

QUICK START

This is for those of you who just can't wait. The Virtual Desktop consists of three modules, the Desktop, which expands your display to almost unlimited windows, the Group Manager which will perform functions similar to the Program Manager, and the Disk Manager which is similar to the File Manager. The Virtual Desktop enhances your Windows environment and provides features not available otherwise.

You can start the Desktop by selecting Run from the Program Manager, the File Manager, or installing it in your Startup group. Once the Desktop is running you can configure it, start the Group Manager, or start the Disk Manager by bringing up the Desktop's options menu. This is done by holding down the Control key while clicking the left mouse button when the mouse cursor is positioned over the Virtual Desktop. Select 'Set VDT Params' to configure the desktop. You can move the desktop window by depressing and holding the left mouse button over the status window of the desktop and then moving the cursor to the desired position. You can also resize the desktop the same way you would resize a regular window.

Start the Group Manager by selecting it on the Desktop option menu. The default Group Manager window will appear at the top left corner of the display. The top button is the 'Group' button, it is used to close the group (right mouse button) and to add subgroups (left button double-click). The next set of four small buttons are the group controls. With them you will be able to move, rotate, expand, contract and rearrange the group. The third button is the Disk Manager which has been automatically installed for you. Double click the left mouse button over the Disk Manager button and the Disk Manager will be executed.

You can add applications and subgroups to your Group Manager window. You can add applications by simply selecting them in the Disk Manager and dragging and dropping them on top of the Group Manager window. You can add subgroups by double clicking on the top button of the Group Manager. You can delete or change properties of any item in the Group Manager by depressing the right button over the item.

The Disk Manager provides intuitive operation of most of the functions that you perform on your file system. Double clicking on a directory expands the tree to show any subdirectories. Almost all operations are performed by selecting and dragging and dropping the items on the destination. You can copy, move, delete files (or complete directories). The Trashcan is the destination for deleted items, the Flashlight is the destination for viewing files. As you move the cursor over items and during operation, the status window will provide information on the item or the operation being performed.

Well that's enough to get you started, however, there are many features that have not been mentioned. After you have installed the environment you should read the remainder of the documentation to get information on all the features available.

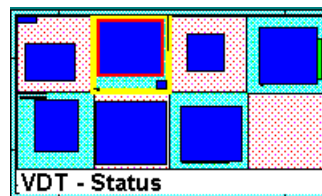
Introduction

Virtual Desktop (VDT) was written by Productivity Enhancing Tools (PET). VDT is made up of a set of tools written by serious Windows users, for

Windows users who would like to get more from their everyday working environment. If you use Windows as a host environment for your daily tasks you quickly find yourself saying things like "If I could only do". VDT grew from a list of desires made by first hand experience of several people who use Windows daily. Of course we realize that everyone has different tastes and ways of performing tasks. It is impossible to make everyone happy with one solution.

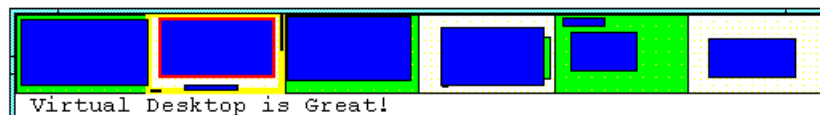
The underlying philosophy behind our tool design is to reduce the overhead required to perform tasks, by reducing mouse movements, button clicks, etc., and provide a means to organize without clutter. We also feel a need to free usable desktop space. We have attempted to provide powerful tools allowing the user to exploit yet work in harmony with the native environment.

Our tools are flexible and support multiple paradigms. In fact they are so flexible that it is easy to misunderstand, or just miss, some of the features. So explore and read the instructions. You really should register to get support and full access to all of the features. The second answer to the problem of not being able to satisfy everyone is to just ask you to try it out. Enhancement suggestions are welcome.



Virtual DeskTop (VDT)

The base tool is the Virtual DeskTop. The basic idea behind the VDT as with most other screen expanders is to increase the available working area on the desktop. Have you ever had your screen so cluttered that you lost track of what you were doing or where you put it? VDT allows you to spread your work out so that you can easily find it. You can simply point with the mouse at an object on the VDT and the status window will tell you which window you are pointing at. You can then press one mouse button and be viewing that object. VDT can be configured to support any number of viewports from one to one hundred. Each viewport is the size of your screen and is just like the default screen supported by Windows. As can be seen above and below, the viewports are presented as a number of alternating squares of different colors. The appearance can be that of a checker board, a column or even a row. The colors are easily adjusted to suit the user.



When viewing the VDT, the window objects currently open on the system are represented by rectangles on the desktop. The active viewport (the virtual screen that you are currently viewing) is outlined in yellow. The active window (the one with the keyboard focus) is outlined in red.

