Moving Forward into the Past with the Revised General Ledger Master Database and Report Changes

By Brenda Hatter

In the past you might remember the following scenario: you ran your Comparative Balance sheet for 2009 with comparatives for 2008 just fine. The next day, however, they are not fine. The support rep that you talked to back then asks you what has changed from the day before. Your answer...”Nothing”. Then you remember that you entered your audit adjustments and closed your 2009 fiscal year end in GL for the first time. So why should that make a difference?

Your consultant told you something about the master.glm file and how it only stored 23 prior periods of activity. So financial statements and ledgers were limited to the current period and 23 prior periods…but ONLY if you do not go back over more than one fiscal year end. Once you closed 2009 and rolled into January of 2010, you lost the ability to report on 2008. At that time you could run ledgers and financial statements on the current period (January 2010) and only 12 prior periods (all of 2009). What on earth!!! What happened to 2008?

As of the version 9.6 release, this was no longer a concern. Sage Timberline Office had finally expanded the GLM Database. Ending balances for year 6 through 10 had been added to the GL Account for both Accrual and Cash methods of accounting. A new record had been created called Account Activity History which stored activity balances for 11 prior years! This suggested that you could run financial statements and ledgers for up to 10 years ago once these fields were populated.

We know from a previous article in this column, that over time the prior periods will be populated as we move forward. If you wanted to enter historical data, the additional prior year activity fields need to be manually populated using ODBC and Microsoft Access.

As a refresher here are the steps to populate the fields manually.
1. First, set up an ODBC data source name (DSN) for your Sage Timberline Office data.
2. Second, create a blank database in Access.
3. Third, create a Link Table that uses the Timberline Data source DSN created in step 1.
4. Next, scroll to the GLM_Master_Account_Activity_History table. When you say OK you will see a table with the following headings:
   - Account
- Years_ago
- X_Years_Ago_Activity
- Year_X_Period_1_Activity (up to 12 Periods)
- Debit_X_Years_Ago
- Debit_X_Yr_1_Per_Ago (Up to 12 Periods)

(The X represents the number that is in the Years_Ago field.)

You can manually enter the data for each account. If you have entered your historical data in an Excel spreadsheet in the same order as the table, you can copy and paste the data directly into the Link table in Access.

As mentioned above, this suggests that you can run financial statements and ledgers for up to 10 years ago once these fields are populated. This is not completely accurate. You will in fact be able to print YTD ledgers for a year prior to our original 23 prior periods. However, if you are hoping to rollback a financial statement to let's say 5 years ago, you will not be able to. In FS, you can still only rollback 25 prior periods. Although the number of fields was expanded in GL, the capabilities of FS were not. These new fields for prior periods are available in FS, so you are able to create custom financial statements for the prior years that you will be needing.

If you are not familiar with Access or uncomfortable writing directly into your Timberline database or you need help creating a custom financial statement to capture the correct periods, your Sage Timberline Office Certified Consultant would be happy to help you with this.

Happy reporting!!