

Business Intelligence Centre

Pastel Evolution BIC

Tips and Tricks Volume 2



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Renaming a Data Expression

Field names in databases are often difficult to interpret. Using user-friendly names enables you to understand the field's contents more easily. For example we are unable to tell from the expression **Name** whether the expression refers to a customer name or salesman name. Changing the expression: **Name** to **Customer Name** makes the expression less ambiguous.

1. Right-click on the data expression to be renamed.
2. Select **Rename**. The **Rename** dialog box is displayed.
3. Enter the new name and click **OK**. The new name is displayed.

Copying a Data Expression

You are able to create special expressions, for example, formulas and SQL expressions from a copy of existing data expressions. An existing expression is copied and changed to a special expression.

1. Right-click the expression and select **Copy**.
2. Right-click on the data container and select **Paste**. The copy of the expression is pasted below the container.
3. Right-click the expression and select **Rename**.
4. Enter the new name in the **Rename** dialog box and click **OK**.

Deleting a Data Expression

Once you have created a data expression you might find that you no longer require the expression in your container. You are then able to delete the data expression. A data expression can only be deleted if it is not being used in a report, in the case that it is being used in a report, you would need to remove it from the report and then delete the expression from the data container.

1. Right-click on the expression.
2. Click **Delete**.
3. Click **Yes** to confirm the deletion.

Renaming a Data Connection

Once you have created a data connection you are able to change the name of the data connection at any time.

1. Select the Data connection.
2. Edit the connection name in the **Connection Name** property field and click **Apply**.

Moving a Data Connection

You are able to move a data connection from one connection object to another. This will obviously only work if the connections are of the same type.

1. Select the Data connection.
2. Right-click and select **Move to**.
3. Select the connection type and click **OK**.
4. Click **OK**.
5. Right-click on the connection and select **Check/Test**.

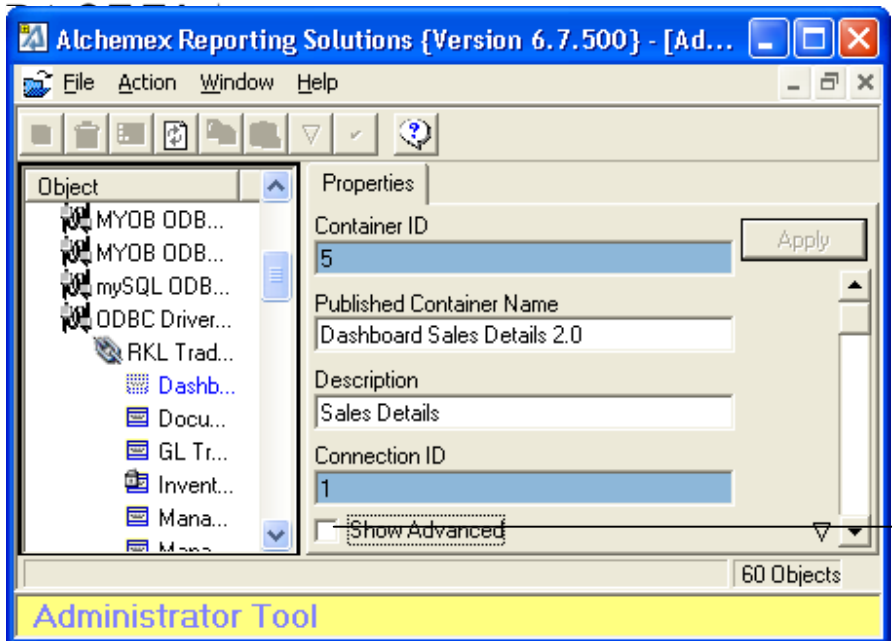
Timeout Settings

When running BIC reports on large sets of data you might need to adjust the BIC timeout settings. This allows you to increase the time allowed before the user would receive a timeout error message.

