Newsletter #30 (Mar 24, 2008)

Contents

What's New

How good is your backup process?

This isn't necessarily a "new" thing, but it may be new to you. We sometimes hear about computer failures causing a complete loss of a campground's data, and the worst part is that they don't always have usable backups to recover from. We hate to hear these stories, but we know it's also too easy to get lazy about backups. In some cases there are some misunderstandings that can cause problems too. So here are some questions:

How valuable is your data? If you lost it, would you know who owes you money? Would you know who has a reservation and for how long? Do you ever need to contact one of your past or future customers? Do you need your records for tax purposes? How long would it take you to set up your database again from scratch, and re-enter all customer information even if you do have paper records?

OK, assuming you agree that your data is valuable, lets see if you're doing adequate backups:

Are you making backups on removable media? If you're just backing up to My Documents, for instance, this will not do you any good if your hard drive fails or your computer is stolen. So you should be making the backup to a floppy disk, CD, USB memory stick, or other external device. When you make the backup, be sure to check the "Save In" location before clicking the final "Save" button to verify that it is actually going to the drive you want. If you don't select a specific drive in the "Save In" drop-down list, then it may just be defaulting to My Documents or some other location on your C: drive.

Do you regularly take the backups off-site, or at least to another building? If you make a backup and leave it near the computer, that won't help if there's a fire or other catastrophe. Likewise, having an automatic backup process on a server, such as copying to an external hard drive, is only as safe as that hard drive (thieves love external hard drives because they are easy to carry away, easy to sell, and contain all of your sensitive data).

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Are you verifying your backups? Just because it says "backup is complete" doesn't mean that the disk or memory stick you're using is readable. After a backup, or at least once in awhile, you should verify it by using the Restore from Backup function. Don't worry, if the backup isn't perfect then your current data will not be altered. To verify it, you should first remove the disk or other media device from your computer, because if you just leave it in the computer and use Restore, it's not really reading it from the disk -- Windows still has it in a cache so it doesn't need to read it from the disk (that's a "feature" designed to make things faster). So you need to completely remove the disk, then re-insert it, before using the Restore function. If it gets an error when restoring, try backing up to a different disk. If you can't get it to restore correctly, contact us immediately so we can get your backups working properly.

Are you rotating multiple backup copies? We recommend a 7-day rotation -- keep 7 disks (or even 7 USB memory sticks -- small 128MB ones are very cheap now), labelled with the day of the week. That way if some of them go bad or get damaged, you're not completely lost. This is also a good way to help you keep off site backups -- each day, take the new one home with you and then bring the oldest one back in to the office the next day to be used for the next backup.

Hopefully these tips will encourage you to use a proper backup routine, not only for Campground Master but for any data that's valuable to your business.

Receipt Printer and Cash Drawer Setup

We've added more detailed guides to our documentation for setting up 3" receipt printers and cash drawers, and configuring Campground Master for them. You can find these guides on our web site here:

For details on setting up a receipt printer using Direct to Port (e.g. for Parallel interfaces), see the documentation on this page:
http://campgroundmaster.com/help/receiptprinterdirecttoport.html

For details on setting up a receipt printer using a Windows driver (e.g. for USB interfaces or when it's to be shared on the network), see the documentation on this page:
http://campgroundmaster.com/help/receiptprinterusbdriverset.html

Further details on connecting the cash drawer can be found here:
http://campgroundmaster.com/help/cashdrawersetup.html

Fixing Webervations upload errors

If you use Webervations for online reservations and you've upgraded to Internet Explorer 7 (or allowed Windows to automatically update), then you may have noticed that it reports an error after uploading the data. Most likely the upload is succeeding, but it's timing out when waiting for a response from Webervations and thus reporting an error. This is due to a change Microsoft made in the default timeout -- in previous versions it was 2 minutes or more, but with MSIE 7 it was changed to 30 seconds (you may even be getting more timeouts when surfing the web because of this).

There is a workaround for this, and it's relatively simple, but it should only be attempted by someone familiar with editing the registry. Mistakes made when editing the registry can make your computer inoperable.

Disclaimer aside, this is what you need to do:

```
1. Click Start / Run.

2. Type Regedt32, and Enter

3. Add a DWORD value called ReceiveTimeout, with a data value of (<number of
seconds>)*1000, in the following registry key:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Internet  Settings
```

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```
For example, if you want the timeout duration to be 8 minutes, set the ReceiveTimeout
data value to 480000 (<480>*1000).

