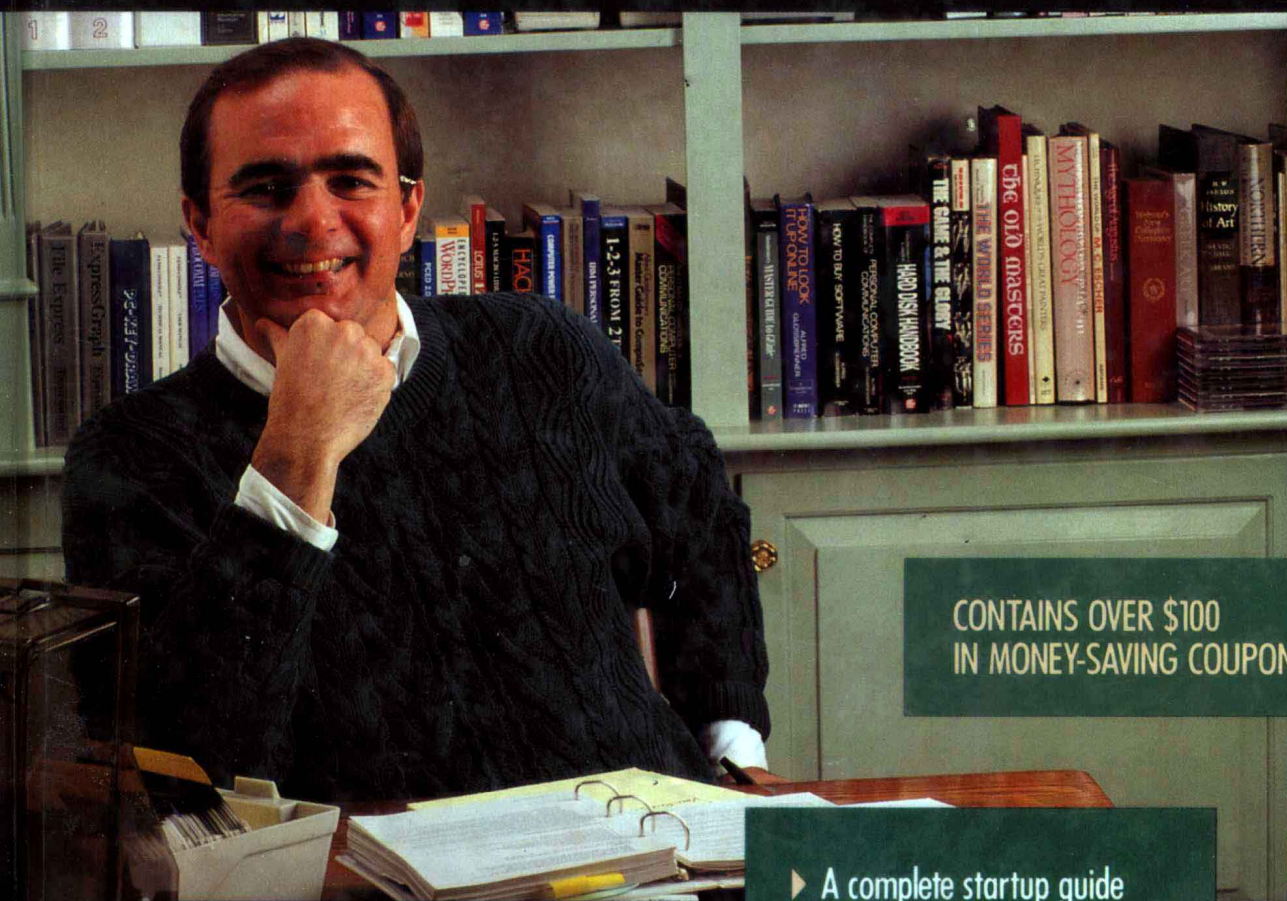


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# Glossbrenner's Guide to Shareware for Small Businesses



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**Alfred  
Glossbrenner**

Glossbrenner's Guide to  
**Shareware for  
Small Businesses**

*Alfred Glossbrenner*

Windcrest®/McGraw-Hill

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# Introduction

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THIS BOOK WILL SAVE YOU *MONEY*. IT WILL ALSO SAVE YOU *TIME*. YOUR CASH savings will range anywhere from under \$100 to well over \$1000. Your time savings will be worth even more. The actual savings in both cases will depend on how much you plan to do with your computer. But, believe me, with this book in your hand, you will be able to do so much more than you ever dreamed. And you'll pay a lot less for it.