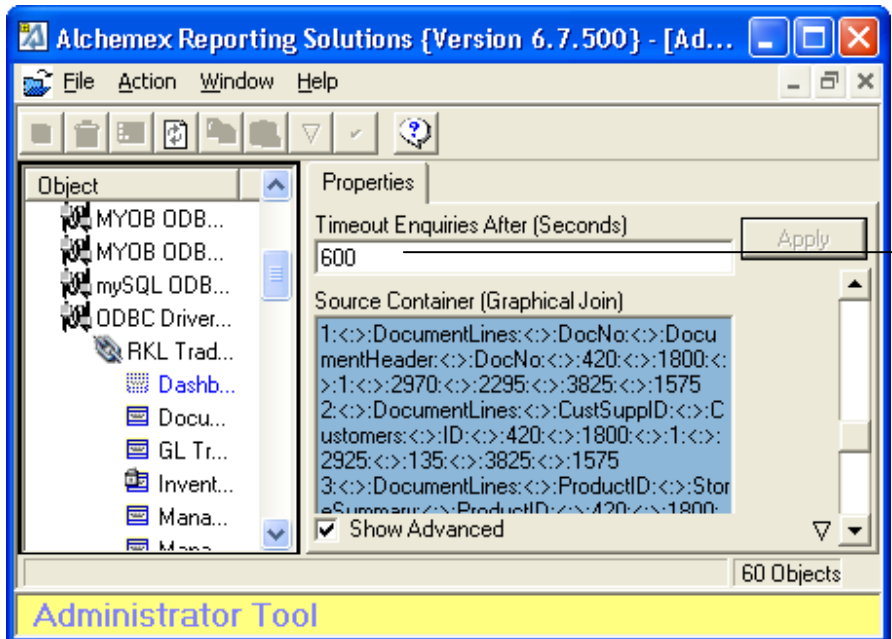
There are 2 ways to resolve a timeout error:

In the BIC Administrator:

1. In the Object window, select the desired container
2. On the Properties window, select Show advanced



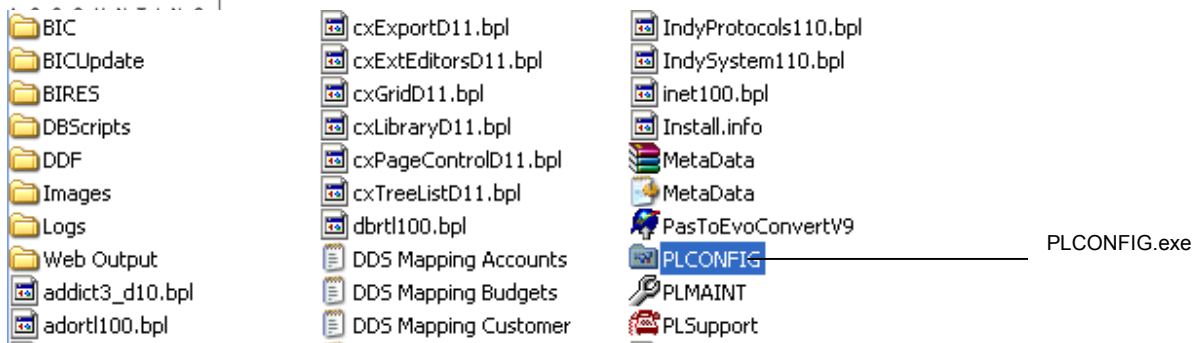
3. Go to Timeout Enquiries after (seconds)



