New Year – New File?

It's hard to believe that 2006 is here already, and we are sure you have been busy with all the end-of-year items that need to be taken care of. In addition, the calls start to come in from clients or prospects that need a new QuickBooks file for various reasons, some of which we discussed last month http://www.idnac.org/newsletters/new-year-new-file.pdf.

Whatever the reason, we are here to tell you about some awesome 3rd party applications that will make the transition easier and more profitable then you probably imagined.

There are many 'traditional' ways to start a new file, and while you need to evaluate the specific needs of your client and their situation, it's nice to know you have options. First, start with a plan of action. Next, decide what tools are best suited to help:
- ✓ Do they need a new file?
- ✓ Are there transactions in the old file that need to be transferred?
- ✓ Is there list information that won't transfer easily using the .iif export available in QuickBooks?
- ✓ What about open transactions?
- ✓ What about Inventory or Custom Fields?
- ✓ Will you provide the service, or will you suggest a product that the client can use?

So, what are these great products that are a 'must have' you ask? Well, let's get started!

Understanding the Challenges of Working With Lists

When we think of starting a new file, the Lists in QuickBooks are the first step. Many times there are entries that we want to preserve, a lot of work has been put into setting up the Vendors, Items, and Customers in particular, and we don't want to have to re-enter valuable and usable information. Once the lists are transferred to a new file they can be cleaned up quickly and easily as needed.

Traditionally there have been two methods to import lists into QuickBooks: the IIF file, or an Excel file. The IIF file (*I*ntuit *I*nterchange *F*ormat) was the first type of file that could be imported into QuickBooks, which is available from inside your QuickBooks file. However, the IIF file doesn't check for data error before importing, and is limited to which fields will populate. After selecting the lists you want to export you can open the IIF file with Excel and attempt to manipulate the data if needed, and import it to the new file. Once you've imported the file, you are never really sure if everything has imported correctly, what has been left out, or even if the QuickBooks file became corrupted in the process. There is no audit trail to refer to, and typically no warning messages. Occasionally there will be a line error that directs you to a problem, or you may receive the message that your data has been imported successfully, only to find out that nothing at all has been imported! *The frustrations of using IIF files are legendary.*
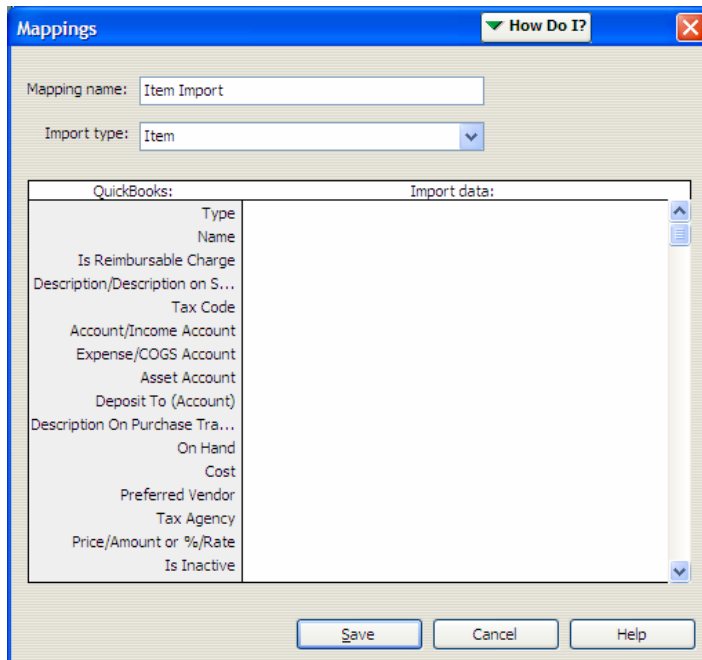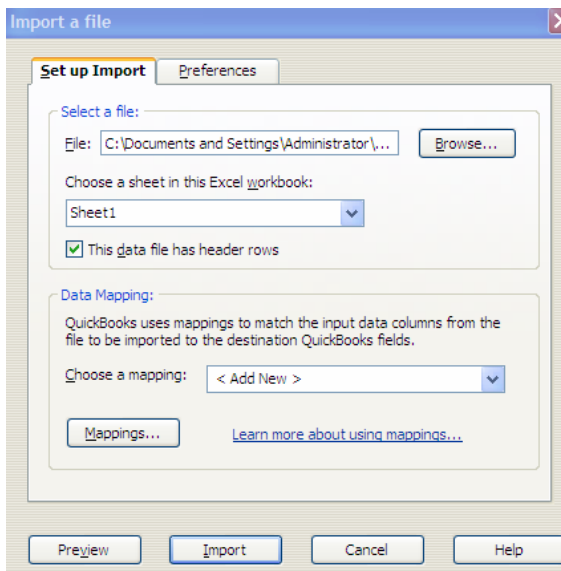
In newer versions of QuickBooks, the ability to import Excel data is offered. However, you must be very careful to format the data exactly, it is a pretty manual process, and quite often provides less success than the IIF method.