If the mouse is not pointing to the VDT, the Virtual Group Manager, or the Minimize Manager the status line indicates the active window on the system. Note that there are windows on the system which bare no name. In that case the VDT status window will display "(no window name)". You can give or change a windows' name. The unregistered version of VDT allows you to change but not save window names. The registered version allows the name to be changed and saved so that next time the window is invoked it automatically gets the new name.

Besides just name games, you can configure several other properties of windows. The size and position can be saved for any window and will be automatically applied on the next invocation of the application. Any window can be configured to appear in any particular viewport so it is always where you want it to be on startup. A window can be made sticky. That is, it will follow you where ever you go. A good use for this might be to set a clock to always be in a corner of every viewport. It will always be there if you need the time. The ICONs maintained by the Minimize Manager (MinMan) are always sticky by default. The Windows clock when minimized is an excellent fit for MinMan. Try it!!

Another configurable window property is "keep to front". When set on a window, no other window will be able to cover that window. Unless, of course, both windows have that property set active. MinMan keeps all ICONs to the front at all times except when a window is maximized or when a screen saver becomes active. In those cases the MinMan and the VDT (if keep to front was set) will drop back out of site to allow the maximized window to have the entire screen. The VDT can be configured as "keep to front" or not. See "Configuring VDT".

Switching viewports is achieved by using the mouse to point to the desired viewport. Clicking, or pressing and dragging with the RIGHT mouse button will provide the desired result. Keep in mind that double clicks aren't used much on the VDT. One of the authors of VDT really dislikes the wasted effort required to double click anything. He would like to see double clicking abolished but we do need to be "Windows-like" don't we? On our initial attempt with the Virtual Group Manager we used single click invocation for applications. Boy did the beta testers get confused. Since double invocations went over so poorly we changed it to the standard Windows double click. If there is feedback indicating that folks out there would like single clicking we'll put it back in as a configurable option.

Moving/activating windows is accomplished by pointing to the desired window, pressing the left mouse button and dragging.

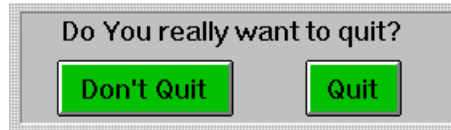
Resizing the VDT, as with most windows, is handled by manipulating the window frame. Moving VDT is accomplished by pointing at the status window, pressing the left mouse button and dragging.

VDT MENU

The VDT owns a floating menu used for various configuration type operations. The menu can be invoked by holding down the control key, while clicking the left mouse button once over the VDT window. The menu will then appear. The menu (from top to bottom respectively) is used to quit, start a copy of the Virtual Group Manager, start a copy of the Virtual Disk Manager, configure windows, configure desktop attributes,

view the system windows list, cascade all system windows, and minimize VDT.

-->The first item in the menu is the About/Quit box.



-->**Start Virtual Group Manager**

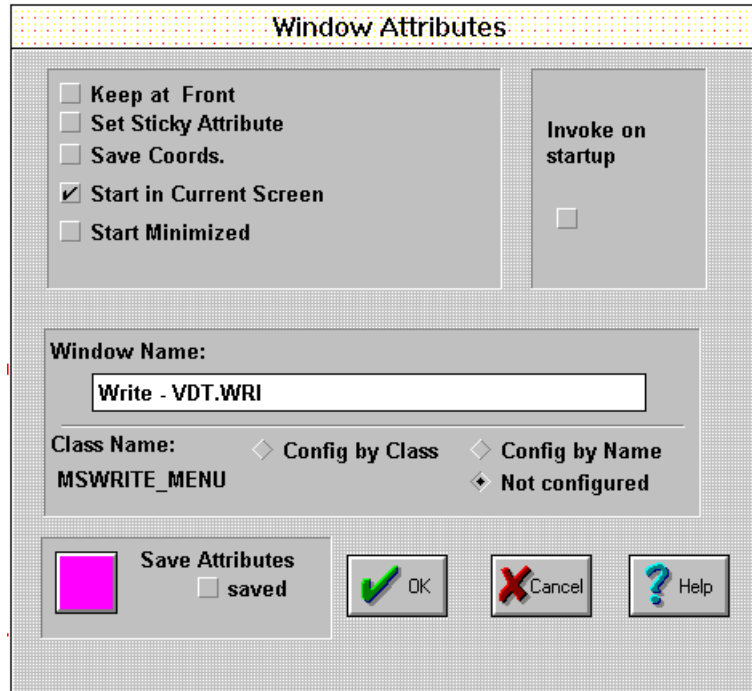
The second menu item is used to start a copy of the MAIN VGM. The Main VGM is started automatically when VDT starts. This menu item is used if for some reason the VGM was killed and needs to be restarted. NOTE: The VGM will not execute unless started by the VDT! This allows communication to be established for displaying status information. If the mouse is used to point at an icon in the VGM, the associated group or file name will be displayed in the desktop status window.