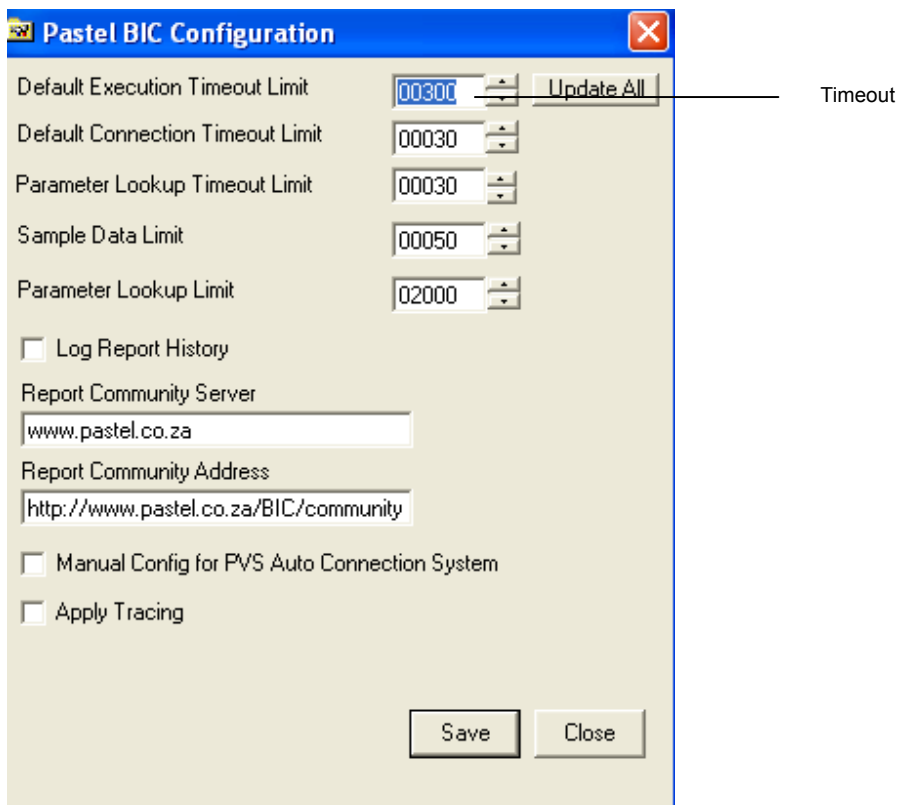
4. Increase the number of seconds here

Or

5. Go to PLCONFIG.exe under Pastel Evolution Folder



6. Open PLCONFIG and make the necessary changes



Note, that if it gets changed inside the Administrator, it is only for that container.

Under PLCONFIG it is for ALL the containers.

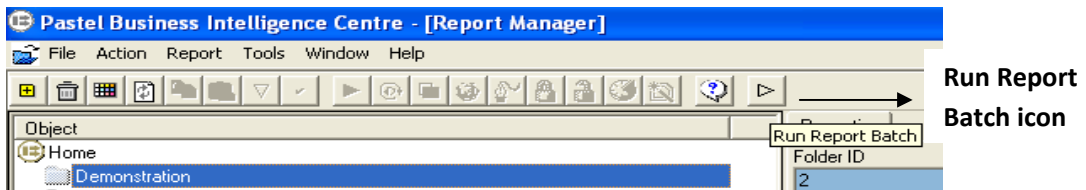
Running a batch report

The Run Report Batch facility allows users to run a sequence of reports one after the other from top to bottom.

Note: The run sequence will always be top to bottom so it is important to name your reports in a way that will ensure that the report you want run first is at the top of the batch.

Creating a batch report to run:

- Create a folder for the reports that will make up the Batch report run
- Name your reports according to the run sequence
- Select the folder that contains your reports and click on the Run Report Batch Icon



