Tips & Tricks #43 – Looking for What You Don't Know

Some twenty years ago Donald Rumsfeld, then US Secretary of Defense, gave what has become a classic response to a question regarding Iraq's possible involvement with arms shipments:

" … as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things [we know] we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know."

This statement was much discussed at the time and actually got a name: "The Rumsfeld Matrix". (There is a Wikipedia article on this – c.f. "There are known knowns")

As businesspeople, we run into this Rumsfeld Matrix every day, having to evaluate a situation, but also having to evaluate how much we know about our knowledge of the situation and possibly having to make a decision despite knowing that we probably don't know as much as we would like. This also applies as a microcosm to your software and your operating procedures – what do you know about its abilities, and what do you want to do with it. And this leads to considerations of the known unknowns – you want to implement a General Ledger, or a better pricing system for your company but you don't know how. We will discuss that below, but part of this is obvious - you know what you want, so it is a matter of finding the people or documents that will help fill in the blanks for you.

But there are the unknown unknowns – you suspect that there are programs and procedures within the PBS accounting system that might be useful, but you don't know what they are so you can't know if they will be useful to you and if you need them.

Known Unknowns

Passport Partner and Passport Support.

The processes to resolve these kinds of issues is to leverage what you do know and what you want to do to tap into resources that will give you information about the "don't knows" or "don't know well enoughs". One-stop shopping for this can involve help from a Passport Partner or Passport Support. Both are available to bring a jelling idea or a general issue and help refine and define it and then point to the best source of information. It may not be obvious but your Passport Partner or the Passport Support people are available for help in these areas, in other words advice not involved with specific and detailed support issues like "my checks didn't print properly" and importantly, advice that may have nothing to do with the sales of the software – objective information. This can involve general discussions of where you want to go or what you want to do with some business process you have, or these may involve aspects of the system you don't have a full grasp on. For example "can I do progress billing in AR?" or "can I have the

OE system create a drop ship order and create the PO for this?" or "really, what are non-AP vouchers and how do I use them?". "I saw something in the PR manual about the ability to email check stubs – how do I so this?"

The Passport Training site is a third source of this kind of information and more, so we will continue there:

The general orientation of this site is to be informative with articles from general introductions like "Accounting Basics" and "Inventory Management Basics" down to the nittiy-gritty of details on the operation of each of the Passport Business Solutions (PBS) modules. For the latter, the information is available as PDF's of the manuals, training videos including course documents and YouTube videos. Much of the site is public and anyone can browse. However, in cases where details of the operation of the modules or details of design are involved you have to be an active customer with a login and password. The signup page of our website is located here: Customer Quick Links - Passport Software (pass-port.com)

This site is not something you will go to, and in 15 minutes have it all digested. There are hundreds of documents and many hours of videos. And besides, the content is being revised and extended every week. Maybe an approach is to find 15 minutes or so every week and spend that quiet time exploring. This is more like shopping for presents – you go to the store and wander through and pick up stuff that catches your eye.

With that in mind, here is a brief run-down of the contents on the Training Site:

On the landing page (Home) are 5 other dropdowns covering the broad categories plus a "what's new and FAQ's" type menu for breaking information and exploring.

Product Training

Videos on accounting and inventory basics, videos on tying PBS into report programs and Excel, as well as the CashPoint product, which ties PBS back-office apps to the Store Front/OTC NCR Counterpoint system. And the last entry is the gateway to video courses for much of the Passport stable of applications.

Tips and Tricks

Short, three-to-four-page articles on details of various aspects of the PBS system designed to be in depth, specific and usually entertaining. Published monthly, we are now into our fourth year with over 40 articles.

Documentation

Quick access to all the User Manuals for our two main product lines – Financials + Distribution and Manufacturing. These are available for the last two releases of PBS. Current V12.07 and V12.08.

Note also in the drop-down, is the page giving Enhancements by Version, a resource to see what new features in PBS might be useful for you. We will go into that further in our next issue.

About Us

Who we are and where we are and that all important telephone number – how to get in touch with us. By the way, we make every effort to have you talk to a person when you call. Dialing zero will usually reach an advisor or transfer you to someone who can help.

Also, in the "About us" section there is also an article about what we do and don't do with any information we collect from you as part of being a customer, or even as part of going to the website. This is worth a visit and a quick read.

Year End Resources

This page has current information on issues of interest to those with Payroll or Affordable Care Act (ACA) needs and the year-end processes that frequently overwhelms us between mid-December and late January. The information is kept current for both the tax/reporting year as well as for issues affecting payroll or ACA in the upcoming year. The landing page includes useful links to the various Federal web sites and forms ordering sites. So, for example, if you want the 2023 copy of the Circular E Employee's Tax Guide, it is here.

These pages also have information relating to year-end processes and issues in general, and it applies for both calendar and non-calendar based company closings. These pages also include advice on annual maintenance and purging functions.

Lastly, the two pages accessed from the drop-down have information on the feature/function aspects to the payroll and ACA packages.

 Our next installment will address the "unknown unknowns".

Happy browsing!

?thesaurus

Flair

Unknown unknowns.

Release documents, release webinars, blogs, T&T etc.

Explorer ?

Test company

Pain points

Spread sheets