-->**Start Virtual Disk Manager**

The third menu item is used to start a copy of the Virtual Disk Manager. The VDM can be started by the VDT or VGM. NOTE: The VDM will not execute unless started by the VDT or VDM!

-->**Set Window Params**

The Fourth menu item allows the user to set configuration parameters for any current or future instance of a window or class of window. To use this item first activate the window to be configured. The window to be configured must be made active before using this item. Then hold down the control key and click on the VDT. When the menu is displayed click on "Set Window Params". The following dialog will be displayed:



The top two boxes allow various parameters to be configured for the selected window. The name of the selected window appears in the edit box under the "Window Name:" static text line. The windows name can be edited by using the edit box. The name cannot be saved in this version, but will remain active throughout the current session once changed. The class name for the window appears under "Class Name:" and cannot be changed. In the above picture the class name is MSWRITE_MENU. That is the name given to the main window of WRITE by the system.

Any chosen parameters can be associated to the window name or class name by choosing "config by name" or "config by class", and clicking on the "Save Attributes" button. Then the next time an application is invoked which has the window or class name previously chosen, the selected attributes will be applied to that window. Keep in mind that the attributes are selected for a window. If an application has more than one window, different attributed may be selected for each. A simple example is the dialog box that appears every time I compile. The dialog had a nasty habit of always appearing in the middle of the screen obscuring any text beneath it. While waiting for the compilation to complete I like to look at the code. So I configured the VDT to move the dialog box to the edge of the screen when it appeared. Since then I've increased my productivity by being able to read the code during compilation.

-> **Keep at front:** will prevent the window from being covered by another window.

-> **Set Sticky Attribute:** will make the window follow the active viewport. So the window will always appear in the active viewport.

-> **Save Coords.:** Save the current coordinates of the window. The next

time a window with the same window name or class (depending on the chosen criteria) appears, the coordinate will be applied. This causes the location and size to be saved. This can be used to start an application in any of the ports on (or across) the desktop.

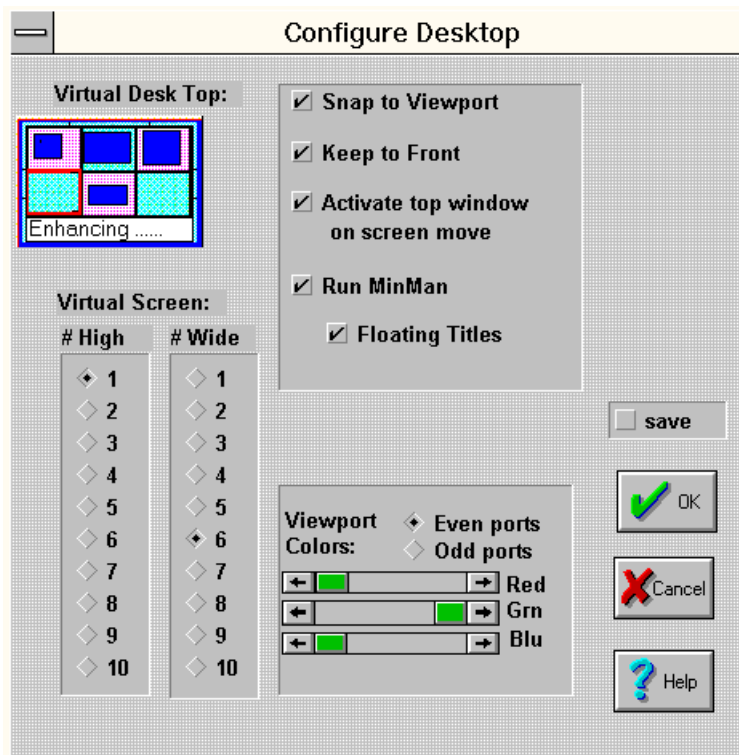
-> **Start in current Screen:** This forces the "Save Coords." to or the windows default coordinates to be applied to the current viewport. This is useful for utilities, like notepad, to always appear in the current viewport whenever it is invoked.

NOTE: The coordinates are also applied to apps which are de-minimized. That is, if an application is ICONIC, and is restored, then it will be restored to the current screen (default) if the "Start in current Screen" property is set. If this property is not set the window will be placed in the viewport in which it was previously iconized.

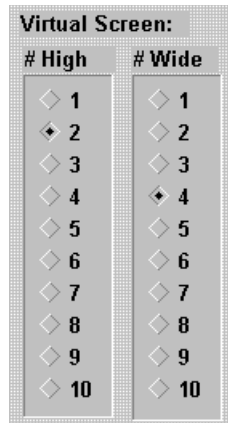
-> **Start Minimized:** This property forces the window to be iconic when it is first visible.

Configuring VDT

The VDT has a special dialog box which is different from the one used for the other windows.

