

PawCom Application Note 106

Corruption of Peachtree or Sage 50 Data Files



Occasionally users of Peachtree or Sage 50 Accounting systems find one or more of their data files have become corrupted. It is important to realize that the program itself cannot cause the corruption; corrupted files result from some underlying problem in the resources that the Peachtree or Sage 50 program uses – the computer network, other software or the computer hardware itself. It is also important to realize that corrupted data can occur on a perfectly healthy system; a corrupted Peachtree or Sage 50 data file does not necessarily indicate that there is a problem with the hardware or software – sometimes it just happens.

The wisest approach is to assume that sooner or later you are going to encounter corruption of your data files and plan appropriately. What does that mean? **BACKUP, BACKUP, BACKUP!** You can easily perform a backup of your data right from the Peachtree or Sage 50 menu. It is very easy and quick to do. The backup procedure creates a single compressed file with the extension PTB. (This file is actually a standard Zip file.) The backup file is, by default, created with the date in its filename. If you regularly perform the backup each morning (or evening), then if you do get data corruption all you have to do is restore the most recent backup and re-enter the activity for the day. The backup gives a first line of defense against problems. An additional problem you should worry about is a disk crash on the system where your data resides. You can easily protect yourself against this by copying the backup file to another computer on your network where you have a few spare GB of disk space. Finally, you can protect yourself against disaster by backing up on tape or CD and taking this backup off site or backing up to a secure site in the cloud.

That being said, there are several hardware and software problems that we know can contribute to corruption of Peachtree or Sage 50 data files. File corruption almost invariably occurs when the program accesses its data across a network – it is far less common for corruption to occur on a standalone computer. If you are experiencing recurring data corruption here are some things to look for:

- **Home versions of Windows.** These systems are designed to accommodate games, videos and old versions of programs. In order to do this, however, they can allow applications to step on each other – a perfectly functioning program can have its data walked over by an independent malfunctioning program. For a business environment it is best to stick with the professional versions of Windows: XP Pro or 7 Pro/Enterprise/Ultimate.
- **Flaky computer hardware.** Computers are very complex with many components that must all work together perfectly. All it takes is one problem component to cause the computer to crash occasionally or simply start acting strange until the system is rebooted. These types of problems can easily lead to corruption of files. If you have a computer that has problems, repair or replace it – otherwise you are just begging for trouble.
- **Recurring natural events.** Recurring power brownouts, power outages, or lightning storms can play havoc with a computer. Your best line of defense here is to make sure all systems are running on a Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS), sometimes called a Battery Backup. If you are in an area with power issues, you should get an UPS with Power Conditioning. Power Conditioning helps to protect computers from surges, spikes, and other power disturbances. NEVER plug an UPS into a power strip; they must be plugged directly into a wall outlet! And, NEVER plug a printer or power strip into an UPS!
- **Mismatched brands of network cards.** Different brands don't always play together well; documentation shows that this can lead to a high incidence of Peachtree or Sage 50 data corruption. Network cards are very cheap – if you suspect problems, replace them with identical cards from a name-brand vendor such as 3COM or Intel. Most modern computers have built-in network cards; so, using different brands of computers on a network could be an issue. Purchasing computers of the same brand; e.g., Dell, HP, Gateway, etc., will limit potential conflicts.

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- **Cabling.** Network cables can get crimped, stepped on, run over by a chair or bent at a sharp angle. Any of these problems can cause the cable to reflect signals at the problem point and cause communication problems. Also home-made cables can cause problems if not set up properly; the connectors must be crimped on very carefully. If you have suspect cables, replace them with new commercial cables or have an expert test out your network cables.
- **Network Hubs and Switches.** Sometimes these can act up. (Switches are better than hubs because they have more throughput.) If you suspect a hub or switch and have a spare port, try switching ports. You might also consider replacing the hub or switch.
- **Disk Fragmentation.** Fragmentation means that files which should be contiguous on the disk are broken up into small pieces and scattered across the disk. As you install, and delete, applications, documents and other files, and use the system, the fragmentation problem gets worse and worse. Eventually you reach a point where the system becomes very sluggish and error rates soar. The cure for this problem is regular defragmentation of the disk(s). All versions of Windows have, a light-weight, built-in defragmenter that can be run manually. However, you are better off using a commercial defragmenter, such as Diskeeper, that has more features and can be scheduled to run, automatically, on a regular basis.
- **Overburdened servers.** Don't ask an individual server to do several different server tasks. If possible you might want to devote a single server to doing nothing but supporting Peachtree or Sage 50 data. This does not require a high-cost nor high-performance server. Please remember, Windows XP/7 Home Premium is not a server operating system.
- **Viruses and Malware.** There are many nasty things out there that can infect your computer and cause strange problems. Be sure to protect your systems with anti-virus and anti-spyware software. Microsoft's Security Essentials is an excellent, freeware, option. Eset's NOD 32 is a top rated purchase option. Also, make sure you have firewall protection. ZoneAlarm is an excellent, software option. Or, a hardware firewall for your network is an even better option.