

QUICK START

This is for those of you who just can't wait. The Virtual Desk Tools consists of two main modules, the Desktop, which expands your display to almost unlimited windows and the Group Manager that will perform functions similar to the Program Manager. The Virtual Desktop Tools 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 any other Windows applications and configure them. This is accomplished by holding down the Control key while clicking the left mouse button when the mouse cursor is 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 re-size the DeskTop the same way you would re-size a regular window.

Start the Group Manager by using the same method used for starting an application. 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 re-organize the window.

You can add applications and subgroups to your Group Manager window. You can add applications by simply selecting them with the File Manager, then dragging and dropping them on top of the Group Manager window 'Group button'. If you drop onto an application ICON that application will be executed and the dropped file will be passed as a parameter. You can add subgroups by double clicking on the top button of the Group Manager and selecting either an existing Program Manager group or a new one. You can delete or change properties of any item in the Group Manager by depressing the right button over the item.

That's it for the 'Quick Start'. You will find on-line help for all functions and features of the VDT environment. If you want more detailed information, follow along with the tutorial.

The most effective way of learning is by doing, so we've provide you with a hands-on example of how to start-up and use the VDT environment. Follow along, but remember, there are many combinations that we will not present and will possibly suit your tastes better, so experiment. You will quickly see that the VDT is an extremely powerful yet simple and organized tool.

TUTORIAL EXAMPLE

To start let's review and make sure that you've installed the files correctly. You will need to copy all the files from the distribution disk into the Windows directory or to a directory of your choosing as long as it exists within your PATH variable.

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.

Before we start you may want to know that help is just a mouse click away wherever you are on the desktop. You can get help by depressing the '?' on the VDT window or by pressing F1 on any of the VDT floating menu options. From the VDT help you may also request help on the VGM or VDM modules.

Start VDT through your normal method of executing an application. The VDT will appear on the screen at a default location and at a default size. The VGM will also appear on the screen at its default location and size. Let's concentrate first on the VDT and then later we will describe the operation of the VGM and then end with the VDM.

Place the mouse cursor over the status window of the VDT (the text window which runs along the bottom). Then depress and hold the left mouse button. A rectangle will appear over the VDT window that will be the same size and shape as the VDT. You can now move the VDT to a location of your preference. Go ahead and move the VDT. My preference is the lower right corner but others prefer the upper right corner. The lower left corner is not the best location because minimized windows will be drawn in that area. Once you've positioned the window, re-size it to your preference. You re-size the VDT the same way you re-size any other window.

Now that you've gotten the VDT at the location you want and the size you want let's set some of the other configuration options. Remember, you can go back and change any of your preferences at any time. You may start out with one configuration and later as you use the VDT make some adjustments. Now, while holding down the CONTROL key, depress the left mouse button over the VDT window. The VDT floating MENU will appear on the screen. Through this menu you will have access to all of the functions of the VDT. For now, select the fifth item 'Set VDT Params'.

CONFIGURE DESKTOP

The CONFIGURE DESKTOP dialog will be displayed when you have made your selection on the floating menu. This dialog allows you to configure several features of the VDT. Let's start with the VDT virtual screen organization. Select the number of columns and rows of virtual screens you wish to have. Again, I'll indicate my preference only as an example. Your preference may be completely different and may change with time. I have my VDT set up for four virtual screens in a 2X2 organization. Some other popular combinations are 1X4 (vertical), 2X4 (horizontal), and 1X2 (horizontal). Although the VDT has limits (10X10), it is beyond the practical usable size.

Let's continue with the remaining VDT configuration options. You can

set the colors used to display the viewports on the VDT by sliding the color bars. Select the color you want for the odd and even viewport. MinMan is an optional module that can be run with the VDT. It is a module that organizes your minimized windows and keeps them in order. MinMan also increases your available workspace by removing the titles from the minimized windows. There is an additional option that you can elect when you run MinMan, and that is, Floating Titles. Since MinMan removes the titles of minimized windows, it sends the titles to the VDT status window. As you move the cursor over the bar above a minimized window the title of the window appears on the VDT status window. The Floating Titles option will display the minimized window titles over the window when you move the cursor over the minimized window. This reduces the amount of eye movement required to identify the title of a minimized window. However, we believe that in a graphical environment text requirement should be minimized. Experiment with the MinMan and the Floating Titles option to determine which you prefer. You can keep your current style by not checking either option.

The right mouse button is used to move to the desired viewport. Simply point the mouse at the VDT window to where you would like to set the viewport and click the right mouse button. If the 'Snap to Viewport' box is selected, then the viewport will always lock to one of the rectangular regions on the VDT display window. When this button is not checked, the viewport can be set or dragged to any position, including straddling between two virtual windows.

When the 'Keep to Front' box is checked, the VDT, or any of its child windows, cannot be covered by other windows. An exception to this is any other window with the keep to front attribute set.

If the 'Activate Top Window on Move' box is selected, when changing viewports, the new active window will be automatically selected. This feature reduces the number of mouse clicks, since when you move to a new viewport (or to any other window for that matter) you must first click on the window to make it the active window. If this feature is enabled, the active window will be the first one found, that have all four corners in the new viewport.

