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OpenAxis developed EzQC, an easy-to-use quality control system for hotel maintenance. It's an affordable solution to record and review maintenance activities.

For more information, please contact us at 323-265-3000.

I thought I have been action oriented, close to sites such as office roofs, factory floors, and landscaping areas, and attentive to listening to the people at the site.

Lazy People?

I have been assisting a hotel with management for 15 years. During the 15-year period, we have had a monthly meeting with managers. We recently had quite a few repair projects at the hotel. I did not understand why the engineers do not finish these projects as scheduled. Don't they care about these projects? Are they lazy?

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One day, after a heavy rain, we had several wa-

ter leaks at the hotel. I asked a chief engineer what to do exactly with the water leaks. He took me to the roof of the hotel. I have never been on the roof for 15 years. He told me that his engineers have to come to the roof to take out water with buckets and blooms whenever we have a heavy rain. If water leaks indoors, they also have to fix guest room walls and carpets in hurry before guests arrive. They have been doing this for more than 10 years.

What a wasteful time we had for so many years! I immediately approved \$175,000 to repair the roof and exterior walls.



Happy Faces

After the budget approval, I saw many happy faces of the general manager and other managers at the hotel. They stated that we will have less guest complaints and save a lot of employee's time in the future. I apologized managers for not coming to sites and listening to them in the past.

Listen to People at Site

I thought I had been at the site. But had not been to the hotel roof—the true site of problems. This is my continuous challenge - make sure I go to true sites and listen to the people.

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Understanding Living Trust

Many people might have heard about living trust, but they do not really understand what it is. There are some things you need to know to plan your estate and transfer your assets:

Will

A Will is one of the most widely used legal documents and is probably what comes to your mind first when you

think about estate planning. However,

1. A Will does not avoid probate when you die;

A Will is simply an expression of your wishes – what you want to happen to your assets after you die. All Wills must go through a probate court process be-



fore they can go into effect.

What is probate?
Probate is the legal process through which the court makes sure that, after you die, your Will is legally valid, your debts are paid, and your assets are distributed according to the instructions in your Will.

A Will by itself is not enough authority to retitle assets or release account balances. A court order is required to do this - Probate is the only legal way to take your name off the title of an asset and put the new owner's name on.

Probate doesn't happen automatically. Someone, usually a relative or the Executor you name in your Will, must petition the court for probate proceedings to begin.

What's wrong with probate?

- Probate fee can be expensive – 3~8% of estate's gross value
- It takes time – nine month to two years
- Your family has no privacy – probate is a public process. Anybody can find out details about your estate: who the heirs are, what they will receive, their addresses, etc. (It's surprising how easy it is in some states to have access to probate files of anyone – all you need to know is

the name of the person and the year he/she died.)

2. Does not prevent the court from taking control of your assets if you become physically or mentally incapacitated.

A Will only goes into effect after you die. The person you have named as Executor in your Will cannot step in and take care of your business because you are still living. Someone has to petition the court to appoint someone to handle your business.

3. Anyone can come forward and claim to have a right to part of your estate without hiring an attorney. And it is very easy to find out about your estate since the probate process is public.

Joint Ownership

Joint ownership is probably the most commonly used plan as an alternative to Wills and probate. Even some professionals recommend it as a way to avoid probate. However, joint ownership probably causes more problems than any other estate plans.

- It's very easy to add a co-owner. But taking someone's name off

the title can be very difficult.

- Your assets are exposed to your co-owner's debts and obligations. You could be forced to sell your assets.
- Your co-owner could transfer his/her share to someone else without your knowledge or approval.
- It would cause you to disinherit any children you have from a previous marriage.
- If you add a minor as a joint owner of an asset, the only way to sell or refinance the assets later is through a court guardianship until the minor becomes an adult.
- If your co-owner becomes incapacitated, you could find yourself with a new "co-owner" – the court, even if the ill owner is your spouse.

Giving Away Assets

Giving away assets will avoid probate after you die and prevent the court from taking control in case you become incapacitated. But it can create a tax problem.

If you give an appreciated asset to your children while you are alive, it keeps your basis (what you paid for it). But if they receive it as an inheritance, it receives a new stepped-up basis – market value as of the date of your death.

To see previous versions of OpenAxis News, please go to our website, www.OpenAxis.com, and go to "About Us", and then "Newsroom".

Doing Nothing

If you don't have a Will, your state has one for you. If you own assets in your name, your estate will go through probate when you die. The only difference is that your assets will be distributed according to state law. Every state has laws for the distribution of assets for those who die without a Will.