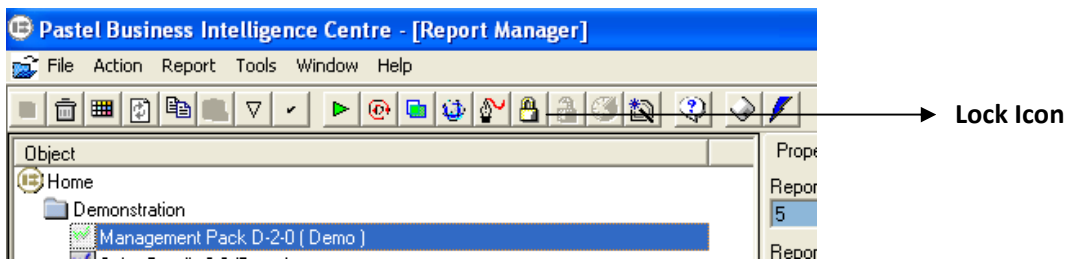
- BIC will automatically run each report in sequence as they appear in the folder

Locking and Unlocking a report

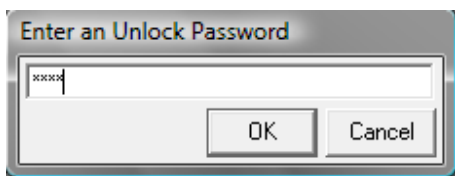
Locking freezes the properties of a report so that it cannot be modified. Users can then only run the report.

Locking a report:

- Select the report that you want to lock
- Click on the Lock icon on the menu bar to lock your report



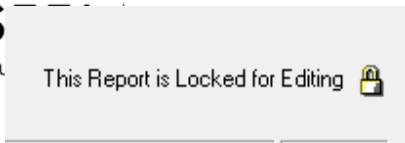
- You will be asked to enter an Unlock Password and then to confirm the Unlock Password



- The report properties will immediately be unavailable

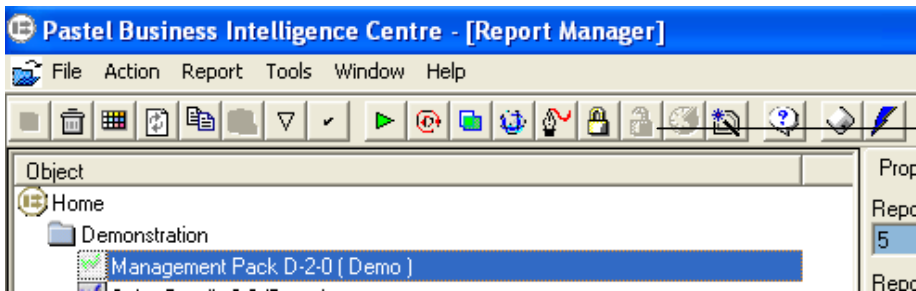
PAS

A C C O U



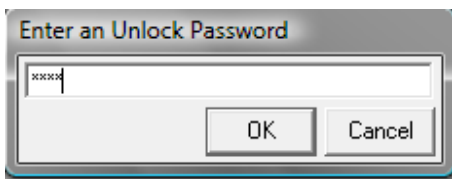
Unlocking a report:

- Click on the Unlock icon



Unlock Icon

- Enter the Unlock password



- The report properties will immediately be available

Using an Excel Workbook as a Data Source

In order to use an existing Excel Workbook as a data source for a report, the data needs to be organized into named ranges.

Naming the Data Ranges

1. Open the workbook in Excel.
2. Make sure that the data is stored with accurate headings so that when expressions are added, the data remains meaningful.
3. Select the data required for report writing purposes by highlighting it.
4. Select Formulas, Define Names

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Excel interface with the 'Formulas' tab selected. A 'New Name' dialog box is open, showing the following details:

- Name:** (empty text box)
- Scope:** Workbook
- Comment:** (empty text area)
- Refers to:** =Sheet1!\$A:\$F

The background shows a data table with the following content:

