

database marketing

The permissive society

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look in 2010?

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ASP for addressing

Listening to customers

Gathering insight from market
research and the database

THE BUSINESS UNIVERSE

DO YOU NEED TO
BUILD YOUR OWN?

My first reaction on being sent this software to review was “Oh no – not another interactive postcoding product”. Warily I loaded Postcoder Pro onto my machine. Indeed at first glance it does appear to be just that exciting – however once you get into it, it has some very nice little touches.

Get going

First, the setup is very easy and straightforward. The loading programme does all the work for you with very little intervention – although I did come across the problem that a response box was looking for input from me and had got itself hidden behind

and press search.

Nothing remarkable so far. In fact, its functionality here is just the same as Capscan, QAS or even Arc en Ciel's Address.

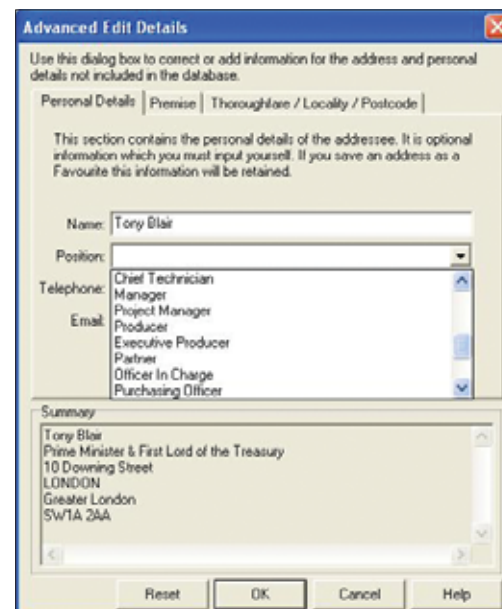
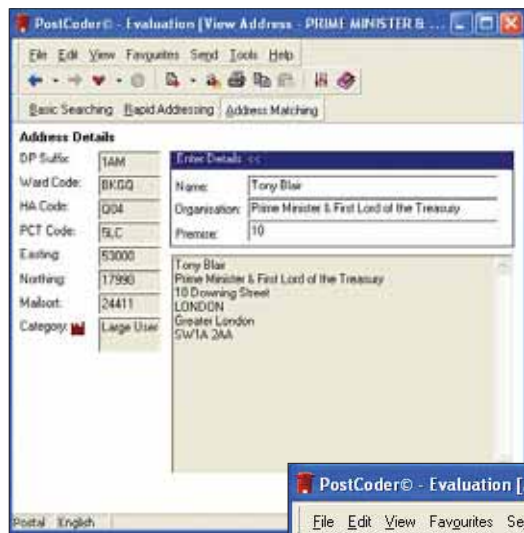
Where it does get interesting is what you can do with the address data once you've looked it up. Essentially you can turn your copy of Postcoder into a personal address book that can be used to feed data into any other application you want.

On the screen with the address data you also receive information about wards, health authorities, northings and eastings (used to display data on digital maps in applications such as MapPoint) and Mailsort codes. But you also get the ability to add

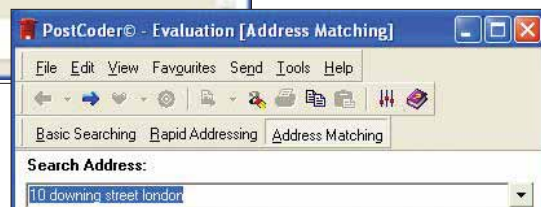
Professional postcoding

The market for rapid addressing software is crowded but John Fowler discovers some clever ideas in Postcoder Pro.

By adding your own information to addresses, you can use Postcoder as your own personal address book.



As well as basic address details, you can add other extra information such as Mailsort codes and grid references.



The search screens are simple to understand.

the main setup window – we could have been there for days.

On opening the application, you are presented with one of three simple to understand search screens (you are given the screen that was in use the last time you closed the application). Depending on the information you have you can just type this in

your own extra data as well. On the front screen you can add contact name details, job titles, telephone and fax numbers and email address. You can also edit the format of the address and add or remove any items you want.

At this point you can paste the information into the application you want, or you can save it as a favourite.

This small added piece of functionality is an absolute boon. It means that any additional work you have done to the address or contact details can now be saved and used again whenever you

want. More importantly, whenever you get new PAF information, you can update any of your favourites with any postcode changes.

The application appears to be totally configurable, even down to adding a new skin to the product's interface. I wonder if there will become a cult for these as there are with WinAmp or Windows Media Player? It is possible to change all of the output formats (or even create your own) and I found it incredibly easy to create export formats to use either in Access forms or Word Documents.

The normal way to use the send function is to call Postcoder from your base application using a hot key. This will then make this application the default for all send operations within a session (ideal for data entry people). Alternatively you can pick any open application as the target and send the data to that application.

It was interesting to note that I could send address information backwards and forwards between postcoding applications. Perhaps this just goes to prove what a sad life I lead.

