

Max Tax Prep



tools of the trade

Tax Season Opens

The tax prep solutions from ATX continue to expand with a wide variety of offerings from MAX®, MAX Plus, 1040, 1040 Office and Office Plus, SaberPRO®, and the Total Tax Office™, which includes Max and Kleinrock's Federal Tax Expert, Total Tax Guide, All States Tax Expert, 1040 Quick Answers, Federal Tax Bulletin, and five Kleinrock Compliance Handbooks on a CD and online. There are a number of program enhancements for MAX 2004. Here are a few of them: The new interface simplifies navigation with the Rollover Manager, Preparer Manager, E-Service Manager, and Bank Manager; a new tab bar lets you navigate between the managers and an open return, and each manager has its own set of menus, toolbars, and buttons; two licensing options are available for up to three users or more than three; entry

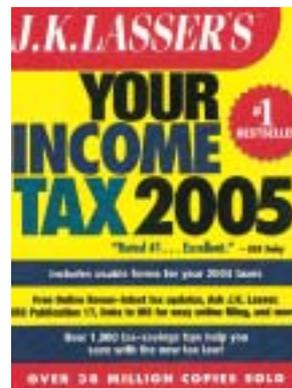
for fixed assets/depreciation has been simplified; a new print manager lets you customize the printing of returns; significantly improved diagnostic reporting and error messaging with user alerts; there's support for an unlimited number of forms in an open return, and additional calculations have been added to fully automate data flow from a return to an amended return; forms 4562, Schedule D, E, 8825, 1116, 2555, and 1040NR have undergone a major overhaul to improve quality of calculations; ATX has expanded its automated conversion from competitor tax packages, and payroll data can be imported from QuickBooks and Peachtree; and there have been improvements to electronic filing and security. Go to www.atxinc.com and click on the Tax Preparation tab.

Once again, *J.K. Lasser's™ Your Income Tax 2005* combines explanations of

recent tax-law changes, with more than 1,000 tax-saving tips, and a variety of tear-out forms you can use in preparing your personal or business returns—all in an oversize 800+ pages. Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., the Lasser guidebook is divided into 49 sections, beginning with Filing Status, Wages, Salary, and Other Compensation, to How Tax Data Is Processed by the IRS, Audits, and Filing Refund Claims and Amended Forms. Each section contains definitions and options, along with help sections, printed in the margins, that are specially coded as Filing Tip, Planning Reminder,

Caution, Law Alert, Court Decision, or IRS Alert. Changes covered include options to deduct state/local sales tax or income tax, automobile and computer donations, improvements in child care credit, and numerous small business changes, including new \$5,000 deductions for start-up and organizational expenses for new businesses, increased limit on first-year expensing of property placed in service before 2007, and the closing of the SUV loophole. Reasonably priced at \$16.95, the guide is available at bookstores, or go to www.jklasser.com for more information.

Norton Internet Security 2005 from Symantec Corporation is a complete security and privacy suite for home users and small offices. It combines virus protection, privacy and intrusion protection, a firewall, parental controls, and spam filtering. It eliminates spyware and



Enough Sun Tzu?

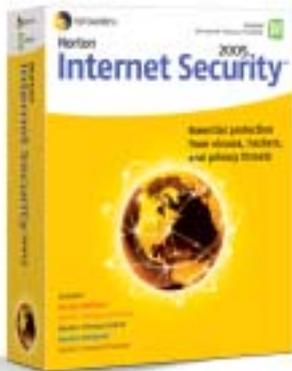
◆ Michael Castelluccio, Editor

■ WHEN A COMPANY COBBLES TOGETHER a philosophy out of borrowed parts, it's just asking for trouble. Sure there were elements of Chinese warfare that were successful at one point in time (5th Century BC) on a battlefield, and the same is true of a Vince Lombardi master plan for a season. And certainly, extensive mathematical modeling can be useful, but it rarely is the whole answer. A philosophy that organically grows out of the organization itself, on the other hand, will produce plans that are integral to the company, its situation, and its personnel. Bamboo grafts on a young maple tree usually don't take.

There's a really good example online of a corporate philosophy that emerged trunk, branches, and leaves from a

single set of roots. It's spelled out on Sergey Brin's and Larry Page's website for their ingenious search engine/corporation, Google. The two personalities resonate like a chord despite their personal differences, and the fundamental idea that underpins their invention and the company is summed up in the company's philosophy. It's a mere five words: "Never settle for the best."