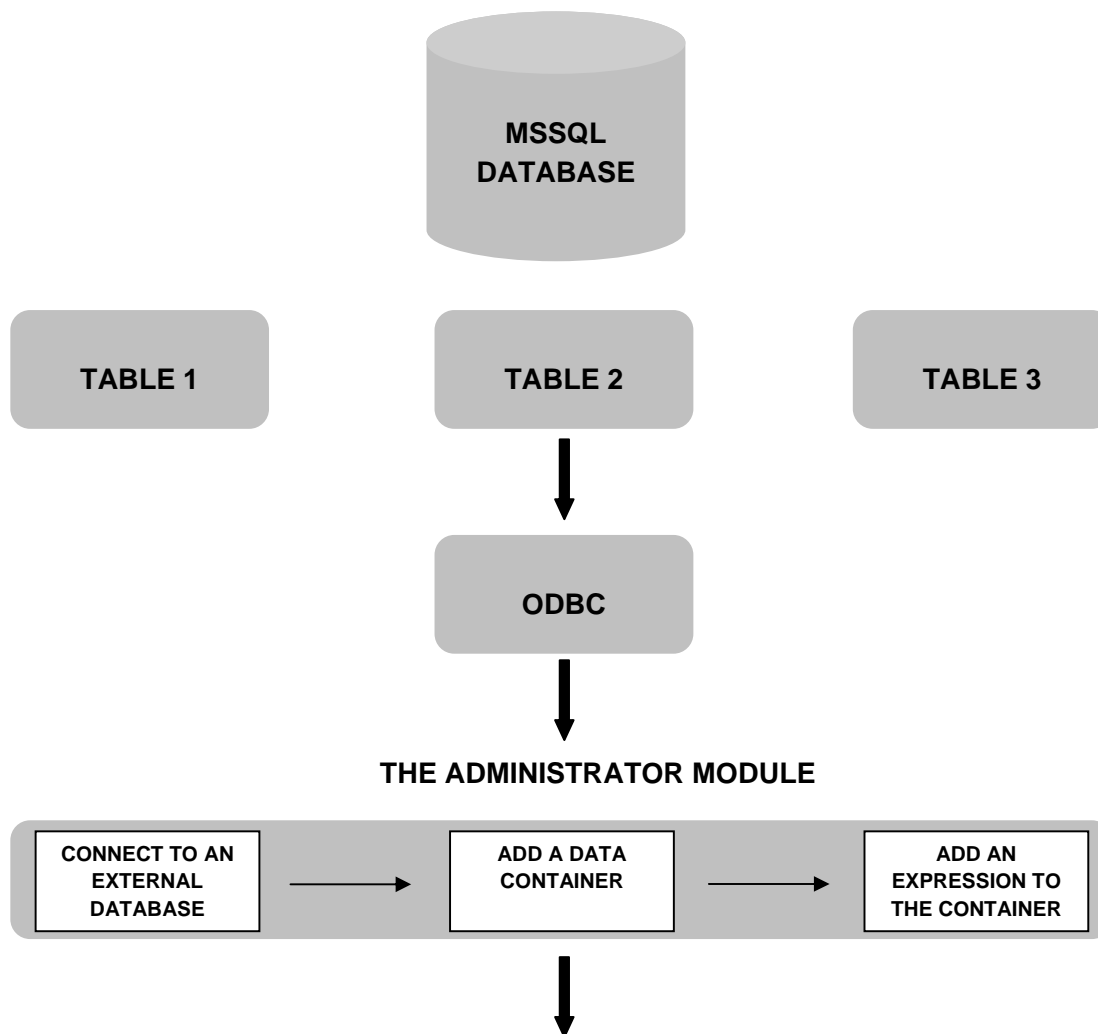
	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	CustomerCodeName	ProductCodeName	SalesPersonName	Store	Qty	TotalSale
2	ARCH01-ARCH'S BAKERY	BOHE01-Bohemian Grapey Tea	FRED	DBN	3	464.52
3	ARCH01-ARCH'S BAKERY	BX0009-B & X Wholenuts	TOM	DBN	3	3231.29
4	ARCH01-ARCH'S BAKERY	CRYS03-Crystal Puddle Ranberry Juice	DAVE	DBN	16	3149.15
5	ARCH01-ARCH'S BAKERY	RONA01-Ronalds Dried Basil	DAVE	DBN	114	19705.54
6	ARCH01-ARCH'S BAKERY	YARD01-Yardville Health Ale	DAVE	DBN	3	270.97

