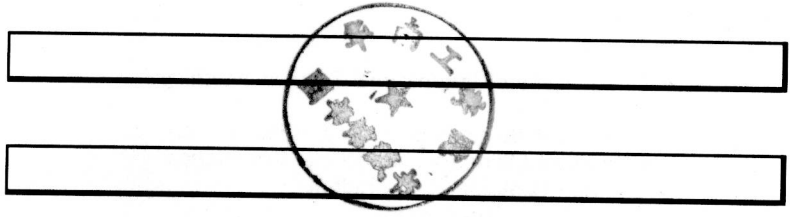
SYBEX COMPUTER BOOKS

The ThinkTank™ Book

Jonathan Kamin

The Think Tank™ Book



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The ThinkTank Book

TO ESTELLE AND HENRY KAMIN,
my parents—
whose unwavering faith and support
made possible the circumstances
in which to write this book.

I could rule the world,
If I could only get the parts.

—The Waitresses, 1983

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book would not have been possible without the contributions of many others. First and foremost, I owe a debt of immense gratitude to David Greene. David helped introduce me to computers, gave me my first exposure to ThinkTank, helped me out of assorted technical jams, and discussed many of the ideas presented in this book with me when they were in their formative stages. A great deal of the material in Chapter 10 in particular is based on David's thinking on the subject.

Many people at Living Videotext, Inc., publishers of ThinkTank, went out of their way to help me in this project. Two in particular deserve special note: David Winer, president of Living Videotext, provided me with information available nowhere else, and arranged for the use of a computer on which to test the program and create the manuscript; Mary Cadloni lent a sympathetic ear when I ran into problems, gave me a great deal of help and advice, and took an active interest in the project as it progressed, Scott Love went over the manuscript carefully and offered helpful suggestions.

Of no less importance are many members of the staff of SYBEX. Carole Alden, editor extraordinaire, did her utmost to squeeze every obscurity and ambiguity out of the text, and is largely responsible for whatever style and grace it may have. Rudy Langer supported the project from the beginning. Paul Panish and Lorraine Aochi took an active part in the manuscript's development. Joel Kreisman tested all my examples, to ensure their accuracy. Kathy Jones, Barbara Wetzel, and Wally Rutherford discussed the ideas presented in Chapter 6 with me, and helped steer me in fruitful directions. Doug Mosher, an avid ThinkTank user, was always ready to share his insights into the program's workings, and provided me with the results of his research on file sizes, which are presented in Chapter 9. Special thanks are also due to Valerie Robbins, who word-processed and indexed the manuscript under great pressure, to Bonnie Gruen who added editorial assistance, and to the members of the SYBEX Production Department, who gave it its present form: Lisa Amon, design and paste-up, Donna Scanlon, typesetting, and Dawn Amsberry, proofreading.

Before I began the actual manuscript, many ThinkTank users were kind enough to share their ideas concerning what would be useful to have in a book such as this one. For these efforts, I thank Mike McKeon, Bernie DeKoven, Don Decker, Rachel Carter, Steven Berman, G. C. Jernstedt, Bill Langenes, David Glaser, James G. Loofbourrow, and Philip S. Magee. I hope this book meets all of your needs.

Finally, thanks to my wife Nancy, for her patience.

INTRODUCTION

This book will help you get a handle on ThinkTank, whether you are a person who is just starting out or an experienced user. If you are a novice, you will find it helpful to begin by reading *The ThinkTank User's Manual* and then read the book from start to finish, trying out all of the examples, as many of the chapters are primarily tutorial in nature. On the other hand, if you are an experienced user, you can use the many tables as reference material, so the book will remain useful long after you have mastered the basics.

All levels of users will find a great deal to learn from *The ThinkTank Book.* It is not uncommon for someone to use this program for some time quite effectively, while gradually realizing that it has many more potential uses. The manual that is included with the software package explains all of ThinkTank's commands and modes, but it does not go into detail about *how* to use them.

I have attempted to go beyond these limits in several ways. First, I have provided projects to demonstrate the effects of every mode. Second, I have organized the projects in ways that require the use of several modes in the course of a task, so you can learn both the relationships between the modes and the most efficient ways of accomplishing various recurring tasks. Third, I have provided projects that suggest applications for the program that you may not have discovered for yourself. ThinkTank is quite open-ended in the variety of uses to which it can be put. When you have finished this book, you may find yourself both using the program for new purposes and using it more efficiently for your original purposes.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

In the course of this book, the capabilities of ThinkTank will be demonstrated through a series of projects. You may choose to type in the examples exactly as they are presented in text. However, the selection of projects is varied enough to suggest parallel examples from your own projects. Feel free to type in your own information and to read only the sections that apply to your interests. Be sure to follow along with ThinkTank up and running on your computer, so you can try out combinations of keystrokes and observe their effects.