Keeping Control with a Revocable Living Trust

A Trust is a binding legal contract. When you set up a Living Trust, you transfer ownership of your titled assets from your individual name to the name of your Living Trust – it is called funding. Anything you leave out of Trust will probably have to go through probate. After funding, technically, you no longer own

anything – everything is now under your Living Trust. So there is nothing for the court to control when you die or if you become incapacitated. In fact, the IRS considers putting assets in a Revocable Living Trust to be a “non-event” because you can take them out at any time. Nothing changes but the names on the titles.

One of the most powerful benefits of a Trust – unlike a simple Will – is that assets can be distributed right away, or they can stay in the Trust until your Beneficiaries reach the age you want them to inherit.

Another powerful benefit is to reduce or eliminate estate taxes.

Example:
Husband and wife have \$1,700,000 value of assets. Husband dies in 2004. The individual es-

tate tax exemption is \$1,000,000 for 2004.

A. Leaving everything to wife – unlimited marital deduction.

Husband dies	No estate taxes	
Wife dies	Net estate	\$1,700,000
	Wife's exemption	(1,000,000)
	Taxable estate	\$ 700,000
	Estate taxes (48%)	\$ 336,000

B Living Trust – one kind of the Living Trusts. A couple set up one “common” Living Trust, of which each of them owns partial. When one of them dies, this Trust will automatically split into two separate Trusts.

Common Living Trust	\$1,700,000
Husband dies: Common Living Trust splits to:	
Trust A (wife's)	\$1,000,000
Trust B (husband's)	\$ 700,000

No estate taxes after exemption

Wife dies:
No estate taxes after exemption

A living trust will give you the maximum control. And you get the best benefit of all— peace of mind.



Things To Know Before You Toss That Old PC

When we upgrade a personal computer, (PC), we throw away, donate, or give away the old computer. We often neglect or forget that what vital information is stored in the computer. PC's hard drive contains a compilation of your personal and business life. If the wrong people were to grab it, they could hurt you and your business

very seriously.
Is the Data Really Gone?
Even if we delete sensitive information, it does not mean the information is gone. It is still sitting there, and anybody with a shareware program could find it.
What you call a data file is actually scattered around in a hard drive in bits and pieces. On your request

to open the file, your PC checks the index, gathers the pieces and reconstructs them. When that file is deleted, the link between the index and the pieces of the file disappears. That tells your system that the file space in the hard drive can be overwritten. But unless you actually order your PC to erase or overwrite

that space, the pieces of the deleted file remain on your computer, and can be restored by a con artist.

Do You Trust the Recipient?

Deleting sensitive files without overwriting their fragments is fine as long as the PC goes to a



At OpenAxis, we focus on the implementation of IT solutions for small- and medium-sized businesses.

We provide management and computer consulting services by identifying issues, implementing solutions, and managing all your IT needs.

Comprehensive Solution:

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trusted employee or your Aunt Minnie.

Recovering deleted data requires a thief or con artist to get some specialized software and learn to use it. Rivers of boring data would have to be sorted to find the good stuff. The average (honest) person isn't going to bother.

Just make sure that the recipient is honest. If he or she is shaky, or if you're selling it or giving it away to a stranger, you might want to follow the instructions below to eliminate the fragments of deleted files. Below is the instruction for Windows. You can either do it all by yourself or use a utility software.

Do It Yourself: Erase (Reformat) the Hard Drive and Re-install the Operating System

There are three steps.

1. Create a start-up disk.
2. Reformat hard drive.
3. Reinstall the operation system using the start-up disk. Reinstall applications if necessary.

1. Create a Start-up Disk.

Insert a floppy disk to your PC and make it a "Start-up Disk" as follows.

A. For Old Versions of Windows (through Windows ME)

Click Start on the left bottom of your screen, Settings, and then Control Panel. Double-click Add/Remove Programs. Click Start-up Disk, and then Create Disk.

the computer with the start-up floppy disk in the A: drive. At the A: prompt, type Format: C. Answer "yes" to the warning of wiping out all the data.

3. Reinstall the operation system using the start-up disk.

When the reformat finishes, put the Windows installation CD in the CD drive and remove the floppy. Restart and re-install Windows. Reinstall applications if necessary.

self. There are several programs available on the internet that do the reformatting for you.

These utilities overwrite only unnecessary files and spaces. Although it might be slow, the good thing is you can stay with your current operating system.

Reformatting will keep most people out of your old files. But specialized shareware exists to reclaim files after reformatting. If you do not know who will get the computer — or you do not trust them — stronger measures are required.

B. For Windows XP

Go to <http://www.BootDisk.com> and click "DOS — Windows 9X/NT4/2000/XP Excellent Boot disks." Download the Windows XP Custom Install Disk and save it to a floppy.

Get Utility Software and Overwrite the Disk Again

If you don't know much about computers, this might be easier than doing it by your-

Please feel free to contact OpenAxis, Inc. for more information.

2. Reformat hard drive

On all systems, shut down all open programs. Restart