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An overview of the Report Creation Process

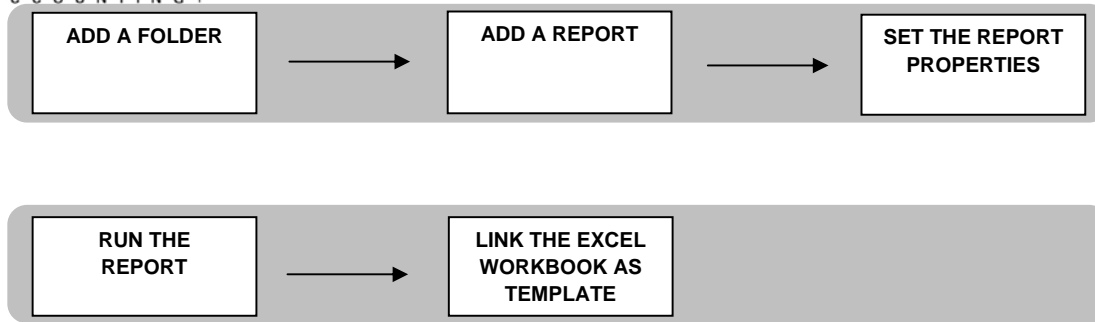
In order to create a report from first principles you need to follow the following process:

- You need to have a connection to the database that you wish to create your report on
- You need to understand which tables and fields within this database are required to generate your report and the location of these tables and fields
- You can then create a container that references these tables and fields
- Once the container has been created you can create your report and add the expressions to the report as required
- You can also add any filters or parameters that might be required to the report at this time
- Once you have edited the report layout in Excel remember to link your Excel template back to the report so that you don't lose any of your changes
- The diagram below graphically represents this process



PASTEL | EVOLUTION THE REPORT MANAGER MODULE

ACCOUNTING



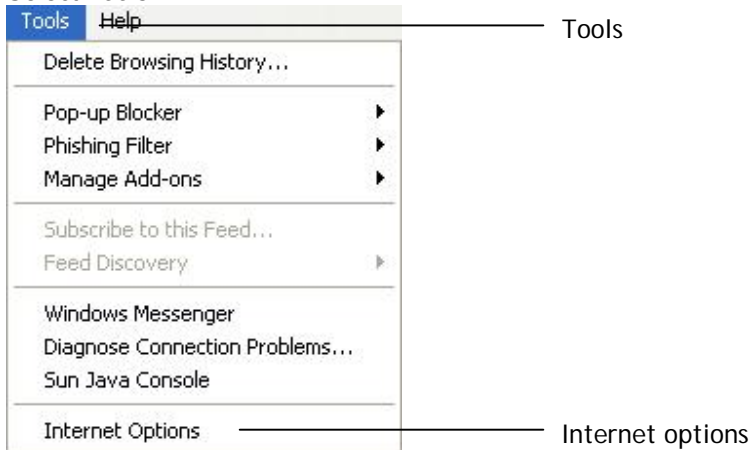
Updating BIC through a Proxy

If you need to update BIC, but access to the internet is via a proxy server, you need to add the Proxy to BIC.