## Computer power for everyone

The book is aimed at small business owners and professionals. It is designed to tell you what *we*—myself and Emily, my wife and business partner—know and have learned in over a decade of using computers in *our* small business.

Our business happens to be writing how-to books about computers and distributing a highly selective collection of shareware software through the mail. So when I tell you that one of the things we've learned is that no small businessperson today can afford *not* to use a computer, you have a right to be skeptical. If not downright suspicious.

But the statement is true, nonetheless, and in Chapter 1 I'll show you why. I can give you a one-word hint here, however, and that word is *competitors*. Whether you computerize your business or your office or not, the people who are out to take away your customers, clients, or patients are doing so right now. And the reason they are doing so is that the cost is so low and the benefits are so great.

## **Dirt-cheap hardware**

Computer hardware is so cheap today that, even if you computerize only one task, it can often pay for itself within just a few months. There's just one problem: as thoroughly as most small business owners and professionals know their own fields, most don't have any idea of how computers work, what they can do, or what to look for when buying a system.

Chapters 1 through 6 will fix that. These chapters will give you everything you need without telling you more than you want to know. They will take you from Ground Zero in computer knowledge to a state of true enlightenment. As you will discover, a computer is just a machine, and like any other machine, it's not difficult to understand once it is explained properly.

By the time you reach Chapter 5, "How to buy the system you need," you'll be comfortably slinging the jargon with the experts. But, unlike many "experts," you will really *know* what you're talking about. Chapter 6 presents a quick run-down on the features to look for when buying add-on equipment (equipment not included in your initial computer system package). And Chapter 7 tells you where to get "support." That's computerese for "Help!"

## **Costly business software**

You will find that buying smart and saving money on your hardware is a continuing theme of ours. But no matter how good a deal you get, your computer will be useless without software to make it do its stuff. It is at this point that many small businesspeople and professionals encounter another problem. What programs should I get? Can they be serious charging \$595 for a single package? Where in the world should I begin?

The answer is revealed in Chapter 8, "The shareware concept: High quality, low prices." Shareware is computer software offered on the honor system. If you don't like it, you don't pay for it. Indeed, even if you do like it, nothing but a guilty conscience will force you to register a shareware program by sending its author the requested fee.

The fees are low—usually between \$10 and \$75—and the benefits are substantial. Free updates, professionally printed manuals, and, most important of all, personalized support from the programmer who wrote the program! Imagine calling up the guy who wrote Lotus 1-2-3 and asking him to add a feature to his spreadsheet. Yet that kind of personal dialogue between user and programmer takes place all the time in the shareware field.

## **You've got a friend in shareware**

Though you may never have heard of it, shareware has long been a vibrant force in the computer field. Magazines don't talk about it much—they've got their hands full reviewing commercial packages. Sometimes it almost seems as though you've got to know someone to get tapped in. But once you enter this world, you'll find that literally tens of thousands of programs are yours, free for the asking. Or at least for the price of a floppy disk and postage.

Shareware and its cousin, public domain programs (for which no fee is asked), cover all the bases. There are scores of word processors, accounting, database, and spreadsheet programs, plus thousands of games, helpful utility programs, music and education software, investment and tax software, real estate managers, desktop publishing programs, and typefaces galore.

It is no exaggeration to say that whatever you want to do with a computer, you can find a shareware program that can do it. Unfortunately, as with commercial software, not every shareware package is a winner. So which word processor do you choose? Which accounting program? Which business forms package?

There are only two ways to find out. The first is to order a bunch of shareware disks and laboriously work your way through each program until you find the best of the lot. In most cases, the best will be so good that it can go toe-to-toe with any equivalent commercial package. But you will have spent so much time finding it that you'd have been better off buying a well-reviewed commercial program.

