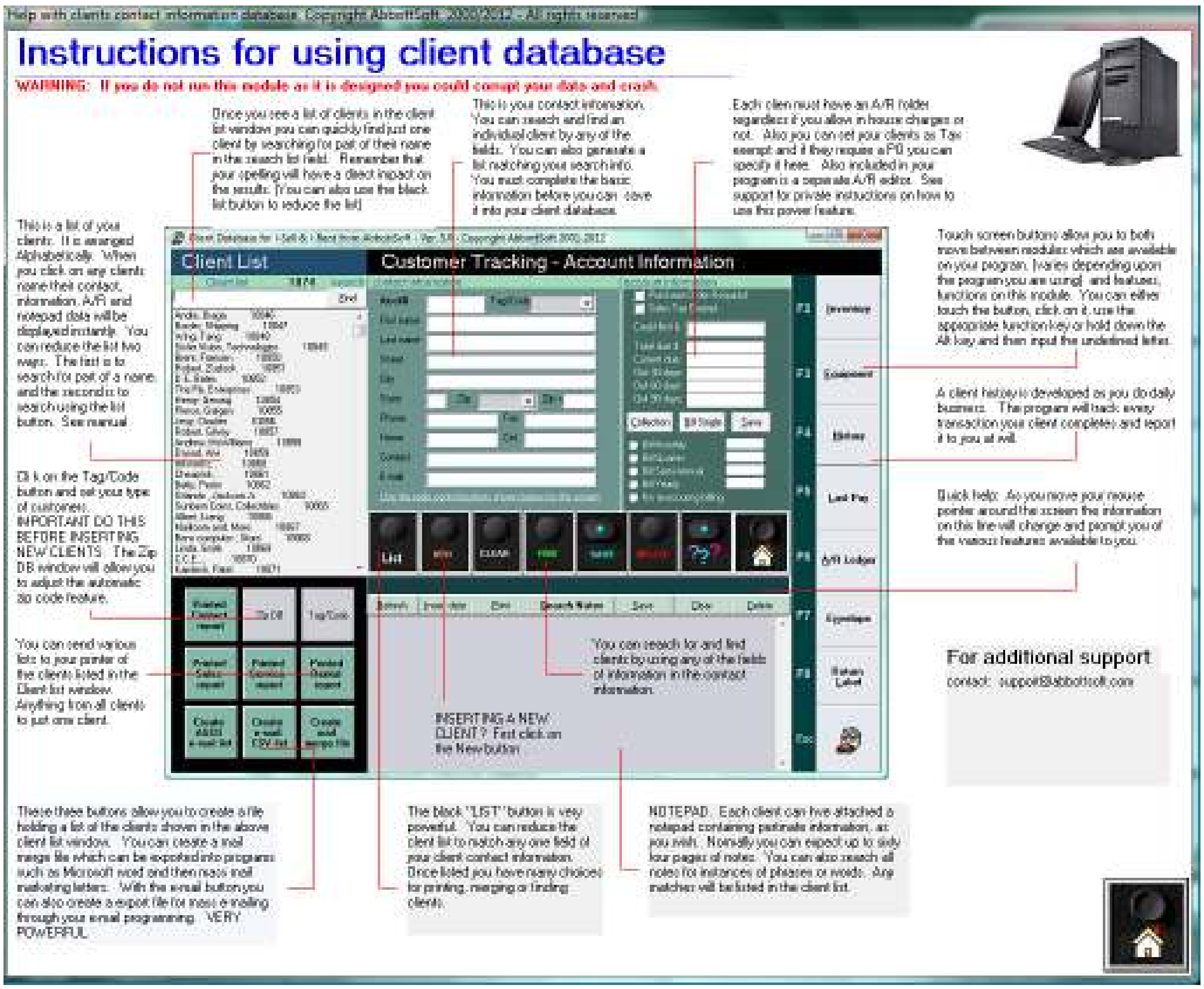
Client Database chapter 4

INTRODUCTION:

Your client database is both a powerful stand-alone program and when used with **i-Sell, QuickFix** or **i-Rent** from AbbottSoft, it integrates with their other modules and becomes even more powerful. Many forms of on-line assistance is included. Including the below help screen.



WHICH PROGRAM ARE YOU USING?

i-Sell is a Point of Sale Program with client -- inventory tracking and income/ billing.
Quick-Fix designed to assist a business which repairs items. It Can also include I-Sell
i-Rent is a Rental Management Program with rental equipment / inventory tracking and income/ billing. It can also include Quick-Fix and I-Sell if needed.

