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hundreds of subtle ease-of-use enhancements, and a number that are quite significant.

**Excel:** Principal enhancements are related to Web integration. One important feature that most people have not used in the past is the "pivot table" that lets you analyze three-dimensional data on a two-dimensional spreadsheet, viewing and analyzing the data in a number of different ways. Excel 2000 makes this feature much easier to use.

**PowerPoint:** This excellent slide show presentation program can now move from CLE programs and client presentations into the courtroom, with great effectiveness. What's new: In addition to the Web-integration features, frequent users will love the new "tri-pane" view. This default view has three windows open at the same time, so that you can simultaneously see and edit the current slide, the outline, and your notes. This doesn't enhance the delivery of the presentation, but it enhances the creative process as you work. PowerPoint also now includes support for most of the multimedia components you can use in a Web page.

**Outlook:** The e-mail and "personal information management" program has significant improvements. If you are still using Outlook 97, you missed the important free

upgrade to Outlook 98 that added most of the user-oriented enhancements that are in Outlook 2000, including the ability to link contacts with tasks, appointments, and other items.

There are many minor enhancements beyond the '98 features, including improvements to the layout of the screens, the printouts of the data, and the wonderful rules wizard to automatically copy, move, forward or delete mail. Programmers and "techies" will breathe a sigh of relief at four enhancements that, by themselves, may justify upgrading: (1) You can now export all fields - even custom fields - directly to a database; (2) You can now customize the first page of a form on the screen, (3) VBScript is still used to program forms, but VBA (Visual Basic for Applications) is available in Outlook as a macro language; (4) There is much better support for installing custom views and forms.

**Access:** Here's the most dramatic changes, including dozens of important Web-enabled features, improved replication, and a new database architecture. You can still use the "Jet" engine MDB files if

you want (either the 97 version or a new Jet 4.0 format). But Microsoft is moving away from that, and offers the ability for an Access Project to use a "lite" version of SQL (Structured Query Language) Server called MSDE (Microsoft Database Engine) or the full SQL Server 7.0 as the "back end" for your data.

**Other Tools:** Microsoft is expanding the Office suite to include additional products, such as an improved FrontPage (for managing and editing Web pages) and PhotoDraw (a new product for creating and editing graphics), both of which are included with the new "Premium Edition." The Developer Edition is a new, must-have add-on for people who do develop custom applications in Access, VBA, and other Microsoft tools.

### Thumbs Up

I like Office 2000. Every firm should involve its attorneys and staff with its Web site, especially in sharing information with clients through private Web pages. Office 2000 makes it possible to do that without the need to retrain everyone in new applications. And the significant enhancements to Outlook, PowerPoint and Access make the suite worth upgrading if you use those programs. While the word processing features added to Word are not enough, by themselves, to justify an upgrade, if you do upgrade, you'll find Word to be solid and easier to use. For the most complete information on new features and implementation issues, visit [www.microsoft.com/office/enterprise](http://www.microsoft.com/office/enterprise).

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PowerPoint are, to my mind, nearly identical in features an ease of use.)

The legal suite only has scaled down versions of voice recognition (Dragon) and document assembly (HotDocs), although both of these programs can be upgraded to full versions at a reasonable price. The legal suite includes a basic version of Amicus Attorney for practice management. (The debate over the relative merits of Amicus versus Time Matters is almost as passionate at the Word vs WordPerfect debate and is best left to another column.)

Once you've decided that you need a feature of the new product, the next question is when to upgrade. Many knowledgeable software consultants always avoid the first version of any software release and wait for the first service pack. For legal users of WordPerfect this has been particularly good advice since the first service pack generally coincides with the release of the Legal Suite, which often makes the Legal Suite seem less "buggy" than the initial release. This release is no different and my advice is that unless you feel you absolutely must have one of the new features wait for the release of Legal Suite 9 in the fall.

**For more information about the products in Second Opinions, please use the Reader Response Card enclosed in this issue.**

**Corel's Office 2000:** Circle no. 341.  
**Microsoft's Office 2000:** Circle no. 342.

**“The usual admonition not to buy an early release of Microsoft software doesn't apply here.”**

-JAMES A. EIDELMAN



## SECOND OPINIONS

# Now, Later or Never? Are the Enhancements

By James A. Eidelman

**T**HE ANSWER, of course, is "it depends." I recommend upgrading to Office 2000 now if you will use the new features, but you can wait until the next version if all you plan to do is word processing and you don't plan to use the new Web-enabled features of Word. The enhancements to Microsoft Office 2000 fall into two categories: (1) Web integration, and (2) everything else.

## Web-Enabled Office 2000

In 1995, Bill Gates ordered every division at Microsoft to deeply integrate each product with the Internet and Web-browser technology. The 2000 version of Office does just that. There are hundreds of minor enhancements in all of the products, none worth upgrading for, but most are not truly compelling other than the Web integration.

❖ Save a Word document to the Web in native HTML format, and it looks on the

screen in the Internet Explorer 5.0 browser exactly the same as in Word. When printed, it looks exactly the same as when printed from Word. Translation: Any lawyer or secretary can publish legal documents to the firm's public or private Web pages without any special training.

❖ You can go "round trip." You can use Word to open a document that has been saved as an HTML document, and have all of the Word formatting intact, such as automatic paragraph numbering, styles, fields and sections. HTML becomes an alternative native Word format to the traditional .DOC file.

❖ If you have "Office Server Extensions" loaded on your Web or Intranet server, you can save documents directly to the Web and take advantage of extra collaboration features, including threaded discussions about online documents with embedded annotations, notification of changes to documents as they are made, and other new features.

❖ You can actually use Microsoft Word to edit existing Web pages, and they generally don't get messed up! If you open a complex Web page in Word - even a complex page- then edit, and save, the good news is that Word will not touch the embedded HTML tags, and will only affect the changes you made.

with long footnotes, tables of authorities and paragraph numbering that have been driving some firms crazy.

Foreign language support is substantially enhanced. If you engage in international practice, have a large Hispanic clientele, or otherwise work in multiple languages, upgrade to Office 2000 right away.

There are dozens of nice, but minor features enhancements, such as a preview of what fonts look like on the drop-down list, much smarter auto-correct and grammar checker, improved handling of tables and graphics, improved help screens, and many other minor ease-of-use features. But the Web integration and foreign language enhancements are the only new enhancements in Word that many firms will consider to be "must-have."

## Suite Story

Most firms do not take advantage of the rest of the suite as much as they should. Every lawyer should use Excel and PowerPoint on a regular basis. Because the products have the same look and feel, a lawyer can easily learn to use the additional functions offered by the other packages. When the whole suite is used together, the benefits reinforce each other. Outside of Word, there is plenty to like in the new suite. There are

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With Microsoft and Corel both releasing their "Office 2000 Suites," is it time to upgrade, or wiser to wait?

## Transition to Word

The transition to Word 2000 is very smooth - because, other than Web integration, not much has changed. The architecture, native Word file format, templates, and formatting are all about the same. No retraining or conversion are required, and even the MIS staff and consultants will find that the macros generally don't need to be reprogrammed.

The usual admonition not to buy an early release of Microsoft software doesn't apply here, because this version fixes many bugs that were in Office 97 and seems quite stable. On the other hand, the feature set was frozen before Microsoft renewed its legal industry advisory group, and we will have to wait until the next version of Word to see whether Microsoft solves the problems