VDT FLOATING MENU

Let's continue by describing the other options available on the floating menu of the VDT. Go ahead and bring up the VDT floating menu by holding the CONTROL key and depressing the left mouse button over the VDT window. The ABOUT/QUIT option is self explanatory. Selecting it will bring up the QUIT confirmation dialog. The 'Start Virtual Group Manager' option will start the VGM module if it is not already running. The 'Start Virtual Disk Manager' will start the VDM module. We will describe these two modules in depth later.

WINDOW ATTRIBUTES

We previously described the 'Set VDT Params' option for the VDT window. Now we will describe how to change attributes for other windows. Bring up Notepad or some other application and make it the active window by clicking the left mouse button somewhere within the window. The active window is identified by the highlighted title bar (default is dark

blue). Bring up the VDT floating menu and select the 'Set Window Params' option. This will bring up the 'Window Attributes' dialog. You'll notice that the name of the application will appear under the Window Name section. There are several attributes that you can assign to any or all of your application windows. These attributes will be saved by the VDT. The next time that the application is invoked they will be in effect.

Keep Window at Front: Selecting this attribute will prevent the window from being covered by another window.

Set Sticky Attribute: Selecting this attribute will make the window follow the active viewport. It will go wherever you go. This is similar to the way the VDT follows you as you move between viewports. 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 Windows clock when minimized is an excellent fit for MinMan. Try it!!

Save Location/Size: Save the current upper left corner coordinates of the window and/or size. The next time a window with the same window name or class (depending on the criteria chosen) appears, the coordinates and size will be applied. The location is any position on the desktop. For example, you may want certain applications to start at a specific viewport all the time.

Start in Invocation Viewport: This forces the "Save Location" or the windows default coordinates to be applied to the currently active viewport. This is useful for utilities, like Notepad, to force it to always appear in the current viewport whenever it is invoked.

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

Invoke on Startup: This item allows you configure the application, associated with this window, to be started the next time VDT is started. This powerful feature, allows you to set up your desktop automatically, the same way, every time that the VDT is started. If VDT is used to replace Program Manager, then just bringing up Windows will cause VDT to start. This can also be accomplished by dragging the VDT icon into the Program Manager Startup group.

Config by Name/Class: All of the selected attributes can be associated with a window by Class or by Name. On the next invocation of an application that has a window by that Class type or that window Name, the attributes will be applied. 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.

Save Attributes: The Save Attributes button will save the changes just selected in the dialog box. If you don't use this button the changes will only be applied to the current session. If you leave Windows, the changes will be lost.

If you started Notepad at the beginning of this section, go ahead and re-size it to the size you would want to start up all the time. Also move it to the location where you would want it to start. Select 'Save Location', 'Save Size', 'Start in Invocation Viewport', and 'Config by Class'. Now the next time you start Notepad it will start with your preferences. As another example, if you have a scheduler or calendar program, you may want it to start up whenever you start your system. You may want to assign a specific viewport to the program, so that it is

always full size and available. Start up the program, re-size it and move it to the viewport where you want it to start up. Now, make it the active window and bring up the Window Attributes dialog so you can set your preferences. For this program you would select 'Save Location', 'Save Size', 'Invoke on startup', and 'Config by Class'. Now when your system starts, the program will automatically start at the size and position you specified.

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 sets 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, that has been automatically installed for you. Double click the left mouse button over the Disk Manager button and the Disk Manager will be executed.

The last two items on the VDT floating menu are rarely used. The 'Display Window list' is more for system information than for anything else. It displays a list of all the active windows in your system, even those that are not visible. A neat trick which you can use, is to make visible those windows that are invisible (be careful with DLL's). One useful feature of this dialog is that you can see, if in fact, a window does exist. If it does, and you don't see it, you can force it to the current screen by selecting it and then depressing the 'BRING' button. The 'Cascade Windows' option will bring ALL windows in your system to your current viewport and offset them all from each other. The same effect occurs when you exit the VDT without exiting Windows. This was done so that you didn't lose any windows that were off screen.

VIRTUAL GROUP MANAGER

The Virtual Group Manager is the second item in the Virtual DeskTop toolset. It performs the same function as (and can replace, when used in conjunction with VDT) the Windows Program Manager. The Virtual Group Manager, however, has many additional (and powerful) features that are not available with the Windows Program Manager. First, the Virtual Group Manager allows you to create a 'hierarchy' of groups that can be similar to how you organize your file system. Second, and for us the most important feature, is the ability to maintain order and compactness within the Windows environment. For instance, you can transfer all of the Program Manager groups and all items in those groups to the Virtual Group Manager and have it 'contracted' to a window the size of two icons. With a single button click, you have everything displayed and available to you in a compact and organized manner. If a hierarchical organization is not your preference, then you can set up segregated groups and place each group in its own viewport.