Computer Settings:
It is very important that the client database is properly installed and the computer settings are correct. Normally I-Sell would be installed in it's own folder under Program-Files on Drive C:. If using Quick-Fix it would be similar. Example c:\program files\quickfix

If using the client module with other modules then it should be in the same folder. It is also important that the sub-folders: ACCR and CUSARC be in place. *Example: c:\program files\quickfix xp\ACCR and c:\program files\quickfix xp\CUSARC*

Your video settings should be a minimum: 800x600 (Hi Color 16bit or True Color). A high quality monitor, including touch screen if desired. You can experiment if needed.

Knowing your client:
It is important to know who your clients are, how much business they are doing with you, What they need from you. And information which will help them do business with you.

Your client database will do all of the following and more.

The client database helps you build a listing of your clients, how much business they have done with you during the current month and year. It will track their account automatically and – at the click of your mouse – print a statement showing the current condition of their account. If using I-Rent, I-Sell xp or QuickFix then it will even report all they have rented from you and any repairs. The client database will also report every purchase, the invoice number and amount of the sale.

Keeping in Touch:

You probably agree that it is Important to Stay in touch with your clients.
You probably understand that it is important you make it easy for your clients to deal with you. There are times when you will need discuss with your client, matters related to a purchase or payment on their account.

During any given business day, you or several of your staff may access your client information and accomplish different tasks using this program module. Others will only need to be made aware of client requirements such as the need for a Purchase Order or the available credit for any client.

No matter what you need, you have the ability to find your client information and modify it at anytime, both quickly and efficiently and record the contact information for future reference.

Client home page Figure 1

Even if this software appears so simple that "must not do much" – realize – hidden behind the screen is a powerful computer program, search engine and relational database. This software is designed to utilize the computing power of today's digital systems.

Marketing. In addition to the built-in mail merge -- version 5 also has the ability for you to pinpoint your mailings to geographical areas -- even down to streets and zip codes. You can both find and list your clients by any field of information you have recorded. Few client database programs have this capability.

Look at the bottom left of the above screen snapshot and notice the buttons which control the features for all the clients listed within the list box on the left side of the screen. *(See finding and listing clients on next page)*

FINDING AND LISTING CLIENTS TO YOUR SCREEN OR PRINTER;
Your client database module offers many ways for you to find one client or a group of Clients, and then list them together onto your screen, or printer. You may need to track only one client, track just a few clients, a few hundred clients or even thousands of clients.

The ease and versatility with which you can find clients depends on how thoughtfully You define the client information when you insert clients into your database.

CONTROLS:
You have two types of controls and other menu choices, which help you accomplish tasks while using you client database.

1. **Radio Control Buttons** – are a graphical control, which resemble push buttons that you might find on an expensive stereo system. They have a descriptive title telling you what they do when you initiate their action, just click with your left mouse, or if using a touch screen, just touch the button.
   Also: When your mouse pointer is over a radio button it will form the shape of a pointing
   Hand similar to using any Internet web browser.

2. **Touch Control Buttons** - are similar to what you see on most window programs Rectangular or square in shape they have a description of their actions and like the radio control buttons you click with your left mouse to initiate their actions.

   Most also have a shortcut key sequence which you can initiate by holding down your ALT key then pressing the underlined letter shown on the control.

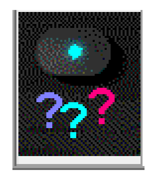
3. **Fields of information** – are scattered about your pages. Some you fill in and others are completed automatically by the software. When inserting information you should normally move between fields using the “Tab” key on your keyboard, not your mouse pointer. Example: When you finish filling in the street address field and if you use the tab key to move on. The program will skip over the city and state, stopping on the zip code field. Once you type in five digits for the client the program will automatically search its built in database, and if listed insert the city and state for you. If not stored. The program will ask then update itself on the fly.

<u>**Help Prompts:**</u> are available on all controls and important fields.

When you move your pointer to almost any control button or menu choice and if you stop the pointer on the item for at least one second, your program will pop up a little window, with a prompt explaining the action, which will take place if you click on it. Also some fields of information or choice controls will exhibit this function.

