

Visual GRASP®: Purchase Order | LL Designer: Evaluation with Pie Chart and Horizontal Bar Chart

A Question of Flexibility

The Grasp Software Corporation based in Demorestville, Canada, develops applications for business environments, mostly in small and medium enterprises and women shelter homes. "Our business software is designed for real business and real people", as Michael Cooper, President of Grasp Software Corporation explains. One outstanding example of a Grasp business solution is Visual GRASP®, an accounting software for manufacturing and distribution. This accounting software provides the General Ledger, Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, Order Entry, Inventory Control and Purchase Order Functions.

Beside other minor and custom programs, Grasp Software Corporation offers W.I.S.H.™ (= Women In Safe Housing) a Shelter Management Software that is designed to manage the day-to-day Client based activities of shelter, providing access to critical Client Information and accumulation of statistical data. Developed for use in shelters which provide service both to in-shelter and out-of-shelter women in abuse crisis, it tracks crisis calls and interventions, service given, referrals to/from and programs attended both from the perspective of client involvement for ongoing case management and for statistical purposes. And that's where combit List & Label comes into play:

Wrapper package for Visual DataFlex

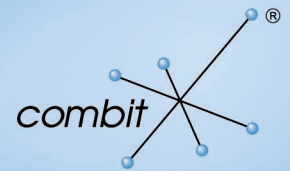
By only a few lines of code, Michael Cooper enhanced his applications running from Windows 98 up to Windows Vista, to include all types of evaluations, from simple tables to comprehensive reports with master details / sub reports, crosstabs, charts, RTF text, barcodes, graphics and OLE objects: "All of our applications use List & Label," Michael Cooper tells. The integrated report designer of

the reporting tool from the German software vendor combit enables his users to analyze and export data. "We used two other report tools before. One of them was embedded into the development language, but we found it to be very restrictive and often unpredictable. The second reporting tool was very well known and respected, but we found

Facts

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- Tool:** combit List & Label
- Products:** Visual GRASP®, W.I.S.H.™
- Programming Language:** Visual DataFlex





several other drawbacks: A long time to write and design a new report, susceptible to version clashes from other software using the same engine, hard to 'wrap up' and distribute with our software, and far too costly to include the designer component with our software." Finally, he heard about combit List & Label: "I had posted a request on our Developers NewsGroup (news.dataaccess.com) about what Report Engines people were using. I was contacted by one developer that gave a glowing report of the product. In addition, he had pioneered a wrapper package for List & Label for our programming language, Visual DataFlex." Therefore, the foundation for the support of Visual DataFlex through List & Label was laid and since that time, combit as approved Data Access Technology Partner continuously developed it further and further in cooperation with the Visual DataFlex Community. Flexibility, which is one of List & Label's main strong points, allows Michael Cooper to choose between developing environments, he can swap any time. And if someday Michael decides to work independent of a database, that'd be possible too.

No royalties for the end user

Grasp Software Corporation uses the internet to distribute its software, which includes free trial versions. Looking back now, company director Cooper reflects on the basic points to be considered when choosing List & Label: "We wanted a powerful reporting tool with a built-in designer to embed into our software and to distribute without any licensing hassles for the end user. So the long and short of it, we needed to have a report engine with the following attributes: royalty-free, user friendly designer built-in, customizable to show or not show various components, unlikely to 'clash' with DLL version differences that may be installed by other software as the DLLs can be installed into the application's directory." To go with List & Label he decided "after weighing in on the 3 or 4 report options. Clearly there were pitfalls with all of the other products. List & Label absolutely met and exceeded each of our goals in selecting a new report engine platform. That was in 2001 and we are still impressed with the product with absolute conviction that it will continue to be our sole Report Engine platform." Did the implementation process meet his expectations? "We found it to be what we had expected. The implementation was adequate as we had to rewrite our code. We took each report

that we had in our software and rewrote the code behind the screen to reinvent the same report that already existed. Then, we modified the design to capitalize on the powerful features that we kept discovering in List & Label. We created a basic Report Template that serves us well since then. The more, we learned about List & Label, the better we were at creating reports that far outshone the previous versions. The switchover was well worth the time invested." Already after a short period of time he knew List & Label quite well. His favourite strengths of List & Label he describes as following: "My favorite part about List & Label is, that I can write anything from a simple to a complex routine to pass data to a report. Some of the other report tools that we worked with, we were forced to pass the data file structures to the reporting tool and then 'pound out' the report there. Sometimes we don't want to adhere to a specific data structure. With List & Label, I really like the fact that I can create a data file structure just for that report and pass the data record by record to the report."



Michael Cooper would not hesitate to recommend List & Label: "This tool has made our job absolutely liveable. I cringe to think what kind of headaches we would have trying to reproduce in another tool what we have in List & Label. Undoubtedly, the best in my books." Questioned about the „icing on the cake" regarding List & Label, he smiles whimsically: "Aside from making coffee, this product does absolutely everything that I could think to ask for!"

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