Since the VGM is started automatically by the VDT, it is probably at a default location on the screen. If it is not, bring up the VDT floating menu and select 'Start Virtual Group Manager'. The top button is the VGM's logo symbol that will appear on the Mainvgm group. The second button is divided into four quadrants. Each performs a specific function. The top left quadrant button will toggle between an expanded and contracted symbol. The group windows grow as you add items,

however, you may wish to contract the window to minimize the space that it occupies on the display screen.

The top right quadrant button is similar to the logo symbol and is used to bring up the configuration dialog box. This dialog box allows you to change the organization of your group windows. The default organization of all groups is 1X10 items vertically. You can alter this to suit your preference. You can also re-size 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. As you move the mouse the rectangle will change size. When the rectangle reaches the desired size that you want the group window to be, depress the left mouse button and the group window will re-size 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 re-size the group to its default size that is the systems default icon size.

The bottom two buttons 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.

The third item in the Mainvgm group is the VDM application that is automatically installed for you.

CREATING YOUR GROUPS

Before we start remember that you may want to experiment with the environment before you make your final arrangement. You will, however, be able to make changes at any time if some grouping does not fit your needs. Help is available for all functions that are performed within the VGM environment.

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 subgroups within groups is a very powerful feature that will enable you to maintain your system components in a hierarchical arrangement. 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. You can install subgroups in any of your group windows by double clicking the top button and selecting an existing group or entering the name of a new group.

A little explanation on what we mean by simple and compound executable items. A simple executable item is 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 the Program Manager Main group after installing Windows. In general, compound items are documents and executables that you combine with some reasoning.

Let's continue by adding a group to the Mainvgm group. Double click the left mouse button over the top button of the Mainvgm group. The items in the list box 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 be automatically transferred to the VGM sub-group you are creating. A group symbol button will then be added to your active group window. Select the ACCESSORies group and press the OK button. A new sub-group will be installed in your Mainvgm 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 Mainvgm 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 button 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.

Now depress the move button and move the new group window to some new position on the screen. Since we had not moved the Mainvgm group window, it will still be in the upper left corner with just two items, the VDM application and the ACCESSORies group that we have just 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. Then depress the 'configuration' button. This is the button that is similar to the VGM icon.

CONFIGURATION DIALOG

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 fewer items in a group 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 maximum size specified. When more items than will fit, are added to the group, 'shift arrows' will appear on the third position of the group window. These will allow you to shift all items into the displayed portion of the group window. Depressing the left/right or up/down arrow button of the group window will shift one item at a time into the display. 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 configure.

To continue, move the main group to the upper right corner of your display screen. Also, change the ACCESORies group so that it is a 1X10

horizontal group. Then move it so that the end button covers the ACCESSORIES group button on the Mainvgm group window.

Depressing the right mouse button over any of the group items will allow you to either delete the items or change some of its 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 Mainvgm group will be left on the display. If you now double click on the group button, the ACCESSORIES group will open. It will be at the same position you had placed it. As you can see, you can create a hierarchy of groups that can easily and quickly be opened to access any item. 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. When the dialog box appears, select 'CHANGE'. This will bring up the 'Icon Select' dialog and allow you to select a custom icon to help you identify the group.

SELECT ICON DIALOG

The dialog box will allow you to view all icons that are contained within EXE, ICO, or DLL files in your system. 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.

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 its properties. To illustrate this, run VDM and drag and drop Notepad to the Mainvgm group window. You can also use the File Manager if you wish. The Notepad icon will appear in the Mainvgm 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 the Notepad item. Depress the right button over the Notepad icon and then select 'change' on the dialog box.

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 multiple buttons defined for the same executable but with different properties. As a simple example, you could define two Notepad buttons that will execute Notepad with different documents and different working directories. Each Notepad button can then be assigned a different icon that will help you identify the document to be edited.

You can continue by transferring any or all of the Program Manager groups that are already in your system and then deleting any items you may not want in those groups and moving them to other groups. You may

want to create some new groups, and then add different Program Manager groups to each one. Experiment, and then you'll be able to determine what suits you best. You may want to maintain all your sub-groups within the Mainvgm, or you may want to have smaller groups that will be maintained within each viewport. We do believe, however, that once you have your system setup you will wonder how you ever got along without the VDT.

DISK MANAGER

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. You can invoke VDM by double clicking on the VDM button of the Mainvgm group or by selecting 'Start Virtual Disk Manager' on the VDT floating menu.

Most of the functions performed on the VDM 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 detailed information about a file. You can select one or multiple files or directories and perform any of the above operations on the selected items. You can also 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.

VDM DIRECTORY TREE WINDOW

The directory tree window displays the directories and sub directories 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 sub directories 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.

VDM 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 that 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.

VDM 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 selections can be made by holding down the Control key while selecting the items. A group of items can be picked 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.

VDM DIRECTORY PATH

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

VDM FILE VIEWER

Dragging and then dropping a file on the 'Flashlight' window will activate the associated editor. If you have not previously defined an association for the file, you can either create one or if you select 'No' Notepad is invoked by default.

VDM 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.

VDM 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.

VDM FUNCTION TOOLBAR

Here's a short description of the functions 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 criterion. 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 criterion.

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. The current directory 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. The state of the button 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. This also allows you to add a command line parameter for the executable.