Another unique feature is the prompt line located directly below the radio control buttons. If you watch this line when you move the mouse pointer about the screen you will see it giving you another prompt about the available features.

Additionally there is a help screen available by clicking on the black help button or by using the standard F1 key on your keyboard. *See page #1*



<u>**FINDING AN INDIVIDUAL CLIENT**</u>: (direct search)
From the main client screen you can click on any field and then type in all or part of what you expect to find listed for the client you want found. The fastest is to use the client account number, but you can also get instant responses with First or Last name. Just type in all or part of the First or Last name and then click or touch the "Find Button"

EXAMPLE:
If you were going to try and find any client with the first name Harold you Could type in the letters "har" in the first name field.
Typing in "har" on the first name field will find any clients with the first name Harold. It will also find clients with the first name Charles or others with "har" embedded.
If you type too much information you can pass over a client because you misspelled or over spelled the name
Example:"Danel" won't find Daniel but Dan will. Donald won't find Don but Don will find Donald. Searching the first name field for "Bill Smith" won't find the client if the first name field holds Bill and the last name field holds Smith. ***Note**: You can use the" List" page to search both first and last together and you can read about this feature later in this chapter.*

Once a match is made then the stored information for that client will be presented on your computer screen and you will be asked if the client shown is the client you wanted or should the search continue?

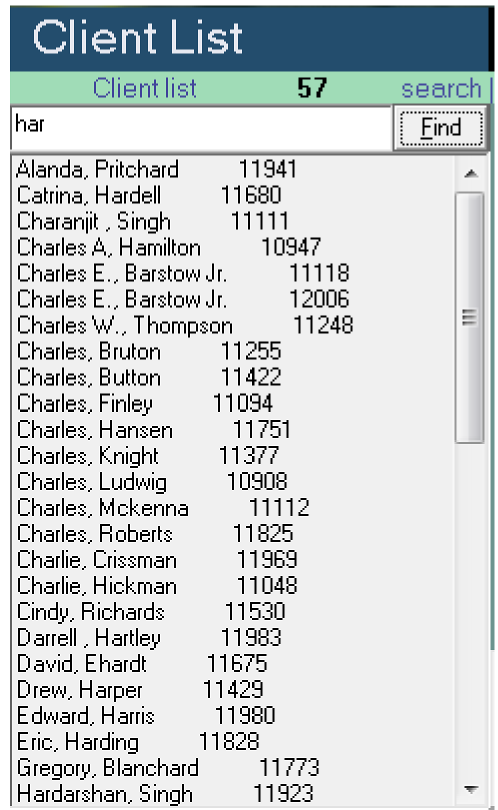
The Power of the List: When you first open the client window all the clients will be shown on the left side of your screen. You can just click on any clients name and their contact and account information will be shown on the screen. In addition you can use the print and contact functions on the bottom left of your screen, which will batch to clients in the list.

Obviously, by reducing the list down to a group of clients, which have a common denominator you, can derive even more use from the client module.

If you had hundreds of clients in your database the list will be quite long. The list will is alphabetized but even then it might take you some time to scroll down the list and find a particular client. You can narrow the list Considerably by using the "Search" field above the list. Type in all or part of the Clients name and then press the enter key on your keyboard. (Fig. 2) Client List Screen

Click on the "Find" radio control button with your mouse. The list will reformat with only clients who match the search information you provided. It should now be much smaller.

In Fig-2, searching for "har" returned 57 out of 1078 hits which contain the search string. The search time was .05 seconds.



Picking from client list – Fig 2

WARNINGS: Here are a couple of things you do not want to do because it can mess up your database and cause you extra fees to have us fix it for you.

1. When typing information into your client database NEVER – **NEVER** type in anything other than **letters or numbers**. That means if you type in a quote (") symbol thinking you are indicating "inches", or if you try and separate words with a comma then you will immediately crash the database you tried to save the information into. NORMALLY YOU WILL BE PROVIDED A WARNING MESSAGE IF YOU TRY. READ THE MESSAGE AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS.
2. Once you save a clients file you cannot go back and change either their first and or last names or their account number. You will have to delete their file and re-install a new one. You can change any of the other fields anytime.

