Multiple Stores…If you have more than one (1) store

Overview - If you have more than one store

If you plan on installing Aspect in more than one store, there are a number of things you can do to make the installations easier, to ensure consistency, and to centralize maintenance of your inventory items and recipes.

Your point-of-sale system

The place to start is with your POS system. Make every effort possible to ensure that your POS system is configured exactly the same way at each store. This means that each store has the same departments, categories, tenders, comps, discounts and menu items and that these are configured using the same numbers and locations.

It is usually possible to copy the database from one POS system to another. If you are operating more than one concept, this may not be an option.

When the POS systems are configured at each store, enforce passwords or policies to make sure that they stay that way.

Decide on a master store

Aspect should be installed in a store and configured to import data automatically at the end of each day. You should also install a copy of Aspect in your central office and use the scripts built into Aspect to send data from the store to the office each day.

This store will be your master store where you will create your reports and enter your inventory list and recipes. Files will be copied from this store to each new store as Aspect is installed.

You may also choose instead to create your reports and inventory files at your central office. To do this, add a store in your copy of Aspect at the central office. Note the store directory when you set up the store. Copy the contents of the store folder at the actual store into the store directory at the central office. When you've done this, you can begin configuring the program at your office and copy the files back to the store when you're done.

Note that regardless of where you choose to do the setup, you will need a copy of Aspect at the store to import data from your POS system.

If you choose to do the setup at your office, make sure that you do not import data from the actual store into your master store using scripts. Otherwise, the work you do will be overwritten during the import. You can add another store at your office if you still want to import data from the actual store each night. The data will be imported into the store record that has the same code as the store record

at the actual store.

Maintaining a centralized inventory database

To copy inventory items and recipes from a master store to another store, you will need to copy the files below. They are located in the store directory:

Ingr.dta - inventory items

Ingrgrp.dta - inventory groups

Nvsize.dta - size descriptions

Recipe.dta - menu items

Recpingr.dta - recipe ingredients

Recpgrp.dta - recipe groups

Vendors.dta - vendors

These files must always be copied as a group. Never try to copy any single file or a subset of this group. The exception is vendors.dta. If you use the merge function described below to merge inventory items at the store, each store may maintain its own vendor list and vendors.dta does not have to be copied with the other files.

There is also one other file to consider. When you delete inventory items in Aspect, they are not really removed, they are just hidden. A record of deleted items is kept in ingrdel.dta. The reason for the separate file is so that each store can maintain its own list of deleted items. For example, yo | Deleted: it's **have a master list of beers, but the complete list might not be stocked at every store. If you do not copy the ingrdel.dta file, each store will be able to maintain its own list of deleted items. When a new ingr.dta is copied or merged, any items deleted at the store will remain deleted.**

Merging inventory items

Copying inventory files as described above will ensure that the inventory and recipe files at every store are exactly the same. However, it is common to find that you need to maintain separate vendors and count areas at each store. If you copy the ingr.dta file as described above, this will not be possible. The way to handle this is to merge the master set of inventory items into the store rather than copying the file as described above. This will ensure that the store has all of the same inventory items as the master list, but vendor information, count areas and par levels for each item will be left unchanged.

The command used to merge inventory items is:

endofday /merge_ingr /store=[storecode] /filename=[name of file to be merged]

For example:

endofday /merge_ingr /store=01 /filename=c:\aspect\master\ingr.dta

It is easy to implement the merge using a script in Aspect. This lets you use a token to specify the store code instead of having to manually change the code at each store. For example, a custom script in Aspect might include the line:

[exedir]endofday /merge_ingr /store=[storecode] /filename=[programdir]master\ingr.dta

This line uses three tokens - [exedir], [storecode] and [programdir]. These would be replaced upon execution of the script with something like:

c:\aspect\endofday /merge_ingr /store=01 /filename=c:\aspect\master\ingr.dta

A complete list of tokens is given under the topic How To: Scripts

In summary, copy the other inventory files as described above but merge the ingr.dta file rather than copying it directly. If you want each store to maintain its own vendor list, then do not copy vendors.dta with the group above.

Updating Master Lists and Files for Inventory

There are basically two (2) lists that will need to be kept for inventory – inventory items and recipes. Inventory items are kept in ingr.dta and recipes are kept in recipe.dta. Now, every recipe can also act like an inventory item. This allows recipes to be included on the inventory count sheet and to be used as ingredients in other recipes. Since every recipe can be used like an inventory item, it is also recorded in the inventory item file – ingr.dta.

So, if you have two (2) inventory items and two (2) recipes, this is what your files look like:

Ingr.dta

Inventory Item 1
Inventory Item 2
Recipe 1
Recipe 2

Recipe.dta

Recipe 1
Recipe 2

Note that the recipe items are also included in the inventory item file. You won't see the recipe items when you open the inventory item list, but they are included in the file….they are just hidden.

Here's what typically happens and it is what NOT to do - The store added menu items to the POS. These were imported into Aspect and records were created for them in ingr.dta. Perhaps the records were added to slots 1000 and 10001. At the office, you also added inventory items which were also assigned to slots 1000 and 1001. When you sent data to the store, it overwrote the recipe items in ingr.dta with the inventory items added at the office. The next time Aspect imported, it put the recipes back in the file in slots 1000 and 1001.

