lynda
>LaPan's dissertation. I have just two words for her:
>Training and standardization. Not just training for the
>legal secretaries and paralegals but training also for any
>attorney who will be working with documents. Standardizing
>Word styles and templates will make the creation and
>editing of documents MUCH more efficient than
>WordPerfect...."

Karl M. Rowe responded:

>"I didn't quite understand what Christel meant when she
>wrote that "training is the most important tool any firm
>will have with the introduction of ANY new piece of
>software," so I've surmised that what she was saying was
>that the key to being able to use Word 2003 effectively is
>training, "training for the legal secretaries and
>paralegals ... also for any attorney who will be working
>with documents." I was made to wonder though what it was
>Christel discovered that she was able to do using Word 2003
>that so "floored" her...."

Regarding Karl Rowe's long, exhausting critique and argument concerning my original posting which, among other things, emphasized the need for training when a firm makes the changeover from WP to MS Word, my first impulse was to sit down and compose an equally long and tedious rebuttal to a good deal of what he seemed to be saying, which

after several readings still seems to me to be chock full of misstatements and inaccuracies arising out of a blind prejudice for WordPerfect and against Microsoft Word.

However, now that I have demonstrated that I too can make what should have been several well crafted sentences into one overlong and confusing one, and, after taking some time to simmer down, I have instead decided to specifically rebut only his statement where he pointedly said "... Christel does come across to me as if she were someone that has never really taken the time to learn how to use WP with the same vigor as she has taken in learning Word... ." And I promise not to use the word "paradigm" in my response (oops, too late).

Let me start by elaborating on my background:

-- 1981-1984: Secretary/Typist/Receptionist for small firms using a typewriter, Wordstar, and WordPerfect for DOS 3.0.

-- 1984: Hired by a mid-size San Francisco law firm to work in their word processing department and helped convert from OS/6 to WordPerfect for DOS 4.0. What was the original word processor used -- isn't OS/6 an IBM operating system?

-- 1985-1996: During my 12+ years with that same firm, I progressed to managing the Word Processing department while the firm adopted each succeeding release of WP from 4.1 through 6. During this time I also served as a primary "Go To" for special projects and complex documents, due to my proficiency in using the more advanced features and functions of WordPerfect and other programs.

-- 1994: Started my own legal technology advising firm and moved to WordPerfect for Windows 6.0a.

-- 1995-1997: Continued my legal technology advising (which included WordPerfect training) while progressing through WordPerfect for Windows 8.

-- 1997-2004: IT Manager for small (60+ Users) law firm in North Carolina, using WordPerfect 8 through 10; where I often made the statement: "We'll move to Word over my dead body" (continued my consulting/training part-time).

-- 2003: I finally "Ate my words" and moved the North Carolina law firm to Word 2003 after trying my darndest to find a valid reason to stay with WordPerfect.

-- 2004-present: Went full time (again) with my legal technology advising and training firm. I currently have clients using Word XP, Word 2003, WordPerfect 8 (ah, there was a great piece of software), WordPerfect 11 and WordPerfect 12.

Does that look like the resume of a person who didn't learn WordPerfect with vigor?

To summarize, after about 20 years of using WordPerfect in a demanding professional environment and strongly defending it against Word proponents for a goodly amount of that time, I finally threw in the towel. After extensive comparison testing between the two word processors, I discovered that Microsoft had finally come up with a superior product, or if not clearly superior, at least so good that, taking into consideration the advantages of using industry standard Microsoft Office products, there is no good argument for staying with WordPerfect.

And, as for my objections (as an expert user and trainer of both WordPerfect AND Word) to a lot of what Mr. Rowe had to say: There is virtually nothing that can be done in WordPerfect that can't be done just as easily in current versions of Word, and there are compelling reasons for die-hard WordPerfect users to seriously consider changing over. Bringing a firm's documents into conformity with those produced by virtually the entire business world and probably 85% of other law firms is certainly not the least of those reasons. And, like it or not, WordPerfect is now and will probably remain an insignificant player in office document production for the foreseeable future.

So, what's the next step in the WordPerfect versus Word argument? How about a "shoot out" between Mr. Rowe and myself sponsored by TechnoLawyer?

Signed:

Former Legal Receptionist
Former Legal Secretary
Former Legal Word Processor
Former Legal Word Processing Department Manager
Former Legal IT Manager
Former WordPerfect Die-Hard
Current Legal Technology Advisor and Trainer

Christel Burris
CEO, Push One Button, Inc.
Finding the solution for the firm,
Not the firm for the solution
christel@pushonebutton.com
www.pushonebutton.com