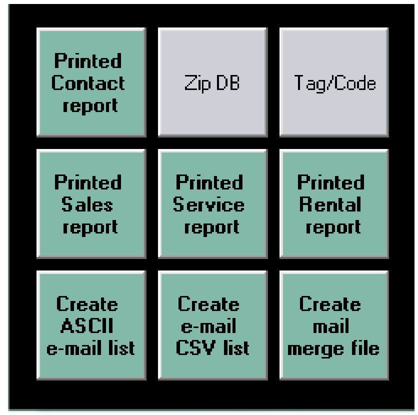
More Power: Another powerful feature is the ability to reduce the customer list predicated upon any one of the fields (*Except the Acct#*) in the contact information screen. In this example we were interested in finding clients, which have an address on a certain street.

By clicking on the “Clear” – black radio control button (*Which clears all of the contact information fields*) and then typing “Merrimon “ in the “Street” field, and then clicking on the “List” – black radio control button, the program mined down into the client database searching for any matches. It then reduced the “Client list” from 1078 down to only 4 which were recorded as being on Merrimon Ave. in Asheville, NC.

How might you use the above feature? Any number of ways. Suppose you wanted to focus advertising mail, e-mails, or even send representatives into a certain neighborhood to help market your business. Perhaps you provide a service such as lawn or pool maintenance? This feature is one way of setting up your daily routes. How could you use this feature to your benefit?

Another unique feature is the ability to search all of your client notepads and build a list based on a particular search string you defined. (Read more later in this chapter)

SENDING A LIST TO YOUR PRINTER – OR A SPECIAL FILE:



Once you have clients that you want to work with shown on the client list, you can then drop down to the bottom left of your screen and click on any of the seven choices. You can then send the list out to your printer showing contact information, or a sales, service or rental report. You can even generate a merge file for addressing custom form letters or even an e-mail file where you can cut and paste the e-mail addresses into your e-mail service and blast out to your clients using the internet.

On-screen instructions are presented as you accomplish your chosen task. **Always remember to have your printer turned on and ready to print.**

Tracking your client's purchases, repairs and rentals.

When closing a sale, work order or rental contract your software will print a invoice. During the printing of the invoice -- income information, tax obligations etc. are automatically recorded in the appropriate database. Information about the sale is also recorded into the client's individual database.

Once recorded you can then recover and review the sales, repairs or rentals for that individual client. Here is what you need to do.

First: Locate and display your customer on the screen. (See previous methods described in this chapter)

Second: Activate the "history" window by clicking on the touch screen button marked "History." (look at right side of screen) You can also use the F4 key or hold down the "alt" key and press the underlined letter "H"

The History window will appear. Notice it needs to know what type of history you are looking for. "Sales, Service or Rental. " Make your choice then press the black "list" radio control button and the information will be provided.

If a repair then by clicking on the repair listed in the window another window will open and you will see information about the highlighted repair.

NOTEPAD:

Your client database allows you to create a freeform notepad attached to any client recorded. Generally this notepad is used to track verbal or telephone conversations with the client and record anything you feel is important.

The client notepad is just like a simple text editor. You can type information, use your delete key to remove information, highlight then copy, cut, etc. Automatic word wrap is built in.

You can save new changes, clear the notepad, create a new one or delete the notepad whenever you wish. Another feature is the ability to insert the date so you can track when you made a note.

Above are the buttons located directly above the notepad. These buttons allow you to control the notepad.

Refresh: Allows you to check the data by refreshing the notepad with the latest information.

Insert Date: Will insert the system date at the point of input. This is a useful feature to document you notes.

Print: Will send the notepad to your printer. The output will not be justified or word-wrapped.

Search Notes: The notepad can be searched for a particular phrase and the client list will be up-dated to only clients, which have a match.

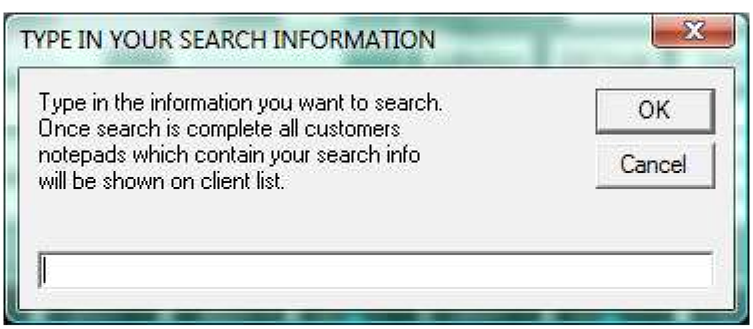
Save: Saves the latest notepad onto your clients database.