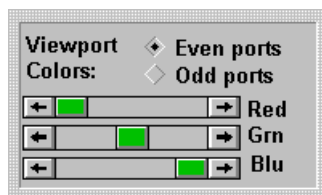


You can select the number of rows and columns of viewports on the VDT:

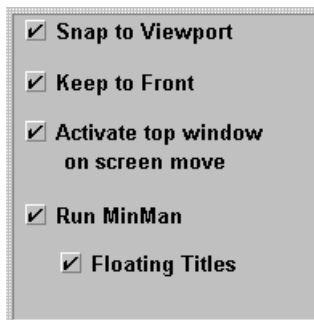


Simply select the number of rows and columns that are displayed by the VDT. The above example shows two rows and four columns selected.

You can choose the colors that please you the most to appear as the even and odd viewport colors. Select even or odd then use the sliders to adjust the RGB contributions of the final color.



Then there are some more subtle ways to configure the environment.



--> **Snap to Viewport:** The right mouse button is used to set the desired viewport. Simply point the mouse at the VDT window to where you would like to set the view and click the mouse button. If this box is selected then the viewport will always lock to one of the rectangular regions on the VDT display window. When the button is not checked the viewport can be set or dragged to any position.

--> **Keep to Front:** When this box is checked the VDT will not be covered by other windows.

--> **Activate top window on screen:** When changing viewports, the active window will change to one located completely within the new viewport, if

this box is selected. If the box is not checked the last active window will not change.

--> **Run Minman:** Allows you to run with or without MinMan.

--> **Floating Titles:** When using the MinMan, if the bar above the ICONs is pointed to by the mouse, the title of the ICON directly below will be displayed in the VDT status window. With this box checked another window directly above the ICONs will appear, when the gray bar is pointed to, which will also display the title information. This window allows you to place the VDT away from the MinMan without having to change your eye focus back and forth across the screen.

VIRTUAL GROUP MANAGER

OVERVIEW

The Virtual Group Manager is the second item in the Virtual Desktop toolset. It performs the same function as (and can replace) the Windows Program Manager. The Virtual Group Manager, however, has many additional (and powerful) features that are not available with the Windows Program Manager. For example, the Virtual Group Manager allows you to create a 'hierarchy' of groups which can be similar to how you organize your file system. Second, and for us the most important feature, is its ability to maintain order and compactness within the Windows environment. For example, you can transfer all of the groups and all items in those groups of your system to the Virtual Group Manager and have it 'contracted' to a window the size of two icons. And with a single button click have everything displayed and available to you in a compact and organized manner.

As an alternative method you can 'section' your groups so that they appear where you want them. This would provide multiple groups with each being assigned a virtual window on the Desktop. Of course, each group can also contain subgroups and a whole hierarchy of it's own.

DESCRIPTION



Fig. 1
Initial VGM Window

This is how the first execution of VGM will appear. The top button is the tool's logo symbol which will appear on the main VGM group. The second button is divided into four quadrants and each performs a specific function. The top left quadrant button will toggle between an expanded and contracted symbol. The group that you create will grow as you add items to the group. However, you may wish to contract the group to minimize the space that it occupies on the display screen.

The top right quadrant button is similar to our logo symbol and is used to bring up the following preference configuration dialog box:

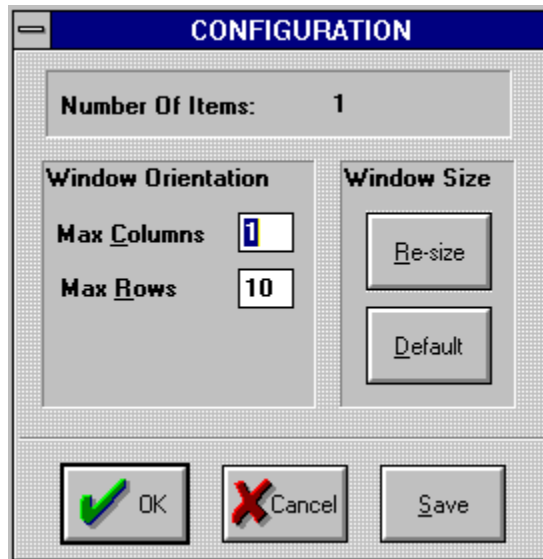


Fig. 2
Group Preference Dialog

This dialog box allows you to change the orientation of you group windows. The default orientation of all windows is 1X10 items vertically. You can alter this to suit your preference.

You can also resize the group window to be larger or smaller than the default size. When you select Re-size, a rectangle will appear on the display over the current group window. A cross cursor will appear on one of the corners. As you move the mouse the rectangle will change size. When the rectangle reaches the desired size which you want the group window to be, depress the left mouse button and the group window will resize to the new size. The group will remain this size until you either re-size again or select the Default button in the above dialog box. This button will resize the group to it's default size which is the systems default icon size.

Note: The resize feature is only available on the registered version.

