

7 October 1991

Dear Shareware Programmer

As you are no doubt aware, there are many shareware programs to be had on BBS' and through various vendors. Some shareware is merely a means for an individual to try out an idea and get pointers or advice from other programmers, but the majority is produced with the idea of eventually marketing it. A major drawback to shareware is the lack of documentation associated with an otherwise outstanding product. Help screens are great, but many people complain that:

- * The Help screen doesn't answer the questions they have in enough detail
- * The help files take up valuable disk space
- * The Windows help engine is slow for a quick answer
- * Poorly illustrated
- * They would rather look it up in a book

This is why I have created the "Shareware User's Guide (TM)". As the owner of a small documentation company, I understand the expense of producing good quality documentation. I believe that this idea will fill the needs of many shareware programmers and satisfy the demands of your users. This idea will allow you to do what you want to do best (program) and allow someone else to write the documents.

You supply me with the information necessary to compose a useful document (read me files, working copy of the product, programming notes, etc.); I will produce a document that can be placed in a loose leaf binder (8 1/2 X 11). After the document is in draft form, you will get a copy to change as you like. Return the changes to me for entry into the final module. I will then add the document to the list of available modules for the "Shareware User's Guide", and advertise as described in the full information package.

Now you ask what's in it for me, and why should I do this? Well I would be a fool to tell you that I am doing this solely out of the goodness of my heart. With your help the "Shareware User's Guide" will be added to. Each shareware program that I produce a document for is in the same format, i.e., contents, layout, etc. Your registered users (or anyone else) will be able to purchase the individual documents (modules) for each shareware program that they own from the same place. The loose leaf format allows them to keep their modules together in one place without having several separate small booklets. The loose leaf format also allows for easy updates when you change your software (and I change the module). The price of each module will depend on the size of the document (I estimate a range of \$2 to \$20).

Along with the purchased module will go a list of all the shareware documents that I have (FREE advertising) and where the program can be purchased. The "Shareware User's Guide" is to be advertised (more FREE advertising for you) in the various computer magazines.

This idea is open to criticism, creative comment, or just plain laughter. All comments will be taken seriously. I have no intention of being a software clearing house (there are enough of them already!), just provide a way for shareware programmers to get the documentation they deserve. Remember there is no cost to you, you will be sent a free copy of the module written for your program and a list of all other program modules available.

A complete information package is available to interested programmers on request. To receive full information and become a member of the "Shareware User's Guide" contact me at the address shown below. We are planning the first module releases in the December-January period with advertising beginning in late November.

You may be wondering why I did not just upload the complete information package? Well it is kind of selfish, I need the response rate to determine the interest. This idea has been reviewed by several programmers with very good response. To determine if it is a good idea (and therefore worth the effort) I need the response of a larger audience. Even if you do not want to become a member of the Shareware User's Guide please sent me your comments. I will respond to any questions that you may have.

Thank You!
Andy McBride

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31 Longa Road
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(603) 424-5823 (Answering machine 24 hours a day)

Channel One BBS (617)354-8873 (Leave message for Andy McBride)

P.S. The term "Member" is used in the above text for lack of a better term. Being a "Member" of the Shareware User's Guide does not entail any fees or dues. Again this service does not cost you ANYTHING other than information!