This is one of the few products at this level where I have seen a language option, allowing the data to be displayed in Welsh for locations in Wales. Here's an example:

**Brackla Break Café
Heol Ffaldau
Ystad Ddiw Brackla
PEN-Y-BONT AR OGWR
CF31 2AJ**

**Brackla Break Café
Heol Ffaldau
Brackla Industrial Estate
BRIDGEND
CF31 2AJ**

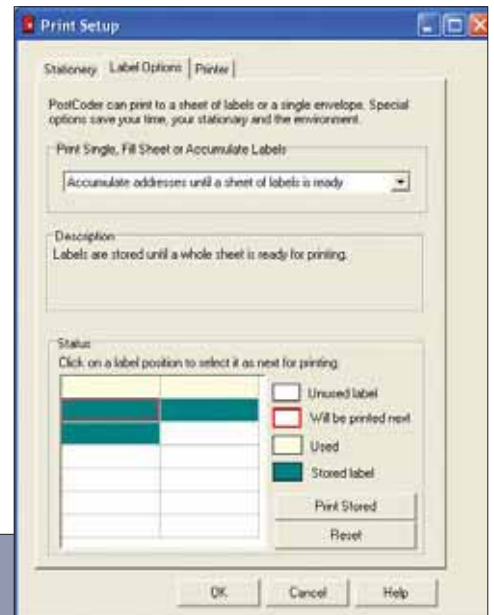
Not that I would ever suggest this for loading the data into a database, but it is an extremely pleasant option to have if you have a small business in Wales – and want to respect local usage.

One small problem I did initially have on my PC was getting the data to paste across to my other applications correctly, especially

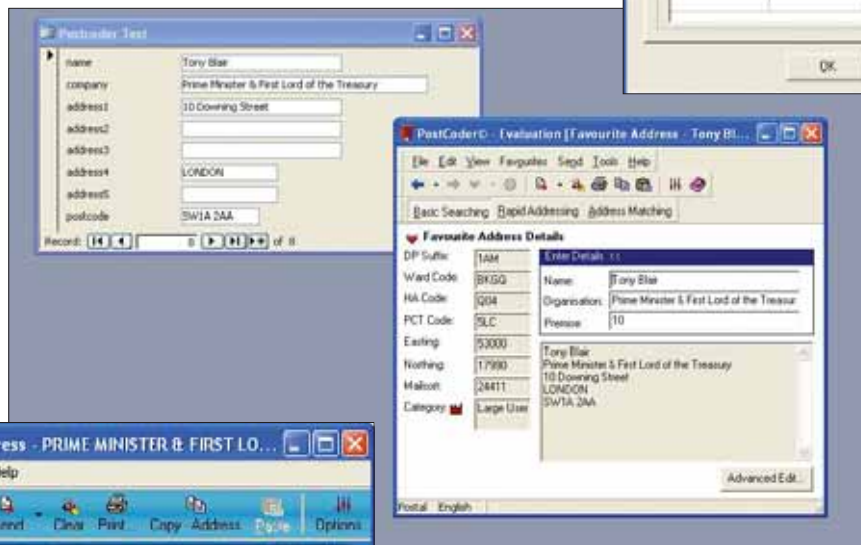
to so that you don't waste pages and pages of labels as you do with some products.

Or you can choose to print a full page of labels to the same person. In my case, I was keen to lobby the Prime Minister and so 50 pages was more than enough.

Or finally and again, a very nice touch, you could choose to store the address details until you had a full sheet to print. Again, this is a very good option, for example, where you



Label printing direct from Postcoder Pro is easy.



Exporting address data to other applications using a hot key is a breeze.

are fulfilling responses to a small campaign.

Overall, I found this a satisfying product to use. It was intuitive, clean and uncluttered (except with the alternative skin); the product lent itself to customisation and I couldn't think of anything that wasn't possible to do with it in about half an hour.

In particular I liked the favourites option and label printing. I also called the support desk to solve a couple of problems for me and the service was excellent. They answered my questions where they could and with the one that they couldn't, promised to ring me back with an answer – and did.

Postcoder comes in various flavours including a low-cost version for single users in restricted postcode areas. This would be of interest to many small businesses that may have a small customer catchment and may only need information on a certain number of postcode areas. ■



You can choose a different interface "skin", unusual in this type of application.

Excel. Although I have an extremely fast PC, it appeared that the data was streaming too quickly to paste into the second application in full.

Fortunately there is a fix for this in the option box that allows you to send a delay after each character. This solves the problem and provides a satisfying imitation of a teleprinter at the same time.

Printing labels is easily accomplished directly from Postcoder Pro and the options are very simple to understand. First of all, you can print a label directly, selecting which label on the sheet to print

Pricing

Postcoder and its reference PAF data come in a variety of versions. Postcoder Pro, the version reviewed, costs £480 for a single annual licence with extra users costing £390 each. This includes supplementary Postzon data and quarterly PAF updating. www.allies-computing.co.uk

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