Refer back to Fig. 1. The bottom two button are used to position the group window on the display screen quickly and easily. The lower left quadrant button is used to rotate the group, the lower right button will allow you to move the group window to any position on the display. When you depress the move button (the lower right button), a rectangle will appear over the group window. As you move the mouse the rectangle will move on the display accordingly. Once you have placed the rectangle where you want the group window to appear, just press the left mouse button and the group will be moved to the new position.

CREATING YOUR CONFIGURATION

You add items to your group in one of several ways. First you may want to experiment with the environment before you make your final arrangemt. However you will be able to make changes at any time if some grouping does not fit your needs. There are two types of items that can be stored in a group: executable items (either simple or compound) and subgroups. The ability to store groups within subgroups is a very powerful feature that will allow you to create a hierarchy of your system. You can install executable items by simply selecting them with VDM or the File Manager and dragging and dropping them on top of the group window you want to add them to.

A little explanation on what we mean by simple and compound executable items. A simple executable item is simply any executable that you are accustomed to. Compound items are those that combine an executable with some command line

arguments. This may simply be a document that will be edited by Write. An example of this is the Readme.wri symbol that you find in your Main group after installing Windows. In general, compound items are documents and executables that you combine with some reasoning.

You can install subgroups in any of your group windows by double clicking the top button. This is the button with the logo icon on the main group window. Subgroups will have a custom icon in this location which will allow you to identify each subgroup. We'll describe later how the icon is selected. The following dialog will be displayed to allow selection of subgroups.

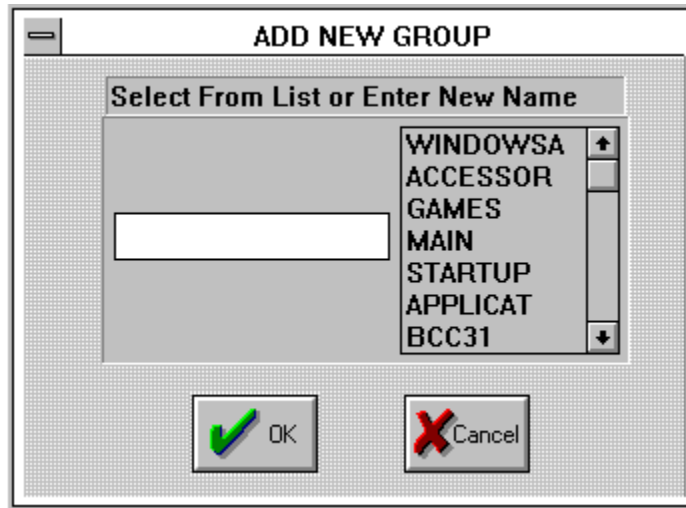


Fig. 3
Install Group Dialog

The items in the listbox are the names of your existing Program Manager groups. You can select one of them or enter a name for a new group. If you select one of the existing Program Manager groups all the items in that group will automatically be transferred to the VGM sub-group you are creating and a group symbol button will be added to your active group window. As an example select the ACCESSORies group and press the OK button. A new sub-group will be installed in your main group window. This sub-group will contain all the items that were in the Program Manager 'Accessories' group. You will notice that a new button has appeared on the group window and that it has the same symbol that the program manager uses to identify minimized group windows. There is also a colored band on the left side of the button. The colored band is used to distinguish group buttons from application buttons. Later we will change the default symbol for the group with one that will help you distinguish this group from other groups. For now let's continue by double clicking on the newly created button. A new group window will appear on the top left corner of the screen (this is the default location for group windows to start up). You will see that it has the group icon symbol at the top position. The default size for all group windows is a 1X10 in a vertical orientation. Move the mouse cursor to the rotate button and depress the left mouse button. The group window will rotate to a horizontal position.



Fig. 4
Accessories Group Horizontal

Now depress the move button and move the new group window to some new position on the screen. Since we had not moved the main group window it will still be in the upper left corner with just one item-the accessories group which we have

created. Go ahead and experiment with the expand/contract button. The group window will expand and contract in response to your action. Make sure you have the window in the expanded mode and depress the 'preference' button, which is the button similar to the VGM icon. The dialog shown in Fig. 2 will be displayed. The top line will indicate how many items are in this group. You will notice that the columns and rows values reflect the default 1X10 orientation. Change these to create a 2X5 window. The group window will be re-arranged into the desired format. If there are less items than are required to fill the window, the display will only indicate those items. As additional items are added to the group the window will grow in size until it reaches the max size indicated in the preference box. When more items than will fit are added to the group 'shift arrows' will appear on the group window. These will allow you to shift all items to the displayed portion of the group window. Depressing the left/right or up/down arrow button will shift one item at a time into the display, while depressing the control key at the same time that the arrow buttons are depressed will shift a 'window' full of items at a time. Go ahead and experiment with the control buttons we have just described: move, rotate, expand, contract, and preference.