Clear: Clears the notepad of all data. If you "save" the new notepad your existing information will be lost.

Delete: Deletes the database from your clients folder.

Another advantage to the client notepad is the ability to group clients past the ability of the Tag Code. Imagine listing all the particulars of your client into the notepad for that client and then searching all the client notepads for similarity.

Just click on the Search Notes button and fill in the search window, which pops open.



INSERTING NEW CLIENTS IN LESS THAN TEN STEPS

When using I-Sell, QuickFix or I-Rent you must establish a database of clients. You don't have to record all your clients you can even add clients into your database on the fly.

If you have not already recorded a client who might be standing at the counter then You are able to access this database modular directly and instantaneously from your invoice, work order or rental screen by activating the "Client" button on the far right.

You can then insert the new client and return directly back and continue on from where you left Your database will be updated and current. At the same time, in the back office, (if using the network version) The person in charge could update the accounts receivable folder for this new client with the credit limit established. Everything happens real time.

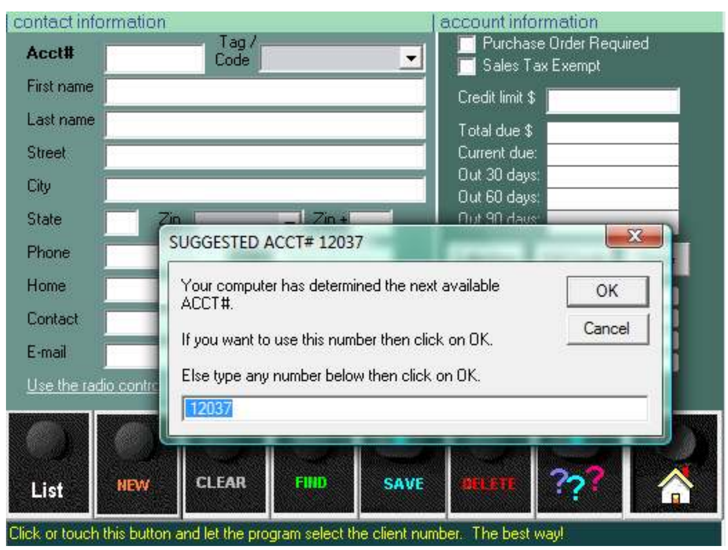
Note: If you are creating an invoice you cannot charge to a clients account until you have a proper account receivable folder in place. (See Account Receivable section) for more information.

Procedures and thoughts for inserting new clients: If you have reviewed the powerful search capabilities of your client database then you probably have already started to consider what information you wish to record about each client . The information can be retrieved and assimilated into a meaningful report later.

As you insert your first client then please follow along with these Instructions as we provide you with hints and considerations.

1st: You must establish an account number for each client. You start inserting a new client by clicking with your mouse button on the radio control button titled "New".

Your client database will suggest a number, if you accept the suggested number, it will automatically increase the next client account number by one.



WE STRONGLY SUGGEST YOU LET THE COMPUTER NUMBER YOUR ACCOUNTS AUTOMATICALLY!

<u>WARNING</u>: If you decide to insert your own client account number, **OR WITHIN ANY OTHER FIELD OF INFORMAITON THROUGH OUT THE PROGRAM** -- realize that Under no circumstances should you Use other than letters or numbers **<u>NO, SYMBOLS</u>** such as quotes commas, etc. because they will cause your program to crash!

2nd Defining the" Tag Field " for this client.

Let's take a few moments and consider this drop down list. It can be a very powerful search tool or completely worthless depending upon what you do with it.

The tag/code field is designed so that you can " tag " the client as fitting, in a particular Category. Create and use this list wisely because it allows you to both identify & relate your client with other similar clients.

Here are some examples and suggestions.

If you want to identify the client as a very good client you might give them a rating such as "A+". On the other hand if they have passed a bad check on you or other things that would indicate that you do not want their business or that you want them restricted in their dealings , then you might want to give them **"BADGUY ".** "The BADGUY" rating could tell your counter clerk to check the notepad for other instructions that you want followed in your dealings with them.

If you deal with building contractors or sub contractors you might want to categorize clients by their vocation. Example; "GC, PAINTER, CONC, Elect, etc." allowing you to create mailings to all your clients who fit into a particular mold and would be interested in something you want to promote. At the same time you could save postage by not mass mailing to all clients.

