

SOFTWARE

BUSINESS GRAPHICS DRIVES A/// USER TO MACINTOSH!

I'd never wanted to trade my Apple /// for a Macintosh until I encountered Business Graphics. It seemed like a great program - on my screen, that is... I couldn't get the darn thing to print out on my Epson RX-80! In fact, it was only configured for a tiny handful of printers, none of which were available to me. I'd get some terrific looking charts on my screen, and could do absolutely nothing with them - except maybe take a photograph and show someone a slide presentation. But that's not what I wanted! I wanted to print these great looking graphs!

Well, I called the previous user of the program (it was an office computer), and I was told, "Nope, it can't be done!" But I didn't want to take "no" for an answer. I knew my /// could do it! I called a couple of dealers, and still, nothing but bad news. Finally, I called Computer Connection in downtown San Francisco, my last hope, and spoke to Eric. I knew he'd come through!

Through Computer Connection, I learned that Business and Professional Systems, Inc., the creators of Business Graphics, had come out with a "PIK program" ("Printer Installation Kit") that could actually alter my program disk to print to an Epson printer. Great! Only one problem - they had lost their disk! I didn't really feel like paying BPS \$75.00 for something a dealer could provide, so I scouted around and found Profit Plus, an outfit in San Rafael who still had the PIK disk.

Well, installation was no problem - you just needed to have two disc drives and an ability to read the English language. However, getting my "modified" program disk to work was another story. Print commands resulted in pages of garbage from my Epson! I called BPS in Massachusetts only to find that nobody there knew much about running their program on an Apple ///! They told me to play around with the dip switches, so I tried that too. Do you know how many millions of combinations 12 dip switches can make? I don't, but I'm sure I tried half of them! All to no avail...

Like I said, I don't like to take no for an answer. Just to fool around, I tried commanding the program to print, not to an "Epson MX-80," but to an "Epson MX-80 with Graftrax?" What's Graftrax? Something you follow to catch giraffes in Africa? I don't know, I've never seen one. But I thought I'd give it a try - things couldn't possibly get any worse! Well, what do you know? The Graftrax option worked! It seems my RX-80 is a newer version of the MX-80 and automatically comes with Graftrax! I called my dealer to tell him this great tidbit I'd discovered, and he replied, "Oh, you mean I forgot to tell you?" So... what's five hours and a few grey hairs?

Is this story sounding all too familiar, and like something you don't want to hear again? Well, I'll make the rest short. Even using the Graftrax option, the printer would print some graph-like output, and then a few lines of garbage. I tried modifying the configuration block on the printer driver, and that helped somewhat, but not entirely. Finally, I gave up.

I needed to print out some charts for a report, so I shelled out some big bucks and bought Draw On ///, "guaranteed to print Business Graphics charts, etc..." We'll see! And sure enough, it did print Business Graphics charts -

with stripes! Yes, stripes! What were these white stripes doing in the middle of my beautiful artwork?! Nobody seemed to know the answer. Even Bob Consorti, who publishes On Three Magazine and is the dealer for Draw On ///, couldn't figure it out by phone. He too tried fiddling with the dip switches, but it made no difference.

Finally, out of desperation, I decided to forget about this problem and do some pleasure reading. For pleasure, I read the specs in the back of my manuals. So read the RX-80 manual I did, and the UPIC manual, and the Owner's Guide... and I found a clue! What was causing my "stripes" was that the printer was somehow not getting the seventh bit, so it was leaving a blank space all across the line. And the particular wire that carried the seventh bit from the UPIC to the printer was not connected properly! This hint came from the Business Graphics PIK program instructions, in section 3. So I drafted a friend who wasn't afraid of a soldering gun and we tried modifying the wire.

Eureka! My graphs printed out from Draw On ///! And they were so nice! All the little bits were right where they belonged! And not only did Draw On /// work, but with this wire modification, my Business Graphics charts were able to print out directly too! (Draw On /// made them nicer by adding textures and printing them in a smaller size.) I wouldn't have to sell my /// and get a Macintosh after all!

BUSINESS GRAPHICS INTERFACE WITH EPSON RX-80 (technical info for above article)

For those of you who own Business Graphics and felt that you could never print out your charts and graphs, here's some good news. Business and Professional Software, the creators of Business Graphics, have developed a "PIK" program (Printer Installation Kit) which will modify your program disk to address several different printers.

In order to get Business Graphics to work with my Epson RX-80 (a newer version of the MX-80), I had to use the command "Write Screen MX80GRAFTTRAX" - "Write Screen MX80" wouldn't work. I also needed to change the driver on my boot disk to the driver that was provided with the PIK program. But the program still printed garbage.

The final change was in the wire connecting the Universal Parallel Interface Card to my printer. According to the PIK manual, section 3.1, there is an error in the suggested wiring for Epson printers on page 8 of the UPIC manual. It should read as follows:

Apple ///	Epson
1	19
2	10
8	1
9	12
10	2
11	3
12	4
13	5
14	6
15	7
16	8
17	9
18	13
19	35
20	30, 33

Once I made these modifications, Business Graphics printed everything from my screen onto my Epson RX-80. It was a complicated route, but it's a route worth taking in order to make the most out of a good program that's available for the Apple ///.

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