Let's take a brief tour through the book. **Chapter 1, "What is ThinkTank?"** introduces the program, gives a brief description of its structure, and suggests some of its many uses.

Chapter 2, "Setting up ThinkTank," is designed to get the package up and running. It explains the uses of the various programs on the ThinkTank Program Disk, and the types of files that ThinkTank can create. If you are an old hand at ThinkTank, you may safely skip this chapter, although you might find new and better ways to set up your work. If you are new to the package, however, I suggest you read this chapter carefully. It will help you avoid some of the pitfalls of using this software package for the first time.

If you are new to your computer, or if you have not run software that requires the use of the Disk Operating System (DOS) directly, at this point you may want to refer to **Appendix B.** Unlike many popular software packages that automatically activate whatever is needed from DOS, ThinkTank requires the user to interact with DOS. Appendix B will teach you enough of the basics of DOS to be able to use the program efficiently.

In **Chapter 3, "The Grand Tour,"** you are guided through all of ThinkTank's modes of operation. The tour starts with opening and closing files, so you can start a new file to work with. Next, you will learn to create and edit a simple outline, so you have some material on which to try out various other modes of operation. The INSERT mode, the Headline Editor, and the FILES mode are thoroughly explained in this chapter, while all the other modes are introduced briefly.

Chapter 4, "From a List to a Reuseable Calendar," takes you through a more complex exercise, to give you an idea of how ThinkTank can transform ideas. Starting with a simple list of things to do, you will learn how ThinkTank can reorganize it into a calendar. Next, you will use a technique called *templating* to create sets of headlines you will use repeatedly.

Chapter 5, "Creating Templates," shows you even more complex uses of templating. You will look over the shoulder of a salesman as he creates a system for logging sales calls, and follow him as he uses it. You will also follow a market researcher as he creates a system for keeping his resume up-to-date. As we watch, all the necessary keystrokes to accomplish these tasks—or equivalent tasks of your own—are introduced on the way. ThinkTank's word processor is also introduced briefly. By the time you finish this chapter, you should have a clear idea of how to use templating in your own work.

By the time you get to **Chapter 6, "From an Idea to a Master Plan,"** you will be familiar with the major aspects of the program, except for word processing and printing. At this point, we turn away from the details to get a larger view. In order to demonstrate how the many capabilities of ThinkTank can simplify and reorganize facets of a large problem, you will observe a mythical solar-heating company, Sky High Technologies, Inc., which has just developed a cost-effective, reasonably priced home solar heating/generating system. We will follow a marketing manager as she researches the market, gathers information, and puts together a final plan. In the course of this chapter, you will see ThinkTank used for brainstorming and organizing new ideas, creating and filling in the details of a plan, planning projects, scheduling, and a few other broad-scale purposes. These organizational principles will apply equally well to problems as diverse as developing a product plan, developing a grant proposal, setting up a new business, managing an office, or writing a book.

Chapter 7, "Using the Paragraph Editor," will show you the uses of the Paragraph Editor—ThinkTank's word processor. You will look at all the tricks to using the word processor effectively, many of which are barely mentioned in the *User's Manual.*

Chapter 8, "Printing a Document," explains the print formatting options. You will learn what they do and how to use them in

combination to get the kind of printed output you want. You will also learn how to make the most effective use of ThinkTank prior to sending a file to WordStar, if ThinkTank's options cannot produce the results you desire.