If it is in your interest to track and mail birthday or anniversary greetings then you might want to place the dates in the "Tag" field. Example; B06 A11 would indicate a birthday in June and an anniversary in November. If you create a mailing list of all clients who have a birthday in June (by listing B06) any other clients you enter in the same fashion, would be on the list.

To start or modify the list, click on the "Tag/Code" control button and use the pop-up Client tag database window. (fig 5)

Tag/code data– Fig 5

3rd (First and Last Names) In the First and Last name you should list both parts of your clients name. Since the way you type in the information is the exact way a envelope, mailing and shipping labels will be addressed. You should be careful with the spelling and capitalization. Done properly you would type " John Smith " not "JOHN SMITH "
If you are recording a business name such as SMITH APPLIANCES then simply list Smith as the first name and Appliances as the second. You will be able to Record the manager or other name in the contact field later. If there is no last name just enter a period.

4th (Street Address) fill in the street address as you would the client's name.

5th (Zip codes/City-State) If, as the program is designed, you use your "Tab" key to move between fields then your client database module will skip over the city and state, and go directly to the zip code. You then either manually type in the zip code of the client you are inserting or you can click and activate the drop down list of recorded zip codes and by clicking on any one of them make your choice.

Note: Your client database has a unique form of learning about your clients. By skipping directly to the zip code it will check a special database of zip codes and if it finds a match for the zip code you entered it will automatically fill in the city and state, saving you time.

If the client module cannot match the zip you typed in, then it will ask you for the city and state; which matches this new zip code. Next it will ask if you want to file it away for future reference. If you do (and you should) then be careful about what you type in and only when sure of your spelling, etc. FILE IT! By answering OK to the prompt, asking if you want to save this new entry.

The next time you insert a new client it will then find the matching city and state and insert the information for you. Obviously if you get sloppy and spelled the city Incorrectly, then every time you input the zip the program will insert the city with the Wrong spelling, just as you told it to do. (*Think!)*

INSERTING NEW CLIENTS CONTINUED:

6th. Take time to complete the four telephone numbers if possible. We would point out that instead of typing a phone number as (800) 926-2892 you will accomplish the same by typing 1.828.926.2892 and it is much easier once you do it a few times. You can copy to your telephone dialer from within the Client Database.

7th. The contact field is where you can list a persons name and position within a company, a wife or husband of the client or just make a short extraneous notes about the client. Be aware that if you print an envelope etc. this will show.

8th. Today just about everyone has an email address. Place your clients Internet mail address here and you can develop a e-mail master list for delivery to any clients listed in the client list, which have an e-mail address in their folder.

9th Once satisfied with the information about the client you have provided then just click with your left mouse button on the "black" radio control titled "Save" and the information will be stored on your computer and ready for you to access again anytime you want. The client list will be automatically updated and the program will ask you if your client already owes you money from a previous transaction, and if so would you like to bring it forward. Otherwise; just click on the "OK" button.

(See A/R module for more information about clients account information)

DELETING CLIENTS FROM DATABASE:

You can delete a client from your database anytime you wish. All you have to do is search and find client and verify the information shown on your computer screen, then using your left mouse button click on the radio control button marked "Delete". The client you have selected and all related information will be deleted immediately. And all records of their existence on your computer obliterated.

USING THE CLIENTS INDIVIDUAL A/R FOLDER:

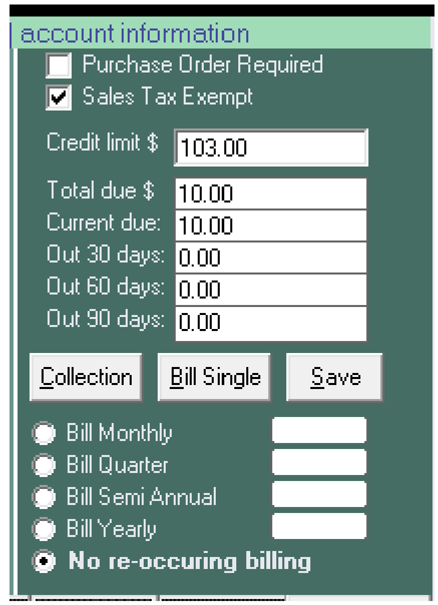
Each client must have an accounts Receivable folder established. Your various modules will not function while using I-Sell, QuickFix, or I-Rent without it.