To continue, move the main group to the upper right corner of your display screen. Also, change the ACCESSORIES group so that it is a 1X10 horizontal group. Then move it so that the end button covers it's corresponding group button on the main group window. The display should be as indicated below:



Fig. 5

Main Group with Accessories Group Open and Expanded

Depressing the right mouse button over any of the group items will allow you to either delete the items or change some of it's properties. Depressing the right mouse button over the top group button will close the group. Go ahead and close the ACCESSORIES group by placing the mouse cursor over the top button (group icon symbol) and depress the right mouse button. The group will close and only the main group will be left on the display. If you now double click on the group button again the ACCESSORIES group will open again at the same position you had placed it. Close the ACCESSORIES group. Move the mouse cursor over the ACCESSORIES button. You will notice that the name of the group will appear in the VDT status window. Depress the right mouse button on the ACCESSORIES group. A dialog window will be displayed which will allow you to change the icon that is used to identify this group. The dialog will allow you to view all icons that are contained within EXE, ICO, or DLL files. Scan through your files and pick an icon that will help you recognize the ACCESSORIES group. When you open the ACCESSORIES group again, you will notice that the top button will have been changed from the default group icon to the one you have selected.

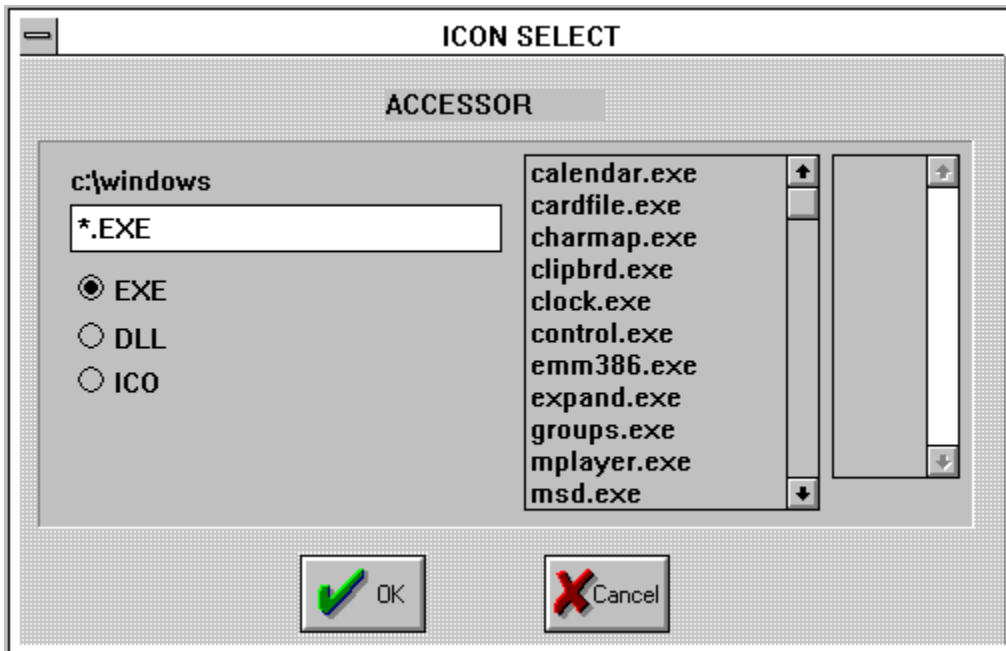


Fig. 6
Icon Select Dialog

As we mentioned above depressing the right button over an item in a group will allow you to delete the item or change some of it's properties. To illustrate this, run VDM and drag and drop Notepad to the main group window. You can also use the File Manager if you wish. The Notepad icon will appear in the main group window. You can now execute Notepad by simply double clicking the left mouse button on the icon, you can delete it from the group by depressing the right mouse button and then selecting delete on the confirmation dialog. You can also add some properties to this button. Depress the right button over the Notepad icon and then select 'change' on the dialog box. The following 'properties' dialog box will be displayed.