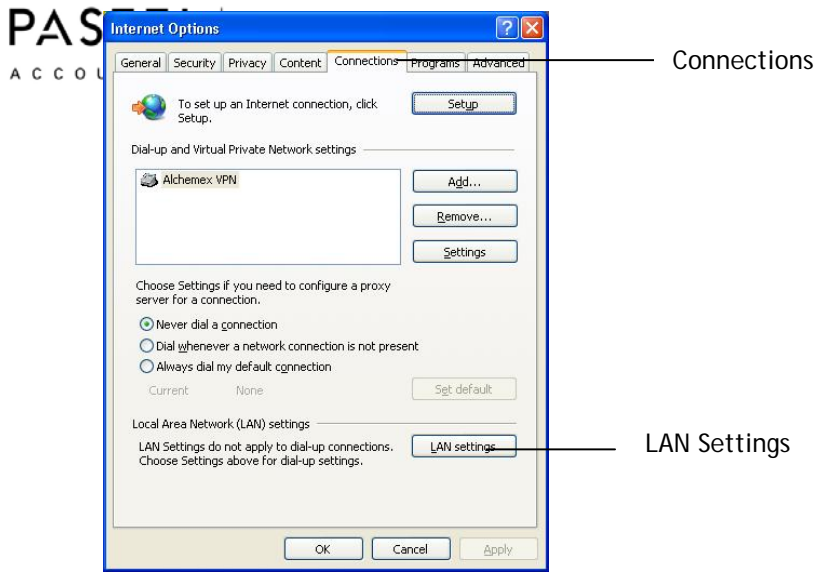
Firstly, make sure of your Proxy Settings. The best way to eliminate any errors is to copy your proxy settings from Internet Explorer

Copy Proxy Settings

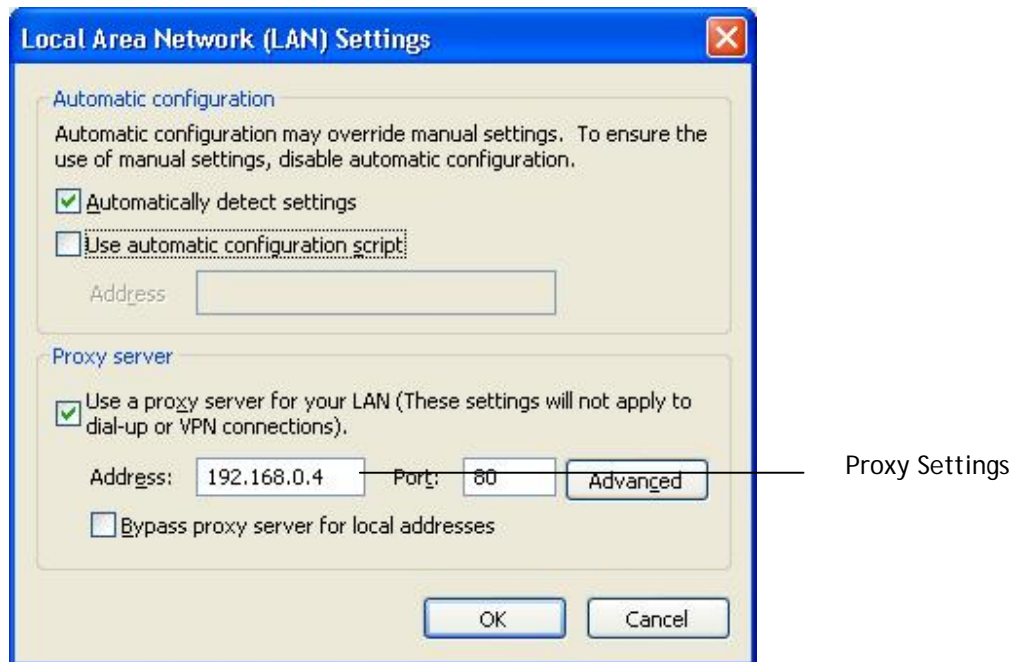
1. Open Internet Explorer
2. Select Tools