Even if you do not want to provide in house charges to your clients, or concern your business with PO requirements or sales tax exemptions for your clients, you must still take the time to set up the A/R folder when installing clients.

SETTING UP A CLIENTS A/R FOLDER:

The A/R database is attached to the client database and other modules in your program. You have primary access through two portholes when running I-RENT or I-Sell, the client database and the billing module contained in reports etc.

Each client has a home page and must have an established A/R folder. The below screen snapshot represents a clients account. (fig 7)



Client A/R folder – Fig 7

Although your screen may appear as if all the information is included together it is not. The information presented on the page is derived from four separate databases and should be considered separate but related.

In the center is the contact information and on the right is the A/R folder.

Note: Each part of the clients home page has it's own set of control buttons which only apply to that portion of the page. The two separate portions are differentiated by a change in the background color/shade.

You must establish an A/R folder for each and every client you place in the database even if they are not allowed to charge to their account. This version of the client module will attempt to assist you when you initially save the client.

Remember. If the assigned credit limit is $0.00 then they cannot charge to a in-house account, but rather provide another method of payment, immediately during the closing of their invoice.

Note: Although you can establish as many clients and A/R folders as your hard disk will hold, the quantity affects the amount of time to do your daily backup and you can increase the time for printed and other type reports. Your monthly aging report will also become more time consuming and confusing if you insert clients who are **not** frequent customers, who you have no need to contact or otherwise would be a one time transaction and thus, a waste of space. You should consider them as client “001” a cash transaction only.

Remember to set up a special client with the account number “001 and the name (example) Cash sale or maybe Cash client. The program will recognize account “001” and respond accordingly.

USING YOUR CLIENTS A/R FOLDER:

Once a clients A/R folder is established, you can review running totals, receive payment on their account and print an ending or "single bill" (statement).

PO (Purchase Order) requirements: If your client requires a PO then check the field by clicking with your mouse. You will be notified during the initial creation and closing of any Invoices, Work Orders, Rental Contracts and space will be provided to record it.

Tax Exempt? If the client has a certificate from the state or another reason why they are not required to pay sales tax in your area then activate by clicking with your mouse and you will see a check mark appear. Even if Invoices created under this client might have sales tax added, you will be asked if you want to remove the tax when you close the invoice.

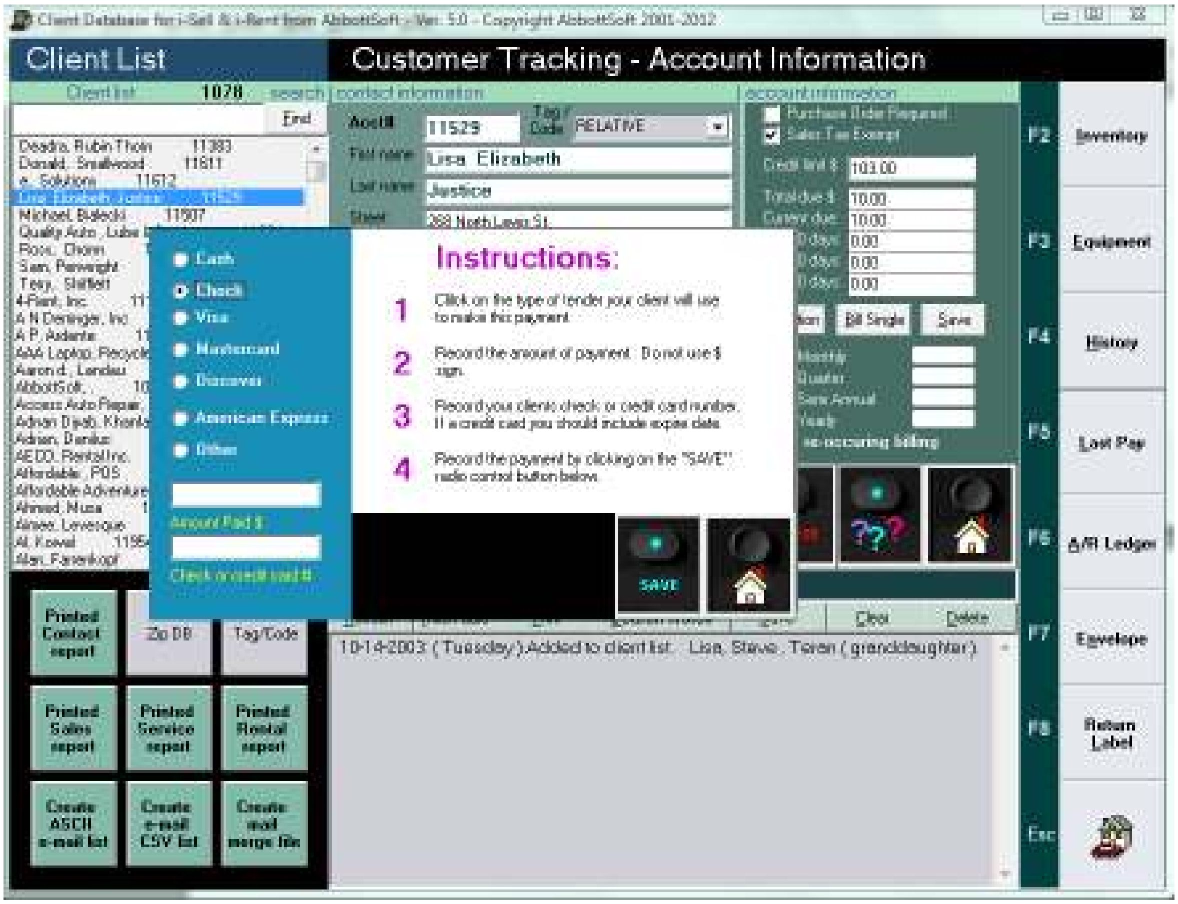
Credit Limit: Is the amount of available credit you define for each client you insert into your client database. It can be any amount including zero. I-Sell will verify and report the amount of available credit during the creation and closing of invoices. The information will be shown on the screen and if the available credit is less than the amount of the sale when closing a invoice then I-Sell will notify you with a special warning notice which must be responded to before proceeding.