With the Excel mapping feature, you do have the opportunity to preview the data and make some changes, however you are limited to the fields offered in the Mappings section. Additionally, the audit trail report that is generated is limited, not always accurate, and there tends to be no error messages, or messages that do not offer much assistance. The success rate is based on the complexity of the information and fields you need to import.

This is not a very efficient way to get your list data in QuickBooks.

QDataImport eliminates all of the issues of the traditional methods by giving you instant feedback on data that can, or cannot, be imported into QuickBooks.

I have found that most of my clients want, and need, a more effective solution. As a ProAdvisor, I need a solution that allows me to import lists with custom fields, inventory quantities and values, the fields must be in the 'right place' once imported, validation of the data before and after the process is key, and the ability to be flexible is very important.

Let's Transfer Some Lists! And Custom Fields! And Inventory Value!

The first tool is a relatively new product on the market, but from a familiar and well-known Developer, Chuck Vigent of Flexquarters (www.FLEXquarters.com). While the **QDataImport** tool was released recently, it has already changed the process of 'hoping for the best' when list information needs to be imported into a new or existing QuickBooks file. The **QDataImporter** works with QuickBooks Pro 2003 and higher, Enterprise Version 3 and higher; and even QuickBooks Online Edition.

QDataImport: www.qodbc.com/qdataimport.htm

There are two unique features to this tool that allow you to fix your 'bad' data so it CAN be imported into QuickBooks:

      (1) An Excel like grid that allows you to edit your data right in the cell

      (2) An advanced Search and Replace mechanism to easily effect data change in a range of cells, or across multiple columns
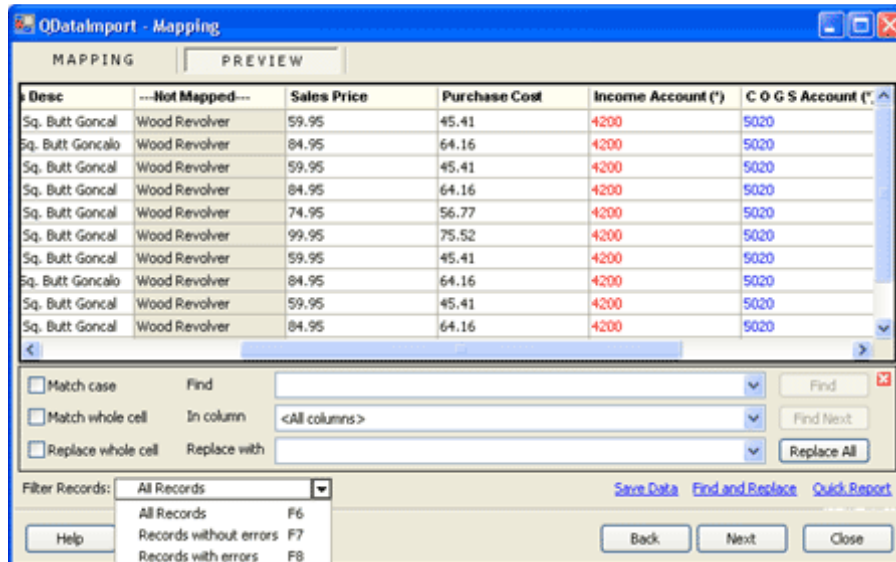
Additional key features that make this tool a 'must have' for ProAdvisors and accounting firms that offer QuickBooks support:

- Source files can be in IIF, Excel, CSV, Text, or direct ODBC connection (Access, SQL, etc.)
- Validation of Duplicate Data, Data Types, and Field Length
- Ability to include Custom Fields and Inventory Valuation *(A personal favorite of mine!)*
- Ability to Manipulate and Correct Data within the Tool Before Import
- Validation of Dependent Lists (i.e. Preferred Vendor in an Item List)
- Uses QuickBooks rules of Data Entry
- Ability to Save and Re-use Import Templates

The tool is also great for clients who have the need to add list entries on a regular basis; such as the Item list or merging Customer or Vendor lists from multiple files. The tool is very easy to learn, with virtually no learning curve, regardless of your expertise with the traditional methods of working with lists - or importing in general.

Flexquarters has plans to add additional modules to the **QDataimport** tool. In the next few months look for:

- *QDataImport Update Edition*, which will solve the needs of those users who need to update their inventory prices on a regular basis, or update customer or vendor information without having to edit one record at a time.

- *QDataImport Editing Edition*, which will allow the user the ability to change information in a range of transactions or items. For instance if you have the wrong class in a bunch of invoices, you will be able to retrieve the QuickBooks invoices into the tool, change the class, and send it back to QuickBooks corrected.

We will be following the release of the new tools and keep everyone informed. Additional questions can be directed to info@flexquarters-solutions.com.

Now What About the Transactions?

When you are starting a new file, there are many reasons why transactions may need to be transferred out of the old file and into the newly created one. Our featured 'must have' tool for Advisors is the **Data Transfer Utility** offered by Karl Irving at www.q2q.us

However, before we discuss the featured tool, I would like to mention another tool offered by Karl, the **Beginning Balance Transfer Utility**, which is specifically designed to assist in the process of creating a new file. The **Beginning Balance Transfer Utility** allows you to take the ending balances in one QuickBooks file (as of any date) and make them the beginning balances in a new QuickBooks file. After transferring the beginning balances to a new file, you can transfer transactions from the beginning balance date to the current date using the **Data Transfer Utility**. *IMPORTANT NOTE:* This program is designed only for businesses using the accrual basis of accounting. QuickBooks reports run on the cash basis that include any receipts or payments affecting beginning balances created by this program will be incorrect. You can read more about this tool at www.q2q.us/bbtuoverview.htm

Our featured tool this month from Karl is the **Data Transfer Utility (DTU),** which allows QuickBooks users too quickly and easily transfer (merge) list and transaction data from one QuickBooks file to another QuickBooks file. For the purpose of this article we are going to focus on transferring transactions for the purpose of creating a new file, but be sure to visit their site for all the capabilities of this tool, especially if you like to work remotely with your clients, or your client has that need.

This utility will easily merge data from one QuickBooks file to another without erasing or overwriting existing data. The data can be transferred between two files located on your desktop computer, between a laptop and desktop, by network connection, email or removable disk; so working remotely with this tool is easy and cost effective. By using **DTU** as part of the process to create a new QuickBooks file, you can be assured the data is correct, validated, and you will have a complete set of audit reports for reference. To view sample reports the tool generates, go to www.q2q.us/dtuscreenshots2.htm

By using simple selection parameters, you can transfer only the unpaid invoices into the new file and/or only the customers who have an unpaid balance or who have not been marked as inactive. This is invaluable when starting a new file, saving you the tedious task of manually re-keying important data and reducing the risk of data entry errors. While this tool has been around for several years, many are just becoming familiar with the idea of performing this task; since a 'picture is worth a thousand words' the illustration below will help understand the concept.
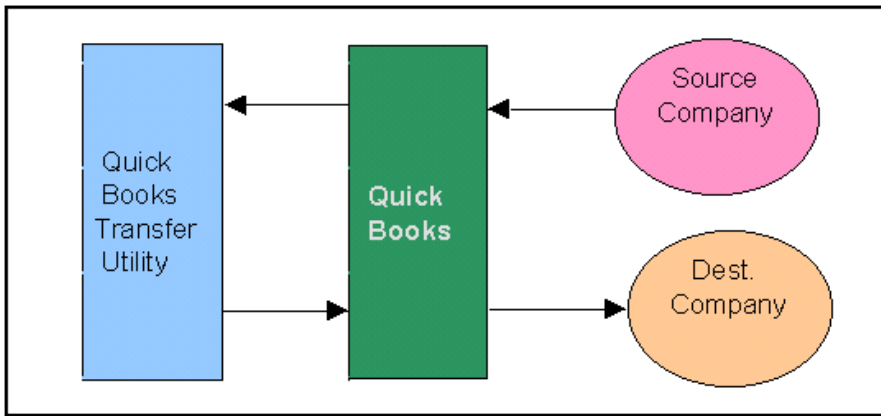
Assuming you are doing the work for your client, the original and new file will probably be located on the same computer; for additional screenshots and how to use all the functionality of the utility, please visit www.q2q.us/dtuoverview.htm

The **Data Transfer Utility** does not use the QuickBooks restore process, which replaces all the data in a QuickBooks file. In addition, it does not use IIF files, which are difficult to create and use. The Utility is based on the QuickBooks XML specification introduced by QuickBooks in early 2002. The XML specification allows list and transaction data to be easily transferred to and from QuickBooks files without erasing existing data.

You are able to select the types of data you want/need to transfer, as an example:

If you attempt to import a list item (such as a customer) that is already in your destination (new) company file, you will get a message that the customer is already exists, and the destination company's information for that customer will not be changed. So if you used the **QDataImport** tool earlier, you will not have data corruption or conflicts when transferring transactions that happen to link to your list entries.

Visit us on the web at www.idnac.org

QuickBooks will import all transactions (invoices, bills etc.) regardless if they have been previously imported or not. To avoid this, review the export status report carefully to be sure that you have exported **only** the transactions that are needed to your destination company. The reports and validation of information is exceptional with the **Data Transfer Utility.**

Data that you export is held in temporary files until you open the destination company and import it. Exporting data does not change your source (original) or destination (new) company files. This allows you to review the exported data, and use the various reports to make sure it's the data that you want to transfer. If it's not, you can change the export criteria and export again until you get the exact data that you want transferred. If you export data and decide not to import it, simply exit the program and the temporary files are erased and the data in your companies will not be changed. Be sure to view the instructional videos offered on the site at www.q2q.us/dtuvideos.htm.

Now that you have a new file for your client, the next thing will be training them on proper procedures and how to automate everyday tasks. Next month we will take a look at an alternative to memorized transactions from Karl Irving and check in with Chuck at Flexquarters on their QDataUpdate and Editing tools.
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