

Husky hand-held computer is at the heart of CAMIL — the Computer-Aided Manhole Inspection and Location program devised in Southampton and now being put into effect by water authorities all over Britain. The program allows surveyors to input data in the field and transmit it over telephone lines to host computers, which can then print out sewer layouts. The program can even respond to a request to see 'all brick sewers built before 1900' — and there's an awful lot of those.

Travelling salesmen will find extremely useful the 'Travelling' series of programs, which run on another hand-held — the excellent NEC PC-8201. In addition to basic packages like the Travelling Writer — a word processor for writing reports, with mailmerge and data management capabilities — the series includes the Travelling Project Manager, the Travelling Appointment Manager, the Travelling Sales Manager, and — this is most essential — the Travelling Expense Manager.

Salesmen, too, can improve their sales techniques with the Sales Edge module in the Human Edge suite of programs. These are distributed for the IBM and Apricot by Thorn EMI. The Sales Edge module ascertains the user's selling strengths and weaknesses with a series of agree/disagree questions and answers, and, after a similar set of questions about the client, evolves a suggested sales strategy with 'opening' and 'closing' gambits. Again, it's not cheap: £240. The

complete set of Human Edge programs, including the Management Edge, the Negotiation Edge and the Communication Edge, costs £840.

If you're playing the money markets, then you may be tempted to invest £1132.75 in Forexia's Forextend, which allows you to study and analyse what's happening to the dollar, the pound, the Swiss franc, the Japanese yen and the Deutschmark. The program produces 37 charts of comparisons, relative strength indicators, interest rates and trade-weighted indices for every day within the time period between 1 October 1983 and the present day. A thousand pounds may seem a lot of money to many of us, but it's a lot less than you could lose in ill-informed currency speculations!

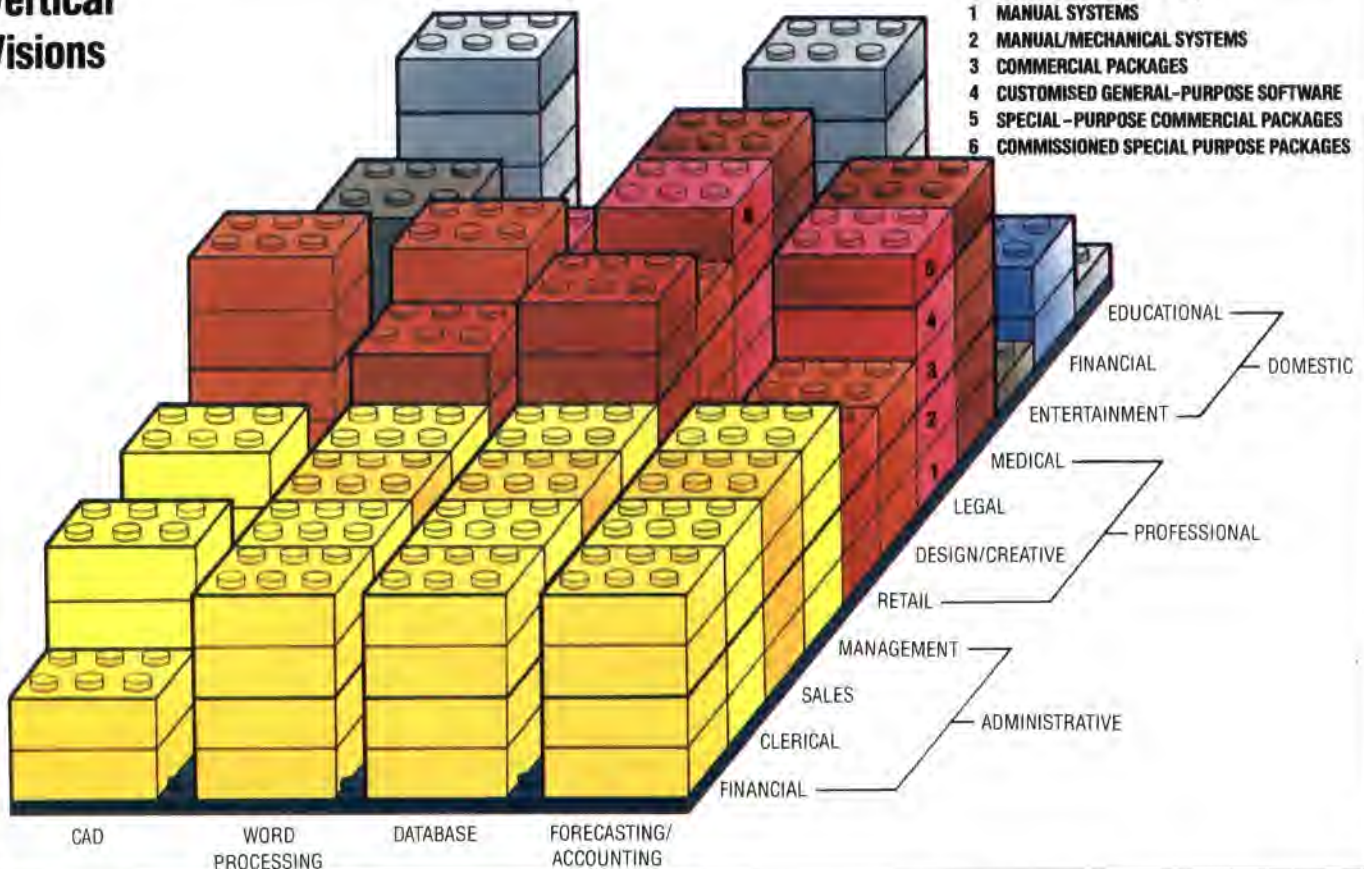
Scheduling and appointments programs are also becoming popular. Most computers have built-in clocks, but few of them are able to interrupt whatever you're doing to remind you where you should be. However, Hewlett-Packard's ROM-based schedule planner for their HP-75C can do just that — with a variety of different alarm sounds, as well.

In the next instalment of this series, we'll be looking in detail at BrainStorm, a program that claims to organise your thoughts in the way that word processors organise your sentences. And, subsequently, we'll be looking at software packages for people in sales, medicine, education, research, video, theatre and advertising, with specific user case histories.

Market Profiles

Software is written to meet the needs of the primary user groups, and to sell in the major market sectors. The bulk of it, therefore, comprises largely financial, word processing and database packages; a fourth area, computer-assisted design (CAD), is of continually growing significance. In our diagram we illustrate these application areas, and juxtapose them with the needs of a representative selection of computer users. The vertical axis represents the level of complexity of the application — manual methods lowest, off-the-peg computer software next and customised or purpose-built software at the highest level. The resulting use profiles show clearly that general-purpose software suits business needs very well in general but that specialist users need to customise existing packages or create their own — irregular high-low profiles show an unsatisfactory match between needs and resources, regular middle-height profiles indicate the market's ability to match needs and customers

Vertical Visions



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