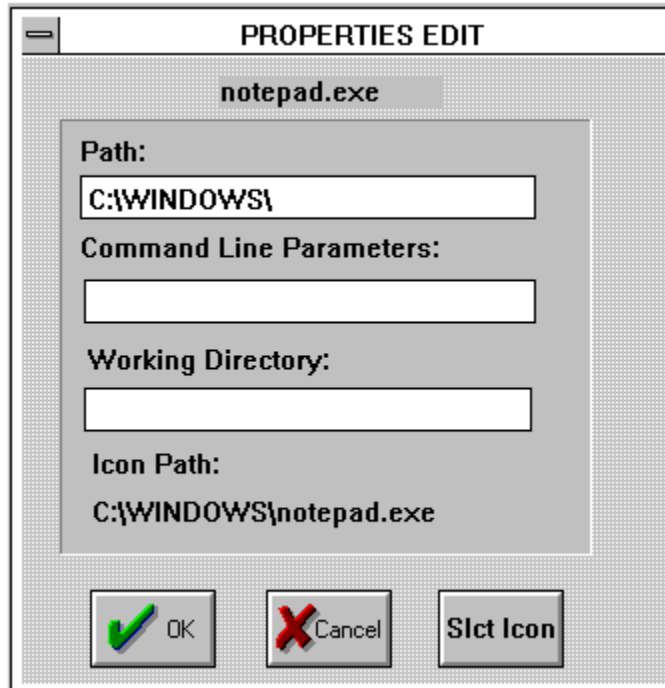


Fig. 7
Edit Properties Dialog

The top line displays the name of the item whose properties are being edited. There are four properties that can be associated with each item, the path to the executable, a working directory, a command line parameter(s), and the icon symbol associated with this item. This feature gives you tremendous flexibility allowing you to have mutiple buttons defined for the same executable but with different properties. As a simple example, you could define two Notepad buttons which will execute Notepad with different documents and different working directories. Each Notepad button can then be assigned a different icon that will identify the document that will be edited.

DISK MANAGER

OVERVIEW

The Disk Manager is the third item in the Virtual Desktop toolset. It performs similar functions to the Windows File Manager but with a more intuitive interface. Most of the functions performed are done by dragging and dropping items (files, directories, etc.). You can use the drag and drop facility of the Disk Manager with any other application that supports drag and drop. You can tell if an application supports the function by simply seeing if the cursor changes shapes. You cannot drop files while the cursor resembles the 'do not enter' sign (a circle with a diagonal line through it).

Note: The Windows File Manager acts only as a drag and drop server, it will not accept dropped files. While the Program Manager will only accept dropped files but will not act as a server.

The Disk Manager allows you to organize and maintain your disk file system. You can move, copy, delete, and rename files or whole directories. You can search for a file, create a directory, execute an application, or get detail information about a file. You can select one or multiple files or directories and perform any of the above operations

on the selected items. And, you can display your files in any order you desire. All of these functions are easily identifiable and are initiated by simply selecting the appropriate button on the Function Toolbar.

Again, the main purpose of the Disk Manager is to be as intuitive as possible. In addition to providing a graphical button for most of the functions, there is also a status window that continuously displays information about what functions are available or what function is being performed.

DESCRIPTION

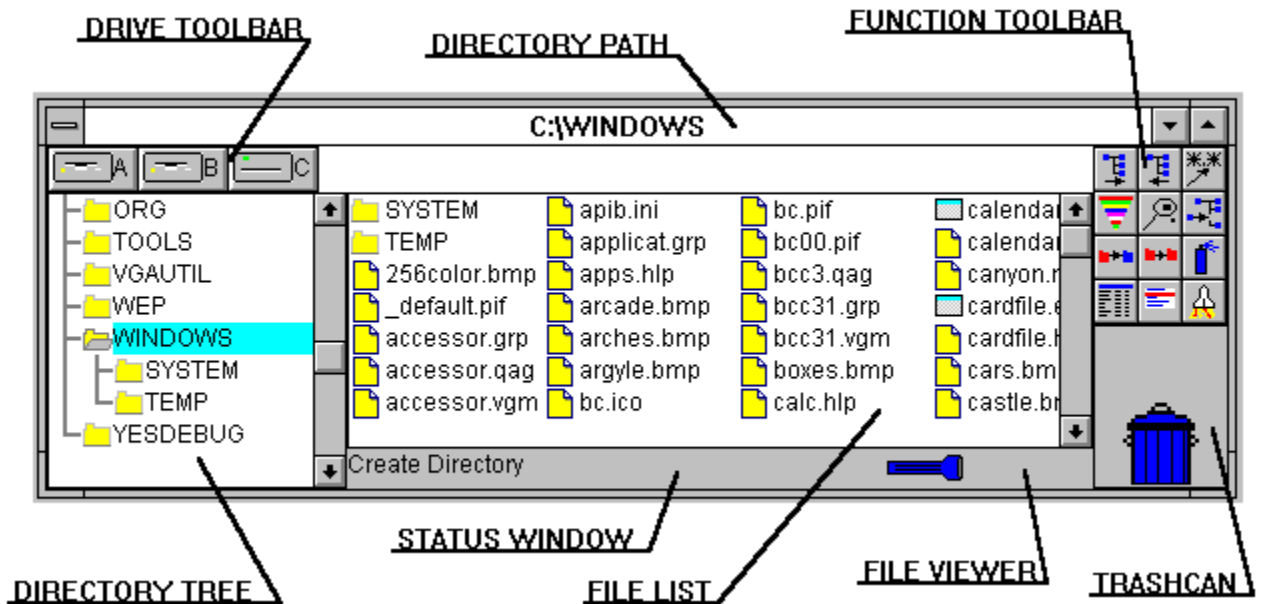


Fig. 1

The Disk Manager Window

DIRECTORY TREE WINDOW

The directory tree window displays the directories and subdirectories of the selected drive. You can display the contents of any directory by positioning the mouse cursor over the directory name and clicking the left mouse button. The directory contents will be displayed in the File List window. Double clicking the left mouse button on the directory name will expand the directory tree to show any subdirectories in the selected directory. Double clicking on an open directory will close that directory and contract the displayed tree. The Directory Tree window is also used as the destination for copy and move operations.