Other information: Information fields such as Total due, Current, Out 30, Month, Year etc. are automated fields and will be filled in automatically by I-RENT, QUICKFIX and I-SELL .

CHANGING YOUR CLIENTS A/R FOLDER: Once you have completed the clients A/R folder to your satisfaction just press the "Save" button shown in fig 7 and the information will be placed in their folder immediately, once you provide the master password you defined when you initially “setup” the program. If you want to verify the information just use the "Clear" radio control button, find the client again, and take a look at their A/R folder.

(***See page 18 for information about re-occurring charges***.)

Receiving a payment on a clients account is simple. Just go to the client's folder using the client database click on the "Collections" button on their A/R screen and then read the four step instructions listed on the pop-up window. (below screen snapshot)

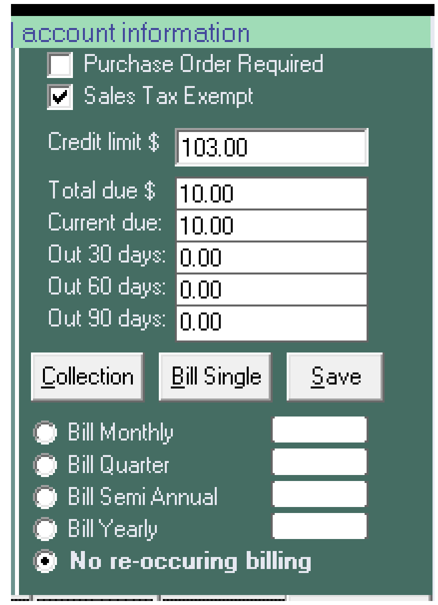


Once you have completed the four steps of posting a payment into your clients folder you can print a receipt and if needed an ending single bill for verification.

Printing an Ending - Single Bill can be done anytime and as many times as needed. Under normal circumstances you should not reset the account. This is best done from within the batch-billing module found by using the "Manager" feature of your full program.

In addition, each client has an A/R folder available for review. Just bring the client onto the screen and on the right side of the client screen click on A/R ledger. A report of any in-house charges and payments will be immediately presented.

RE-OCCURING CHARGES: Many companies have need for this feature.



One Example would be any re-occurring services, which are billed on a corresponding time schedule. Example: A yard or pool service company who performs a weekly or monthly service and then bills out their client on a re-occurring time schedule.

The initial setup of this is accomplished on each clients A/R folder by activating the cycle and then the fee for that cycle.

Example: Clicking on the Bill Monthly choice and then entering a re-occurring amount will enable that feature when printing monthly statements. (See billing module included in your program manual)

NOTES: