

Compress your files makes Quickbooks faster



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Five years ago I took the plunge and migrated my business accounting from Excel spreadsheets to a real financial application called Quickbooks. I had to hire a CPA that was also an Intuit Quickbooks consultant to help me configure my original Deans Consulting company file and it was worth it.

He logged on to my computer remotely and showed me how to setup the accounts, vendors, and customers using the old Excel accounting spreadsheets as the model. It took only a couple of hours for him to teach me the basics and then some short cuts on how to enter data into my timesheet, create invoices, and make deposits.

After our remote session was over I spent the next couple of days entering in the previous six months of data so I would have a full year's worth of financial activity starting in January 2004. When that was completed I found over \$1,000 of hardware and software hidden in Excel that I had bought but never billed the clients.

Since that misplaced activity was buried in transactions and invoices months prior, I had to eat that cost rather than bill such outdated expenses to those clients. Quickbooks pointed out those losses due to my sloppy spreadsheet accounting and has since kept such losses from happening.

I've only upgraded once since that original Quickbooks 2004 installation,

and I am still running on the Quickbooks 2007 version. Many of my clients are on the 2008 level of Quickbooks and others are even at 2009. Odds are I will upgrade to 2009 before the end of they year or surely at the beginning of 2010.

Now that I've got five years of financial activity in my Quickbooks company file the size of it has surpassed 70 MB. It keeps growing every day as I enter my hours and tasks performed at each site. On average days I'll hit six to eight sites, but on busy Mondays it is not unusual to make 10-12 client site visits.

Each site visit can include at least one (usually more) billable tasks. Each billable task is an entry in the timesheet and some days I'll have 20-plus line item billable tasks.

Over a year that can add up to over 5,000 tasks and that is where the Quickbooks space starts to mount. After you add in items purchased and billed to clients just a one-man company can easily deposit 10 MB per year into a Quickbooks company file.

On the Intuit Quickbooks support page, they officially recommend that company files stay below 100 MB for Premier/Pro versions with the number higher for Enterprise versions of Quickbooks preferred to a maximum of 250 MB. Before I hit the 100 MB virtual limit I plan to follow a procedure to clean, compress and reduce the

size of the company file.

Larger files like that are time-consuming to transfer around to remote accounting offices. Since many of my clients have DSL for an Internet connection which has a limited upstream speed of less than 400 Kbs, files over 100 MB can take over an hour to upload.

Just last week I had a client that had close to 10 years worth of transactions which had grown their Quickbooks company file to over 400 MB. Since that is four times the recommended maximum size we had to get that resolved. Their remote CPA waited for over three hours for it to upload to her office in Houston.

The simple operation of looking up checks, finding invoices, and making timesheet entries slows significantly when company files get too big. Not only are there performance problems when they get that large, but data integrity issues can arise and then a whole new can of worms opens up.

If the Quickbooks company file ever gets corrupted, the accounting of a business simply stops. So we all need to be proactive and reduce the file size before bad things happen.

To perform this company file size reduction process, first make sure it is a good time to do it — not just before month end closing or payroll processing. I highly recommend this be done on a Friday evening after business hours since that will give you the whole weekend to work on it or recover from

any problems before Monday morning.

Next, make at least two copies of the company file onto different computers before even getting started with the operation. I like to rename the old company file with a name like YourCompany-NonCompressed-070109.

After the backups are done and all users are logged out of Quickbooks, start the cleanup utility on the computer that has the company file on its local hard drive rather than accessing it through the network. This will save you a good deal of time.

Click on File-Utilities-Clean Up Company Data to begin the process. It will ask you to back up the data first (do it yet again) and then pick a date to drop transactions off prior to that date. It will give you a couple of other screens with options of data to remove so check them all.

Remember, you have all the data in your backup files that you can still access later for legacy accounting requirements.

After clicking the last OK and Start, then just sit back and wait a while — a long while. That client's company file that was over 400 MB took all day long! Now, just so you won't be surprised and upset, the file size will NOT go down after the clean operation. To recover the blank space left by the cleanup you have to backup your data to a Portable Company file and then restore that back into a new full company file.

Again I recommend using a new name like YourCompany-Compressed-

2009.QBW. Only after the backup to and restore from Portable File operation will your Company File be actually compressed, smaller and faster.

Bottom line: If your Quickbooks is no longer quick and your company file is getting too fat, then slim it down before it has an obesity-related digital illness.

Next week's column: Test your backups!

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