Here's the solution and it is what to do. Use one of live stores as a master or use a POS system in the office. In either case, menu items need to be imported into the master Aspect list from the POS before new inventory items are added. If you're using a remote office as a master, you need to make sure that the office has received files from the store before adding inventory items. Most importantly, your copy of Aspect at the office must contain every menu item that is on the POS at the store.

There needs to be one person responsible for adding menu items to the POS. When items are added to the POS, you need to verify that you have them in your master list at the office. When you've verified that, you can add inventory items that you want to send back to the store. If the store adds two new menu items and you add two new inventory items and you try to synch things up you're going to have trouble.

Maintaining centralized sales reports

To update the Daily Sales report and Sales Summary reports, copy the files below. They are located in the store directory.

Salesdef.dta - sales record setup

Slfile.dta - sales record setup

Salefmt.dta - sales input setup

Slsumm.fmt - sales summary reports

Slcusdef.dta - custom buttons on the right of the daily sales report

Slcustom.dta - custom buttons for the daily sales report

Incmdef2.dta - income and expense reports

There is also one file located in the Aspect folder that should be copied:

Incmdef1.dta - income and expense reports

As with the inventory files, these must always be copied as a group.

Other reports that you customize using the binoculars are kept in the Aspect folder and have an .fmt extension. It is good practice to copy all of the .fmt files from the Aspect directory to the Aspect directory at the store. There is also one .fmt file of importance not kept in the Aspect directory. It is the one that defines the displays used in the employee schedule. This .fmt file is kept in the store directory and it is named schedule.fmt.

For a complete list of file descriptions, look at FAQ_File_Descriptions.htm in the Doc folder of your Aspect folder or look online at www.aspect-software.net/doc/FAQ_File_Descriptions.htm.

Removing menu options

If you want to simplify the program at the store level, consider removing menu options from the program that will not be needed at the store. Select Passwords in the Navigator and then Protected Routines. Double-click on a routine and note the checkbox labeled 'Hide this menu option'. Any menu options you choose to hide will not be visible the next time you restart the program.

Passwords and other settings

If you plan on maintaining inventory items and recipes at a central site, make sure to use passwords to prevent users from changing those items at the store. For example, users should not be able to access 'Edit Menu Items' or 'Edit Inventory Items' in the Inventory menu.

If you want to prevent users from modifying report displays, select System Settings from the Settings menu and turn on the checkbox labeled 'Disable custom displays'. Also, make sure to password protect or hide the System Settings option.

Users have the ability to modify count sizes and purchase sizes when they enter inventory counts and invoices. To prevent this, select Inventory Setup from the Settings menu and then Inventory Settings. Turn on the checkboxes labeled 'Do not allow modification of count size' and 'Do not allow modification of purchase size'.

Reporting on multiple stores

When you import data from multiple stores at your central office using scripts, you will be able to view data for any store. When you open a report, Aspect will ask which store you wish to look at.

Currently, there is no way to view reports for multiple stores at one time in Aspect. If you would like to do this, the best approach is to export the data to an accounting package that has this capability or to your own database or use the script called "Consolidated Reports" built into Aspect to export the data to a spreadsheet application such as Excel.

If you choose to bring the data into your own database, there are two sets of files that you will use. These are sales.* and menumix.*, both located in the store directory. When Aspect imports from your POS system, it automatically generates these files using the day of the week as the extension. The sales files contain all of the numbers defined in the sales record. The menumix files contain the number of each menu item sold. Because the day of the week is used as the file extension, you will always have a week's worth of data available to import.

Customizing the Navigator

The Navigator in Aspect is completely user-defined. You can add your own text, graphics and controls. Controls added to the Navigator can be used to run scripts, to select menu options or to load external programs and documents like a spreadsheet or web page.

To see how the Navigator is created, select Navigator Setup from the Settings menu. Right-click on any control to see the properties for that control. If you decide to experiment with the Navigator, make sure to save it to a new name to avoid changing the default Navigator.

Advanced scripts

As you learn more about the scripts in Aspect, you may realize that there are a lot of other things you can accomplish with them. For example, some people use scripts to back up their critical POS files off site. Scripts can also be used to update selected POS files from a central office. Anything you want to send from your office to a store and visa versa can be accomplished with a script.

Scripts like this can be of great value, but be aware that Aspect does not directly support them. If you choose to create them, you will need to become familiar with the files you are working with and take full responsibility for managing them.

Copying from Another Store

You can copy all of the store files from another "master" store into a new store for initial setup if you desire. This option is only to be used for advanced users.

From the "master" store, copy the following files from these directories:

Aspect Folder

Copy all of the *.fmt and *.dta files, except installw.dta.

Store Folder

Copy all of the *.fmt and *.dta files, except acctpybl.dta, dlylabor.dta, saleYYYY.dta (YYYY by year), updtperp.dta.

Once done, you can begin the normal setup of Aspect, including modifying the store, resetting up the import routines, scheduling of tasks, as well as the first import from the POS system.