DRIVE TOOLBAR

The Drive Toolbar displays drive icons for all drives in your system. Selecting a drive by depressing the left mouse button over the desired drive icon will change the directory being displayed. The Drive Toolbar icons are also used as destination for copy operations. When dragging items, a focus rectangle will appear over the drive icon which will receive the dragged items if dropped. Depressing the right mouse button over any of the drive icons will start a new Disk Manager window for that drive.

FILE LIST WINDOW

The File List Window displays the contents of the selected directory. All items that are going to be copied, renamed, or deleted are selected in this window. This is also the source for all drag and drop operations. Items are selected by depressing the left mouse button over the desired item. Multiple items can be selected by holding down the Control key while selecting the items. A section of items can be selected by selecting the first item and then holding down the Shift key while selecting the end inclusive item. Global selects can also be made by selecting the Global Select button in the Function Toolbar. Double clicking on a directory item in the File List window will affect the same operation as selecting the directory in the Directory Tree window.

DIRECTORY PATH

The title bar of the Disk Manager displays the full path of the currently selected directory.

FILE VIEWER

Dragging and then dropping a file on the File Viewer window will activate the associated editor. If you do not have previously defined an association for the file, you can either create one or the default is to invoke Notepad.

TRASHCAN

The Trashcan is the destination for any files and/or directories that you wish to delete. Just select the items then drag and drop them over the trashcan. The trashcan lid will open to indicate that you are about to 'throw away' the selected items.

STATUS WINDOW

The Status Window displays information about the various functions that you will be performing. Here is some of the information displayed. When the mouse cursor is over the title bar the disk space of the current drive is shown in the status window. When you move your cursor over any of the items in the Function Toolbar, the Status Window displays a description of the button function. Some of the Function Toolbar buttons toggle between two states. For example the MOVE/COPY button allows you to determine what will happen when you drag some file, either it will be copied to a new location or it will be moved to a new location. The Status Window will indicate the state of the button. As you select items in the File List Window, the number and size of the items will be displayed in the Status Window. When you are dragging items, the Status Window will display the function that you are performing.

FUNCTION TOOLBAR

Here's a short description on the function of each of the buttons in the Function Toolbar.

Expand Directory Tree Window-If you have expanded the directory tree by double clicking on a directory name and your directory tree is very deep, then it is possible that the tree will be larger than the window size. You can expand the Directory Tree Window by clicking on this button.

Contract Directory Tree Window-To close the window after you have expanded it.

Global Select-Depressing this button will bring up a dialog box where you can enter a select criteria. For example you might want to select all *.doc files, or all *.txt. This action is cumulative so any

files that you may have selected manually will still remain selected.

Change Sort Key-Depressing this button will bring up a dialog box that will allow you to change the way that items are sorted in the File List Window. You can select either by type, size, date, or name. Once set the type will remain in effect until you change it again.

Find File-This will search through the current drive for a file or for files that match a certain search criteria.

Create Directory-Depressing this button will prompt you for the name of the directory to create. The new directory will be created in the current directory which is also displayed for your confirmation.

COPY/RENAME-This button is used to rename the file in the same directory or to make a copy of the file within the same directory. The function that is performed will depend on the state of the COPY/MOVE toggle button. You can always check the state of the COPY/MOVE button by passing the mouse cursor over the button and the state will be shown in the Status Window.

COPY/MOVE-This button toggles between the two states when depressed. This sets up the function that will be performed when you drag and drop items or when you select the COPY/RENAME button. The state of this button is displayed in the Status Window when the button is depressed.

Refresh Window-Depressing this button will cause the disk to be re-read to update the window contents. This is specially useful when you change disks in your floppy drives.

LONG/SHORT File List Window Format-This button will toggle between the short and long list formats for the File List Window. The short format will only display the names of the directories and files. The long format will display the file size, date and time of creation.

Menu-Depressing this button will display a menu of least used items. The first two items will allow you to set associations for the viewer and for Window's executables. For example if you wanted Notepad to be invoked whenever you double-clicked on '.bat' files. Or if you dragged '.txt' files on to the File Viewer. The fifth item allows you to change the font being used by the various windows of the Disk Manager.

Launcher-This button will allow you to invoke any application in your system by typing in the name. And also allows you to add a command line parameter for that executable.