

Radio Days – 2011-12-10

Tip of the Week – Learning to Use Email

During the week I went to see a new client who had been to the local learning centre to learn how to use email. The tutor, for obvious reasons, did what I have done when I was teaching in the local Learning Centre in Maryborough: he asked his students to create a hotmail account. This sort of account allows you to check your email from any online computer in the world and is used by many people for its convenience. I have a similar account with another online account and find that it can be invaluable.

The problem occurred when my student returned home and tried to access the email account which his ISP had given him when he signed up. Because he had previously only used hotmail he put his new ISP email address into the hotmail email address area and his ISP password in the hotmail password area. He became really frustrated by hotmail's continual refusal to allow him to access his new email account.

I set up a normal email program (Outlook Express, in his case, because he had a brand new refurbished Windows XP computer) and showed him how to use it. He was delighted to see just how easy it was to do his emailing when shown the correct way to do it!

This is the one of the reasons why I only teach one-on-one in your home or office and do no more classroom teaching!

Stock Control by Computer

In the last two weeks I have had two clients with the same problem: one was using MYOB and the other was using QuickBooks. Both problems brought to mind an experience that I had shortly after I started work in my last job as an employee: telephone technical support at MYOB. Both QuickBooks and MYOB have a group of well-trained people who support their products out in the field. These people, like everybody else, rely on the staff at the other end of the phone.

One of the earliest phone calls that I got was from a support person called Max. Max lived in Tasmania and had a client called Susan. Susan had MYOB and ran a small business. She had setup MYOB to keep track of how much stock she had for each product. Max had got into trouble trying to help Susan as he had little experience, and I got into trouble trying to help Max as I, also, had little experience.

Between us, Max and I really managed to wreck Susan's MYOB experience. I have never forgotten that learning process, and here I was, over a decade later, trying to help people who had the same problems with their stock control.

What Goes Wrong?

For some reason which I have never understood, people who do use stock control in their business always end up with the amount of stock which varies (usually wildly) from what is on their shelves. Especially with MYOB, which used to stop you from selling a product if it thought that you did not have any in stock, this meant that you had to adjust your stock before writing the invoice for your customer. This was annoying, especially if your customer was at the counter, in a hurry, watching you apparently wasting time.

Doing a stocktake each month or so to keep the figures under control and more or less accurate was an enormous waste of time and resources. Even when doing a regular stocktake, with the resulting stock adjustments, the problem seemed to continue and become worse each month. And, even worse, it did not seem to matter if you were the most meticulous person in the world when it came to entering data!

The problem, like a cancer, seems to get worse every time I see a client with a stock control problem. There is no end in sight.

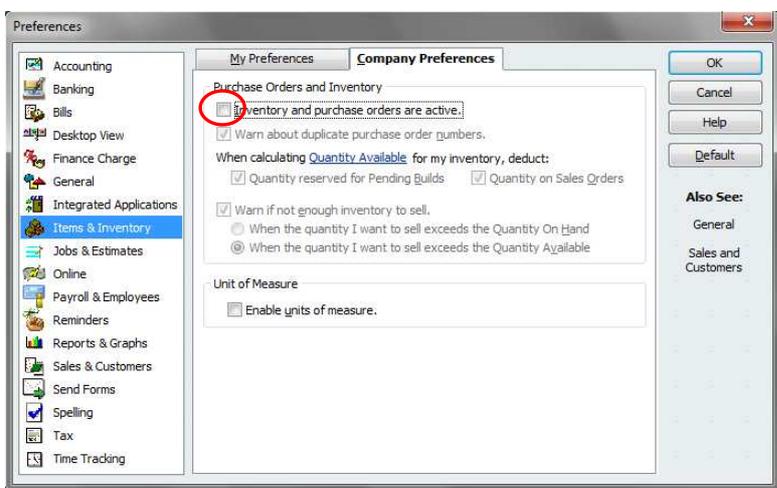
Repairing the Damage

The problem with starting to use stock control is that the only way to remove the problem is to start with a new data file. This involves either losing all your transaction history or having to re-enter all the data in your file. Neither option is good. Both of these options suggest to me that you should always get help when setting up your accounting file: it will save you time, money and anguish in the long run.

MYOB will allow you to change the type of an item if you do so before you have entered any transactions because of the way it was designed. QuickBooks, on the other hand, makes you decide what type of item you are creating before you create it. This is the more helpful option.

The net result of this is that both programs make it impossible to repair the damage caused by a lack of thought or knowledge before rushing in to creating a data file with either MYOB or QuickBooks.

Setup QuickBooks



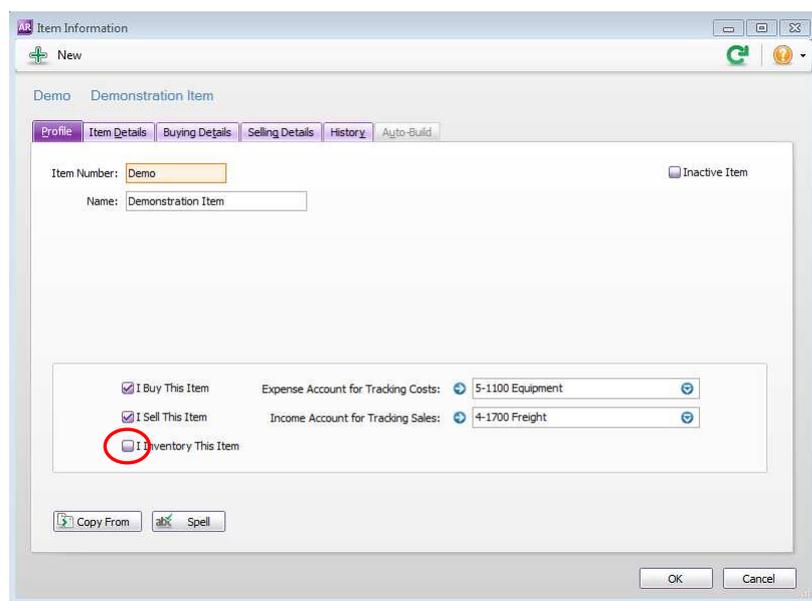
It is very easy to setup QuickBooks so that you do not have to worry about having inventory items. This is done at the global level for each file that you create.

As a normal part of the setup process you go to the preferences screen: *Edit » Preferences*, select *Items & Inventory* then *Company Preferences*.

Now make sure that the top check box is empty. This will stop you creating an *Inventory*

Part because the option will no longer be present.

Setup MYOB



When creating a new item in MYOB you should be careful to ensure that you leave the button *I Inventory This Item* blank when you create new items. This ensures that you will not get into trouble with incorrect stock levels.

This is something which you will need to do each time you create a new item. Unlike QuickBooks, you can't set a global option which ensures that you do not use this check box when you create new items.

This is one more reason why I recommend that people use

QuickBooks rather than MYOB.