### **Only the best!**

The second way to discover the best shareware packages is to have someone else survey the field and evaluate the software for you. That's exactly what Emily and I have done. Parts III and IV of this book present the results. There isn't a program discussed in these pages that isn't absolutely top-drawer.

How good are they? You won't really know until you try them yourself. But a number of the programmers involved have built multimillion dollar companies on the strength of these packages. Many of them receive licensing fees from Fortune 500 companies. A number of them have licensed their products to commercial software firms. The NDOS module supplied with the best-selling Norton Utilities, for example, is actually a version of the shareware program 4DOS.

## **Shareware can save you MONEY**

In our own business, we use shareware almost exclusively. I do all my word processing with PC-Write (Chapter 9). Emily keeps track of book sales with File Express (Chapter 10). I do all of my communicating with ProComm (Chapter 12), and Emily does all of our financial projections, income statements, and the like with As-Easy-As, the Lotus 1-2-3 clone covered in Chapter 11. We're also constantly using shareware utility programs because they offer features you simply can't find in commercial products. (And every now and then, we kill an hour or so playing a game like Hugo's House of Horrors or Commander Keen.)

All of these business programs come with ready-to-print on-disk manuals, each of which is 100 to 200 pages or more. There is certainly no dearth of information. The problem is that if you are a new user, you have no way of knowing which specific techniques are crucial and which you can save for another time.

That's why Chapters 9 through 12 in Part III take you step-by-step through the process of installing and using the "Big Four" applications: word processing, database, spreadsheet, and communications. These are the programs you will use everyday, but there is no need to start out by trying to absorb all of their features.

The chapters in Part III will show you what's most important and get you using this software for productive purposes literally within minutes.

Part IV, "Shareware: Beyond the Basics," is designed to expand your range even further. The chapters in this part of the book profile the best shareware accounting and money management software. They cover programs to produce business forms on your printer, graphics and CAD/CAM software, and the utilities that can make any computer easier to use while saving you tons of time. Finally, since neither man nor woman lives by work alone, we close with a look at some of the best games and education programs.

## **Powerful programs on the disk**

But, as the saying goes, there's more! The disk bound in with this book contains our personal selection of programs every computer user should have. You'll find a summary in Appendix A, and once you install the software, you will wonder how anyone can use a computer without them. If you know a little bit about running a PC, you may want to turn to Appendix A right now for a quick preview. Otherwise, you'll just have to trust me: This is really prime stuff!

At the back of the book you'll also find the Glossbrenner's Choice Order Form in Appendix B. Chapter 8 will tell you about all the many sources of shareware (mail-order firms, local computer user groups, online systems like CompuServe, etc.). It will also show you the best ways to tap in. But since everyone's so busy these days, and since we've got all of these programs cited in the book anyway, we'd be happy to send them to you. The programs cited in the book are part of a collection we call "Glossbrenner's Choice." Individual disks are available for a small fee to cover postage, handling, and the cost of the disks themselves.

Finally, in keeping with the book's money-saving theme, you will find a selection of really good coupons at the end of the book. Each of them is for a product or service that Emily and I use ourselves. We have no relationship with the companies making these offers. We simply felt that they are so good that you should know about them too. If you decide to take advantage of just a few of the special offers included here, you can save enough to nearly pay for this book.

## **Conclusion**

Our ultimate goal is to help you get into personal computing as easily and as inexpensively as possible. The book is thus designed to supply all the missing links. If you are a brand-new or prospective computer owner, it will tell you what you need to know to understand your system and feel comfortable using it. It will tell you what to buy, where to buy it, and give you the tools you need to fend for yourself in the marketplace.

Then it will show you how to save big bucks—with no sacrifice in power or performance—by following the shareware route. But it doesn't stop there. It also identifies the specific shareware programs that are the best in their class, and tells you exactly what software to get. But it doesn't stop there either. It goes on to show you how to install and actually *use* the Big Four applications programs.

Then it shows you how to move beyond the basics and explore the best shareware programs for other applications.

With this book and the hardware and software it recommends, you'll have everything you need to harness the power of the personal computer and put it to work in your business or profession. And you'll save a great deal of time and a great deal of money in the process. Emily and I know it works, because we've done it. Now you can too.



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