

Design Manager Company History

Design Manager was founded in 1984 in Doylestown, PA, then under the name of Franklin-Potter Associates. Bill Smith, an accounting controller for a local university and Rich Williams, an engineer/computer programmer, began the business to help companies in need of custom accounting software. They had many different companies approach them for new software solutions, but it seemed that interior design was the one industry had the most potential. Once they saw how many interior designers they could help they decided to focus their company on a comprehensive software solution for the design industry.

Their goal was to provide an affordable solution to managing design projects and running the business of design in a single software package. After working with several design firms, they released software for MS-DOS in 1986 and continued to update it until 1989. Their business began to progress as quickly as computer technology as a whole, so they decided to bring on a new programmer with long-term vision. Joe Kissel was hired in 1989 to reprogram the DOS software to the new Windows 3.0. In the spring of 1992, the team had programmed Design Manager 4.0 for Windows and even had added in a full Inventory system to provide a solution to the design firms who held inventory. This was a huge success for the company because they were becoming known across the country as the leader in design software.

The Inventory module proved so successful for design firms that they needed to program a Point-of-Sale module to accommodate storefronts. The Point-of-Sale project began the programming of Professional 5.0 which was released in final form in 1995. This was an interesting turn for the company because it signified the branching out into 2 distinct software platforms. Later these would be known as Design Manager Standard and Professional platforms.

From 1993 until 2000, the company focused on high quality updates to its Design Manager 4.0 and Professional 5.0 releases. To stay on top of technology, however, in 2000, they released an upgrade to Design Manager 4.0 called simply DM2000. DM2000 was particularly significant because it contained a whole new “user-centered” interface. The ease of use for the end user was the focus for the release and designers took to it quickly. The company continued to grow, adding new clients and employees at a steady pace. Also in 2000, a Remote Data Collection module was added to Professional 5.0 which allowed larger design firms to keep track of their massive inventories and record deliveries to clients by means of a remote scanner.

In 2002, Professional 6.0, the upgrade to Professional 5.0, was released. Through suggestions from designers, accountants, and bookkeepers, Professional 6.0 improved both the accounting and project management features. It also added a Showroom module to the Professional platform for firms that had in-house showrooms where customers could come in and create special order items.

With two strong products being sold to an industry embracing the organization that Design Manager software provided, it was time to reorganize the internal structure of the company to poise Design Manager for future growth. Joe Kissel and Brad Martin, who had been a lead programmer for 7 years, took over the company in 2004. Together they realized the potential for incredible growth and market presence by collaborating to take the company into a host of new endeavors.

The first order for company growth was new hires and new programming projects. In 2006, Design Manager released an upgrade to DM2000 called DM Standard Edition 6 or SE6. This was the most sophisticated user interface yet and is still being sold to this date. This release gave the company a firm hold on the small design firm client base because it was intuitive, but still handled the complex accounting functions necessary in design projects.

2007 proved to be a banner year for Design Manager because not only did it introduce the new SE6 On-Line version, but it also released an upgrade to Professional 6.0, called Pro 7.0 in December. The SE6 On-Line revolutionized the design industry because now designers could work from anywhere with an Internet connection. For example, they could work from home, the office or even directly from the client's site. It has been a huge success for the company as the fastest selling product in Design Manager history and a huge leap in technology for the interior design industry. Pro 7.0 was also an enormous success providing clients with cutting edge features never seen before in software. For example, color coded status conditions that automatically change and can be user-definable.

In 2008, the obvious next step was to create Pro 7.0 On-Line so the Professional users could reap the benefits of "cloud commuting" as well. Pro 7.0 On-Line was introduced in the summer of 2008 and has out sold any Professional product thus far. In 2008 and 2009 Design Manager begun key collaboration efforts with well known partners like PayChex Payroll service and Merchant Warehouse. Design Manager's goal is to offer as many features as possible to designers to help save them time and money. The partnership with Merchant Warehouse allows users to accept credit card payments directly from Design Manager software taking one less step out of a designer's process and bringing them the lowest rates in the industry.

We have great things on the horizon in 2010; such as, iPhone and iPad compatibility with our On-line Version, a strategic partnership with a leading design software in the industry, DreamDraper, exciting new online web sites and store functions that integrate directly with Design Manager and a new release of our Standard software.

Throughout the years Design Manager has been featured in Forbes Magazine, ASID articles and a number of textbooks; such as, Professional Practice for Interior Designers by Christine M. Piotrowski and The Interior Design Business Handbook by Mary Knackstedt. Design Manager's promise is that they will continue to bring the best design, accounting and technological advances to their customers, so get excited about what's around the corner!