Newsletter #5 (June 20, 2005)

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What's New

Version 3.5 Update

We announced the v3.5 release last time, and of course all customers should have received the release notice by now.

Just as an update, the new version appears to be going smoothly for all those who updated (no bugs reported), except for the occasional issue with the "Sites integrity" error report that comes up. In case you're not sure what this means:

A new feature in 3.5 is a Sites data integrity check which runs when you start up (until you tell it to stop). This will probably show a rather large message with various details in it -- please pay attention to it, and don't tell it to stop checking until the problems are fixed.

This is NOT saying that your database is corrupt, and it's not a problem caused by the new version -- rather it's reporting problems that already existed in your database setup.

We've found that many of our customers' database setups are missing information in the Site Details because it wasn't enforced by the program when entering the data, and the natural tendency is to skip over details you don't have to enter. Some fields were also misunderstood, such as the "Full Name" field.

However this missing information can cause numerous problems that you may not realize, such as charges not being applied to the right sites (or even reservations going on the wrong site), missing information on receipts, incorrect reporting and other problems. Please pay attention to the message and fix the problems as soon as possible. Let us know if you need help.

If you disabled the report but you want to see the errors again, then go to Site Details (right-click on any site in the Rack to get to Site Details), make some small change e.g. to the Notes field, and click Save. It will check the current site's details and report any problems there, and it will also run the full integrity check on all sites again.

Feedback

Q & A

Here are some interesting support questions we've encountered this week. Have a question? Let us know!

Q. Why does it sometimes not print all pages of a report?

This is most likely due to changing the printer to Landscape mode just before printing, because the number of pages has already been calculated based on the portrait mode. Printing in landscape mode may require more pages. To use landscape mode, you should set it as the default mode for reports so it knows ahead of time how many pages are required. Go to File / Printer Setup / Default (grid-type reports), and set it to Landscape there. This won't affect receipts, only reports.

Q. How do you enter a payment for a previous day, for instance if it was missed or if it's an after-hours payment that should apply to the previous day's transactions?

When you enter the payment, e.g. in Reservation Transactions, check the "Details" checkbox near the upper right corner. This will add more columns to the transactions table, and the next one after Total is the Date. Just click or double-click on that field in the grid and modify the date as needed. Note that the ability to do this with previous transactions is restricted by an access level.

Q. Is there anyway to get the customer name to come up on the housekeeping report?

No, but you can get essentially the same thing using the Rack view -- just check the "Show Range" button at the top to see only yesterday and today (or any dates you need to see). Then you can print it out that way.

Q. How can I sort all of my arrivals so I can have the window tags ready for those who are next to check in, an easier way than by clicking on each one, opening their reservation details, then going to print options.

A quicker way to do print a bunch of window tags (or any receipt) for people arriving is to use the Arrivals tab view. You can enter the arrival dates you want to print for, right-click and select "Print for all shown reservations", "Reservation receipts". Then select the Window Tag format before printing.

If you're using the ETA field to note estimated arrival time, then you can sort them by ETA on the Arrivals view, but they won't necessarily be printed in that order.

Reader Comments

One of our customers writes with this comment:

When it comes time to check out 120 campers do I have to select each one individually to check out?

Our response:

Yes, I'm afraid so. A bulk checkout function is planned for a future release, though. There are a couple things you can do to speed it up, so you don't have to answer so many prompts for every check-out. In Maintenance / Program Options / Prompts, make sure the "Ask for Confirmations..." box is unchecked and also the "Checking Out..." box under "Open a transaction dialog when...".

This information came from one of our customers struggling with internet and networking functionality in Campground Master:

I thought I would let you know how I resolved my problems getting the networking working and also the problem with sending email confirmations.

Both issues were caused by my Norton Antivirus/Firewall software. It seems that Norton will scan your outgoing emails as well as incoming emails. The scanning of outgoing emails is incompatible with Campground Master (if the modem disconnects after sending the email). I had to turn that feature off. Also, on my master computer, I had Norton Personal Firewall running which made setting up the network aggravating. Even when I got the network going, the emails still wouldn't work from the master computer. I ended up removing the Firewall program and letting Windows XP do its firewall thing.

Our response:

The XP firewall and various "security" programs have been giving people all kinds of problems with networking (blocking the TCP/IP port of Campground Master), but we hadn't heard of it being a problem with sending E-mail.

Personally I've heard a lot of negative things about Norton software for several years now, and McAffee isn't much better. They try to do so much to "protect" you that it causes headaches in all but the most simple cases. Now AOL and MSN are adding their own "security" software to systems causing even more headaches.

We use ZoneAlarm for the firewall and "Avast!" anti-virus, in addition to running 4 different spyware scanners weekly -- Spybot S&D, Ad-Aware, Microsoft Anti-spyware beta (or CounterSpy, it's the same engine), and Webroot's SpyAudit. This routine maintenance, plus avoiding Microsoft's Outlook E-mail program (a major security leak in itself) and of course never opening an unknown E-mail attachment, has kept our systems clean. We recommend that everyone do the same.

Bug Hunt Results - POS Mystery Solved

In a previous newsletter we mentioned that some users were getting "record locked" errors when trying to use the POS from two different workstations. We've discovered what causes this, and it's actually not a bug, but a required protection.

If you have the POS option "Automatically save transactions when receipt is printed (prevents Canceling the sale)" selected, this locks all of the sold inventory items as soon as the receipt is printed so that it can save the new transactions and update the inventory quantity on hand. However, the lock can't be removed until all dialogs are closed (when changes committed to the database).

Therefore if the same inventory item is being added to another POS terminal then it can't be locked until the first one is closed. The item can be added to the sale, but the sale cannot be completed (receipt printed or dialog closed) until it's able to lock the record.

So if you're using multiple workstations, we recommend leaving the above option disabled. If you need to keep a sale from being cancelled once the receipt is printed, select the option "Automatically close the POS dialog when a receipt is printed (also auto-saves transactions)" -- this will accomplish the same thing, but also closes the dialog immediately so it doesn't keep the inventory records locked.

Tips & Techniques

Changing Font Size for Reports

When printing a report, you might have experienced a problem with the font size being so small you can't read it, or way too large. Or you might end up with the report spread over two pages when it could have fit on one page if it used a slightly smaller font.

There are basically 3 settings that affect the font size for reports. All of these settings are in File / Printing Options / Reports.

The Zoom percentage allows you to manually adjust the font size, so you can tweak it if the "normal", or 100% zoom, is a little too small or too large.

However, the zoom percentage is ignored if the option "Fit output to page horizontally" is checked. This is usually what causes the print to be very tiny -- if your report has many columns, it will shrink the text so it fits across the page. There is also a shortcut to turning this on and off right in the File menu.

If you also have "Allow stretching to the full width" checked, then it could cause the font to be excessively large for reports with few columns. This option is not usually desired, it's mainly for special cases.

If you do prefer trying to fit the report across one page for easy reading, then you can select the "Fit to page" option but reduce the number of columns printed. On the Rack view, check the "Show Range" box to limit the columns to the date range you enter. On the other views, you can disable almost any column you don't need printed by clicking the Options button at the top of the report. For other dialog-based reports, for instance in Find Reservations, you can't disable columns but you can shrink them to nothingness by dragging the right side of the column header (you'll see the cursor change to a double arrow when you're in the correct position to drag the column divider).

Miscellaneous

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