The first thing you notice about the company's primary goal is that it's unattainable. You never get there, and that's good. And the second thing is that it causes the company to be inward looking. Compare that to advice like Sun Tzu's "all warfare is based on deception," an axiom that focuses a company's attention *continued on next page*



Symantec
Internet Security

keystroke logging programs, and it includes new outbreak notification alerts. New features include protection against e-mail spoofing and fraud by automatically filtering for fraudulent URL addresses; Outbreak Alert notification for Internet viruses and worms; elimination of spam in Yahoo! Mail; a QuickScan tool scans the system upon receipt of the latest virus definitions and automati-

cally removes those threats; it has confidential information blocking alerts when you're sending personal information to untrusted websites; and Home Protection Pack provides licenses for up to three PCs. As part of its virus controls, Internet Security scans and removes viruses from incoming attachments from AOL Instant Messenger, MSN Messenger, and Windows Messenger, and it identifies viruses in Windows XP/2000 compressed file archives in real-time, even before the files are used. Software includes a one-year subscription to Symantec's protection updates. Buy Internet Security now and get a copy of the TaxCut program from H&R Block free. Go to www.symantecstore.com.

Have you been spending time recently mapping out the location at work of available AC outlets for your rechargers for your cell or PDA, laptop and/or DVD or MP3 player?

Xantrex has another alternative for you. The **XPower Micro Inverter 400** is the smallest 400 watt power inverter on the market, and you can plug it into your vehicle's lighter socket and run electronic devices such as cell phones, laptops, PDAs, portable work

lights, even a TV, without the need for multiple adapters. The inverter provides two three-prong grounded AC outlets and has protection features such as over-temperature shutdown, low-battery voltage shut down (10.5 VDC and automatic reset), high-battery voltage shut down (15.5 VDC and automatic reset), and overload shutdown. Xantrex has a variety of power inverters, and you can get information about these at www.xantrex.com.

Xantrex Micro Inverter



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outward on the competition.

Introspective restlessness has proven to work well for the two Ph.D. candidates who had a pretty successful IPO this year.

A Different Perspective

On the Corporate Information page of Google's website there's a list of 10 truisms that are there to help others "understand all the ways in which the company has helped to redefine how individuals, businesses, and technologists view the Internet." The complete explanations are at www.google.com/corporate/tenthings.html, but here's a short version of what the cofounders found to be true as they searched for a *raison d'être*.

1. Focus on the user, and all else will follow. Now there's a novel approach—shareholders second, users first. You can see evidence of this approach in the simple elegance of the Google search page. The company doesn't sell placement in its search results, and the rule for advertising on the site is that it "must offer relevant content and not be a distraction." Like the sculptor, they have created the page by removing all that isn't absolutely essential.

2. It's best to do one thing really, really well. Some companies stake out the entire territory (desktop, server, all services) and then proceed to spread their talents thinner and thinner as they complicate their product(s) with feature-creep that resembles jungle growth. In the words of the founders: "Google does search. Google does not do horoscopes, financial advice, or chat."

3. Fast is better than slow. Certainly more of a "Well, duh" than an epi-

phany, but while others "accepted speed limits imposed by search algorithms, Google wrote new algorithms that proved there were no limits." Restlessness pays.

4. Democracy on the Web works. By democracy, Brin and Page mean they actually take a vote. Their Page-Rank™ system looks at which sites are most linked to by others, and, using an established ranking, the search engine pushes those more often cited by others up the list.

5. You don't need to be at your desk to need an answer. That includes PDAs, mobile phones, and cars, and the tailoring of the search to something other than a full keyboard interface.

6. You can make money without doing evil. It sounds like Hippocrates' charge to all who wish to practice medicine—do no harm. Curiously, this is the Googlism that has the longest explanation. It begins with a reminder that "Google is a business." But obviously convinced that most harm (evil) is related to advertising, Google's do-no-harm advertising practices include controls not only over the advertising on its site, but also the way the company can influence others to make their ads more useful to searchers.

7. There's always more information out there. Once again, the refusal to be content with what they have managed to index is apparent here. Keeping an up-to-date index of millions of HTML pages, and then new databases, such as phone numbers and address lookups, then the 880 million or so images, and then additional file formats like PDF—the process is by its nature unending.

The search engine is always in need of improvement.

8. The need for information crosses all borders. With offices around the world, Google's interface can be customized into about 100 languages.

9. You can be serious without a suit. "Google's founders have often stated that the company is not serious about anything but search. They built a company around the idea that work should be challenging and the challenge should be fun." At Googleplex headquarters, "Google Inc. puts employees first when it comes to daily life." On campus, for instance, lunch is free, available from a number of theme restaurants, and is cooked by gourmet chefs. And that *increases* productivity.

10. Great just isn't good enough. Once again, we are reminded of the need for constant improvement. With the number of repetitions, you could almost imagine signs all over the campus: The product is the process, and choosing, shaping, and improving is the ultimate end of what we do—endlessly. And speaking of philosophies, Google's basic premise is strongly reminiscent of one of the oldest ideas in Western Philosophy—Heraclitus' notion that the only reality is change itself. It's an idea that constantly gets updated—recently by the Continental school called the Existentialists, and, of course, the Mountain View technologists, the Googlists.

If you were impressed by the Google IPO this year or by the way its search engine finds information by searching millions of pages in a fraction of a second, you might want to read the full text of the company's philosophy. It's worth the time. ■