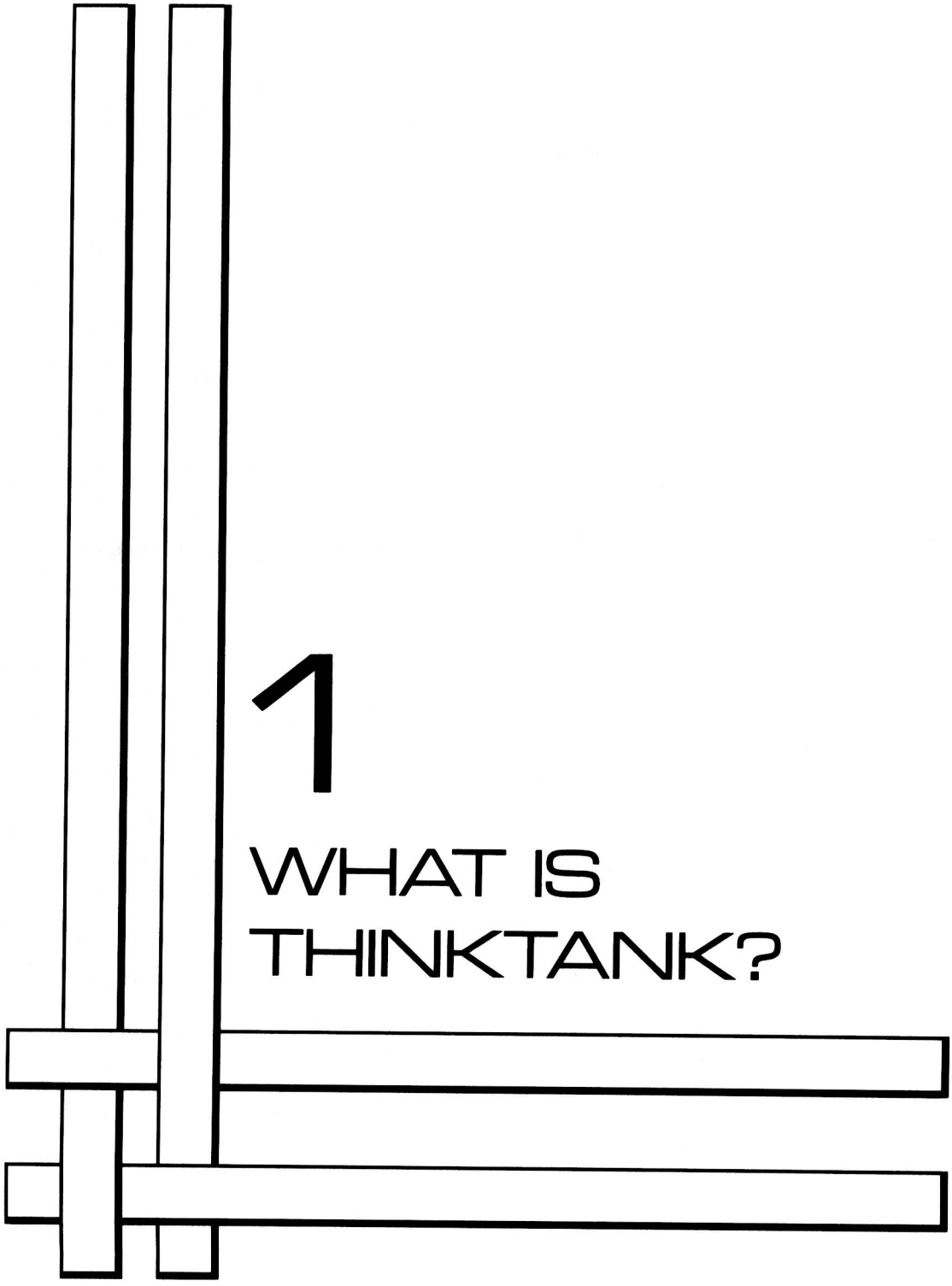
In **Chapter 9, "Managing Your Files and Working Around Bugs,"** you will find out how to deal with problems like crashed files, files that are too long, and errors. In addition, you will create and transfer files with the PORT menu. In this chapter, you will also find many hints and tricks that will allow you to accomplish various tasks which you might have thought impossible in ThinkTank. Finally, a few miscellaneous commands are introduced.

Chapter 10, "Thinking about Thinking," concludes the exploration of ThinkTank with a brief review. This chapter also considers the implications of using an idea-processing software package.

Three appendices are included for reference. **Appendix A** is a reference table of all the ThinkTank commands, explained and listed alphabetically. **Appendix B** introduces the elements of the IBM Personal Computer Disk Operating System. If you have a computer that uses Microsoft's MS-DOS instead of PC-DOS, most of this appendix will be equally applicable to your computer. **Appendix C** is another reference table, explaining the effects of the escape key in ThinkTank's various modes.

TYPOGRAPHICAL CONVENTIONS

this type style	Anything that appears on the computer screen, whether generated by the computer or the program, or typed in by a user. Also used for DOS commands and prompts.
ALL CAPITALS	ThinkTank commands.
P T S S	Keys to be pressed in sequence by the user to enter commands.
Ctrl-Home	Keys to be pressed in combination by the user to enter commands.



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