

Beyond Branding

Back up those files

● Make financial year end a little easier on yourself

BY STEVEN COHEN

The time pressures that surround finalising your financial accounts in time for the year end cause mistakes to be made all too easily.

Mistakes could cost you a great deal of money, either in the form of taxes, penalties, or in projecting an image of an incompetent company.

Is there a way to handle those time pressures better?

Well, having the right accounting software is an enormous help, because it automates the process of collecting and allocating financial information throughout the year. So, it provides you with most of the necessary information in good time for year end.

Even then, you need to take steps to ensure that the information is accurate and complete before you start year end work because it's at this time of the year that it is analysed and adjusted by management and accounting staff in order to produce income statements and balance sheets that make sense in the overall

context of the business.

Obviously, if the original data is incorrect you'll get erroneous year end results.

Also, in the process of moving the data around, perhaps from one account to another, and in consolidating or breaking it down into its component parts, the original data can be lost. This means that there is no reference point to go back to, should the adjustments that have been made need to be cancelled.

Besides, hard drives can crash, files can be deleted intentionally or accidentally, and data can become corrupted or simply be destroyed by viruses. So one of the most important things you can do at this time is to back up all your original data before you start working on it. Ideally, of course, you should be backing up your data on a daily or weekly basis throughout the year. You should also be backing it up onto a reliable device such as tape or CDs. Never use stiffies for this purpose. They have too little space and their integrity is questionable.

Whatever you do, don't store your back ups on-site. Theft, fire

and simple human error can cause you to lose them. Keep at least a week's back up off-site in a place where security is guaranteed.

Always check the integrity of the backed-up data because the PC or other device on to which you are backing up may be faulty without you knowing it. It's vital, therefore, that when you have backed up your data you restore it immediately to see that no errors have been made. Obviously, you would restore it on the back-up PC and not the original device.

Some businesses back up only new information as it is added to the system. That's better than not doing back-ups at all, but you should try to do a full back-up at regular and close intervals. In that way your whole system is up to date all the time and this will save you a great deal of time at year end!

Another tip for a smooth run-up to the year end is to make a print-out of all financial reports for the previous year end, including the income statement, balance sheet, trial balance, general ledger detail account listing, inventory valuation, management reports, age analysis for customers and suppliers, bank reconciliation, sales representative's commission reports and tax reports. The reason is that, for this year, you may need reference to last year's figures and if you have them printed out it saves you having to go back and restore your back ups from last year.

Also, it's enormously helpful to get the advice of the people who implemented your accounting software for you. They are trained in the principles of accounting as well as in the functionality of the software, so they know what year end pitfalls to look out for and can also tell you how best to exploit your software to ensure that you're always optimally prepared for the year end rush and can handle it with the minimum amount of fuss and bother.

● Cohen is the managing director of *Softline Pastel*.



Steven Cohen stresses that all files should be backed up to save money and time.

Advertorial policy

Beyond Branding is a special section of *Gauteng Business* in which advertisers are given the opportunity to contribute to the editorial content of the newspaper. The editor has full

editorial control over the advertorials and approves every article before publication. *Gauteng Business* has a strict no-advertorial policy in all other sections of

the newspaper. For more information about our policy, contact Ryk van Niekerk, editor of *Gauteng Business*, at ryk@gautengbusiness.co.za.

6/4/1994
6 days before
a major seizure

6/5/1994
5 days before
a major seizure

6/15/1994
5 days after
a major seizure

7/29/1994
1 month
after surgery

10/10/1994
4 months
after surgery

A.J.'s handwriting before and after a brain surgery shows major differences in the letters.

Handwriting reveals more than swirls

BY ANTOINETTE GMEINER

All the above handwriting samples were made by a man in his early 70s, called A.J. He had a brain tumour at the front of his right parietal lobe, near the post central gyrus, which left him dizzy and subject to seizures. A.J. wrote the samples at the top five and six days before a major seizure. You can see great differences in the flow between the 5 June sample and the one written just a day earlier. Clearly, A.J. had suffered a debilitating neurological event on 4 June and recovered the following day. Nevertheless, even in the better sample, you can see arhythmic disconnections. Note the lack of ability to connect the "d" with the "r" in the name "Andrew." This kind of arhythmic indicates a disruption in communication between the brain's two hemispheres caused by either the seizures or the tumour in the parietal lobe.

Five days later, on 10 June, A.J. suffered a seizure that caused him to collapse and then to walk with awkward movements.

The third signature was made on 15 June. Note the

evidence of what is called akinesia: the handwriting appears flaccid and has weak pressure. Two weeks later, on 19 June, A.J. underwent brain surgery to remove the grade 4 glioblastoma. The fourth sample was given a month after the surgery.

The ability to integrate simple curved movements had been severely disrupted. Also, the directionality of the writing trail is troubled and the baseline undulates. This increased lack of muscle control (ataxia) suggests an additional problem in the central nervous system.

The last sample, given four months after surgery, shows that A.J. was still severely disabled.

At this time, he was paralysed on his left side.

His writing reflects not only the grave disruption of activity in his right parietal lobe and brain damage caused by seizures, but also problems from deeper areas of the brain, perhaps the basal ganglia.

● Gmeiner is the chief executive officer of *Orion Business Solutions* and a registered graphologist. For more information contact her at 011 718 6484 or www.oriongroup.co.za.