4. Close the registry editor and restart your computer.
```

The next version of Campground Master will include a change to set this key automatically, so if you don't feel the need to correct this urgently then you might as well wait for the upcoming release.

Q & A

Changing customer field names

Q: Is it possible to change (in Customer Details) the "Drivers Lic:" field to a different name?

A: Yes, you can change this by editing the field under Maintenance / Data Field Definitions / Customer Fields. Look for the Drivers License field, and edit the field name, short label, and report heading as needed. There are several fields that can be renamed for other purposes, but there are also some limitations. For instance, the type of field can't be changed, so for instance the Rig Length field can be renamed (e.g. to Boat length), but it will always be considered a "length" type of field (so it wouldn't work well to change it to be # of slide-outs or to any non-numeric field). If you need additional fields for other purposes, refer to newsletter #27 for an example.

Using the demo to train people

Q: Can I use the demo to train people without interfering with the data (or other computers)?

A: Yes you can, as long as your real database is using a name other than "demo" and you specifically open the demo database. You also wouldn't want to do this on the Master computer (in a networked environment), since that would disable all of the other workstations. To run the demo, just use the "Campground Master demo" icon on the desktop, or if you've removed that, go to Start / Programs / Campground Master / Sample database (demo). This will open the demo database, and since the demo isn't enabled for networking then it won't affect any of the other workstations. When done training, close Campground Master and re-open it the way you normally do.

Note: If you don't find the "Sample database" option, try File / Open to see if there is a "demo" database under C:\Program Files\Campground Master. If it's not there, then you would need to install the "free demo" version of the software from our web site -- just make sure it's the same version that you're using now (see Help / About Campground Master for the version, and download that same version from the Downloads page of our web site).

Some taxes missing on Discounts

Q: Not all of my taxes are being calculated properly when I do a Discount.

A: For manually entered Discount transactions, the default taxes are based on the configuration under Maintenance / Park Setup / Taxes. Select "Default" for each tax that you want to show up. Optionally you can select which categories of charges it should be the default for -- if you do this, be sure that "Discount" is one of the selected categories for each Tax type that might be discounted.

Note: Ideally you want to select a specific category when you do a discount, rather than leaving the default "Discount" category selected. This will ensure that the appropriate taxes are subtracted along with the discount (in case discounts are applied to items taxed differently), and also will make sure the amount is taken out of the appropriate category for reporting purposes.

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Viewing checked-out reservations on the Rack

Q: How can I see checked-out reservations on the Rack?

A: In Maintenance / Program Options / Reservations, there's an option "Make checked-out sites immediately available". If you don't already see checked out reservations on the Rack, this must be currently selected. Just uncheck that box to see them on the Rack again.

Note that there may have been a reason to have that option selected, though, e.g. so that if someone vacates a spot on the same day they arrive you could re-use it for another walk-in. So it's up to you whether you want to leave it unchecked.

Another option for locating past reservations would be to use the "Departures" tab view, adjusting the date as needed (and be sure the "Pending only" box is not checked).

Adding first names to transaction reports

Q: In the Transactions tab, when generating detail reports, is it possible to get both the first and last names displayed?

A: Yes, just go into Detail Options (on the Transactions tab view) and check the box(es) for the fields you want. "Customer First Name(s)" is one of the options.

Misc. Income not on Shift Report

Q: Aren't the Misc. Income Transactions supposed to show up in the Shift Report?

A: Misc. Income transactions are meant for things outside of "customer" business, e.g. things not handled by the clerks and/or not affecting the retail receipts. For things like this that you want to appear in the Shift report, especially if they will affect the Receipts side of it, you should use Unbound Transactions to enter them as separate Charge and Payment transactions.

Receipt transactions overwriting the bottom text

Q: When I print a statement for a long-term customer, sometimes the transactions overwrite part of the notice at the bottom of the page, instead of going to a second page. How can I fix that?

A: If you don't need the statement to include their entire history, then you can have it limit the transactions printed (using the "Print Only Some Transactions" button, with the various options next to it, instead of the "Print Reservation Receipt (All)" button. If you're using a version prior to 4.0, this is the only option. However in version 4.0 and later, it can print multiple pages. The problem is that the default number of transactions per page doesn't work for all situations, e.g. if you've added more text in the notice at the bottom, or changed the "Starting position" value for the bottom text. To correct this so it goes to another page sooner, go to Maintenance / Advanced Customizations / Forms. Select the receipt format you use, and click Edit Selected Form. Reduce the "Trans. rows/page" value until it gives the results you need. (Be careful not to make any other changes in the form definition unless you fully understand how they affect it.)

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Tips & Techniques

Showing Reservation Details before check-in

This example shows how to use an Event Action to automatically open the Reservation Details dialog when checking in a customer. (Version 4.0 or later required.) This may be useful if you want to review the information before doing the check-in.

1. Go to Maintenance / Advanced Customizations / Event Actions.

2. Click Add Event Action.

3. Enter an Action Name, like "Resv Details before check-in".

4. For the Event Trigger, select "Check in reservation, before".

5. For the Action expression, enter:

```
EditReservation(ThisResv())
```

That's all there is to it.

To get fancier and only do this only under certain conditions,such as not having How-heard filled in, with a message beforehand to indicate why it's going to Details, then use this Action expression (be sure to copy it exactly -- every quote and back-slash is important):

```
iifq(Resv:Resv_HowHeard = "", 'Evalq(\'MessageBox("How-Heard has not been set!  Please
set it in the following Reservation Details window.")\',
\'EditReservation(ThisResv())\')','.F.')
```

There are a lot of other possibilities, and potentially you could even use this to abort the check-in if conditions still aren't met after editing the reservation details.

Opening an old backup for review

There may be times when you want to look at an old backup database, to check something that may have changed or been purged from the current data. There are a couple of safe ways to do this without affecting your current data.

IMPORTANT: In older versions of Campground Master (prior to v3.6), opening any database might make it used that as the new default database -- be sure to make a note of where your normal database is located (e.g. through Maintenance / Program Options / Database) before attempting to open a different one.

The safe way to open a backup without changing your current data is to extract the old database file from the backup, rename it, and then open it.

Note: This assumes familiarity with folder navigation, file opening and file copying in Windows Explorer (or My Computer). If you are not familiar with manipulating files in Windows, then we don't recommend that you attempt this on your own.

The backup file is typically a "zip" compressed file. You should be able to "open" a backup in Windows Explorer if you have Windows XP or later, and you'll see the file "database.prk" in it (possibly with some other files like BMP map images). Don't try to open these file directly (Campground Master probably won't let you do that anyway) -- instead, you need to Extract the "database.prk" file out of the backup to somewhere like My Documents. Then, Rename the file to something like "old.prk" (because Campground Master won't open one that's called "database"). Then you can safely Open it in Campground Master, using File / Open.

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Note: When you open it, you should get a message saying that it will NOT be used as the default database. This is what you want to see, so the next time you open Campground Master your normal data will be opened.

When you're finished viewing the old backup, close Campground Master. It's a good idea to clean things up by deleting the old.prk file as well as any log files or auto-backup files that it created for the old database. Now when you re-open Campground Master, it should open your normal database again.

Forcing How-heard to be filled in

A common request is to make sure the How-Heard field is filled in when making a reservation. We've had an article before, in Newsletter #26, showing how to force a field to be filled in (in that case it was # Adults).

Changing that to check for How-Heard is a simple matter, but because the field type is a drop-down instead of a text field, slightly different expressions must be used rather than just changing the field name.

1. The first step is to add a Dialog definition that's an Add-on to the New Reservation dialog. Go to Maintenance / Advanced Customizations / Dialogs, and click "Add dialog definition".

Note: Only one Add-on definition can be active for a given dialog, so if you already had such a definition then you would just add elements on to the existing one instead of creating a new one here (in which case, skip to step 3).

2. Give it a name, such as "New Reservation add-on". Then check the "Add-on" box and select "New Reservation" from the list. We're not adding any new controls to it, so the Width and Height values can remain 0.

3. Now we need to add an action to the dialog that checks the How Heard field, showing an error message and preventing the reservation from being saved if How Heard is blank. Click "Add Element", and for the element type select "Action on data saved".

4. We don't really need a Condition for this element (assuming we always want it to force the field), though you might want to add a condition so that only non-administrators are restricted, for instance.. In that case you could put in the following Condition:

```
CurrentOpLevel() < 5
```

5. Now for the Action expression, which will be executed when the reservation is saved (e.g. "Done", "Continue", or any other button clicked that would normally save the reservation). We won't go into the design details, but it should be fairly self-explanatory if you look up the components in the Function Reference of the Advanced Customizations documentation. Also note that we need the Control ID of the How Heard field, which can be looked up in the Dialog Control ID reference. This can be found online here: http://campgroundmaster.com/help/basedialogs.html.

Enter this for the Action expression:

```
IIFQ( Empty(DlgGetDropListSelectedText(1084)),
     'Eval(MessageBox("How-found must be filled in",0,2), DlgSetFocusCtrl(1084), .F.)',
     '.T.')
```

A few notes about the expression:
- It's broken into 3 lines for readability here, but it must be continuous (no line breaks) when you enter it.
- IIFQ is used instead of IIF, because we don't want both of the result expressions to be evaluated (which would result in the error showing up no matter what).
- If the "How Heard" field is empty, it does the Eval( ) function, else it simply returns True.
- The Eval function does 3 things in sequence: Shows the error message, sets the keyboard focus to the field (for convenience), and returns False to abort the saving process.

6. We also need to check both of the boxes -- "Execute the action before..." and "Abort the operation...". Obviously we want to make sure this condition is met before actually saving the reservation, and if the How Heard is not filled in then we don't want to save the reservation yet.

7. Now just Save the element, and we're done with the customization for checking the How Heard field. Once you're all finished, just Save everything and try it out. Remember that if you entered the condition shown in step 4, it will still allow How Heard to be blank unless you log in as a lower level operator.

Adding a logo to your receipts

One of the new features that was added back in version 4.0 was the ability to add graphics to the receipts and other forms, so company logos can be used. However this is probably not utilized by many people because it's an Advanced Customization. While there is some technical savvy required to do this, here are the basic steps involved that may be sufficient for you to do it.

Of course this isn't limited to just company logos. You can add any graphic you want -- associate membership medallions, official seals, a photo or small map of your campground, decorative graphics, "form stamps" with boxes for them to enter their information, etc -- anything that can be a digitized image.

First of all, the logo needs to be in a BMP format. It can be either black and white or in color, but the file format should be 256-color BMP, with RGB encoding. More details on how to get an image in this format can be found in the documentation for Bitmap Element Fields (e.g. in the Help Topics under Maintenance / Advanced Customizations / Forms / Editing Form Elements), or you can access that topic online here: http://campgroundmaster.com/help/editingformelements.html

Ideally the logo image should be created as the correct size, in pixels, to result in the right size image on your printer. This can take a fair amount of experimenting though, and isn't essential because it can be stretched or shrunk to the right size in the form definition -- it's just a matter of whether the resulting logo looks good enough.

Now to get the logo on your receipts, there is an easy way and a hard way:

The easy way will work if it can fit on the receipt without moving any of the existing text (e.g. company name & address, etc.). This involves just adding an element to the "canned" form definitions to put the logo on top of the current form.

The hard way is required if you need to move (or remove) some of the existing text in order to put the logo where you want it.

The Easy Way:

Here are the basic steps for the easy way:

1. Go to Maintenance / Advanced Customizations / Forms

2. Select the desired receipt format or form (confirmation letter, etc.) that you want to modify, and click Edit Form definition.

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3. Click Add Element.

4. Select "Bitmap" for the Element Type. Note: If Bitmap isn't an option, then this is a form with a format of "Character positions", such as for a 3" receipt printer or E-mail. graphics cannot be added to these types of forms.

5. Configure the Top and Left to be "Absolute (in region)", and enter the desired positions for the top left of the bitmap image.

6. There are different options for the Bottom and Right, as described in the documentation, but the most common is to select "Relative" and enter 0 for Bottom, which will make it keep the correct aspect ratio, and select "Absolute" for the Right position with the desired location of the right side of the logo. For instance if you want it 3 inches wide and the Left position was 2 inches, then make the Right position 5 inches. This will force it to be 3 inches wide, and adjust the height as needed to keep it in the correct aspect ratio.

7. Select the logo file using the Browse for file button.

8. Click Save to save the element.

Now you can use Save & Test form to see how it looks, and go back to make adjustments as needed.

The Hard Way:

If you need to do it the hard way, then you will first need to import the sample form that imitates the receipt format you want to modify. For details, see the documentation on the following page, under "Making other changes to the default formats -- Importing and changing templates ":
http://campgroundmaster.com/help/formssetup.html

Once you have the sample imported (which will add form definitions to the list such as "Custom full-page receipt"), select the appropriate custom form and edit it to move things around. We can't go into details of editing the form here because there are a lot of different possibilities, but basically you need to be familiar with forms editing and adjust the positions of regions and/or other elements as needed. If this isn't something you have time to learn, then contact us for a quote on customizing the form for you.

Once you have things moved around to make room for the logo, then follow the same procedures as detailed in the easy way above to add the logo element.

This can be a challenge but we hope you have fun with it. We would love to see the results -- send us a FAX or screen shots of your receipts with logos on them!

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