3. Select Internet Options
4. Select the tab Connections
5. Then select LAN Settings



6. Under Proxy server, highlight and copy the proxy settings

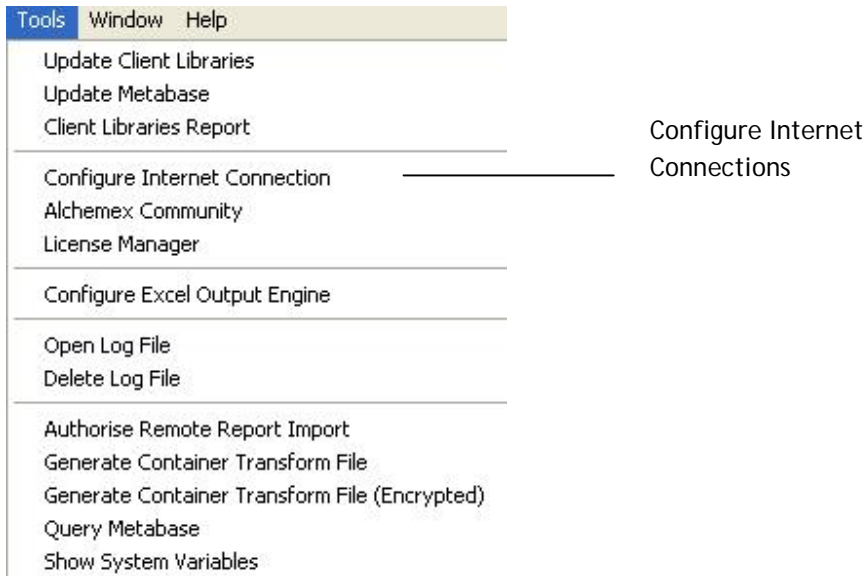


7. Make a note of the Port Settings

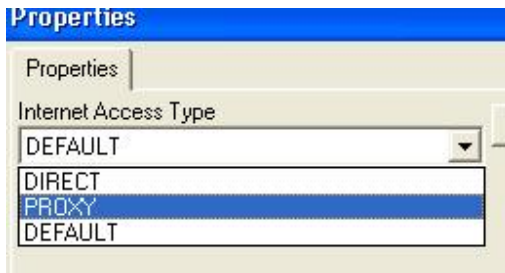
Now add the proxy to BIC

ACCOUNTING

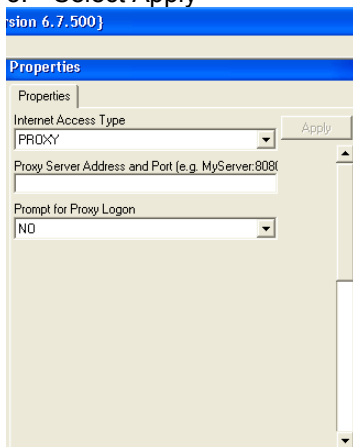
1. Open BIC administrator
2. Go to Tools
3. Select Configure Internet Connection



4. Under Properties select the drop down arrow, then select Proxy

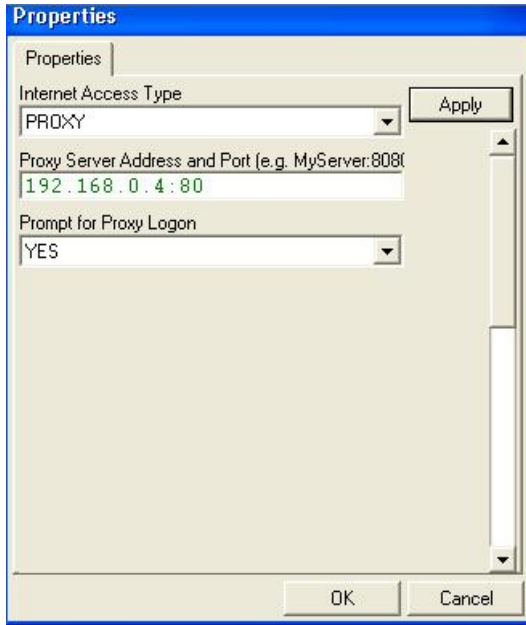


5. Select Apply



6. Under Proxy server Address and Port

PASTE | Paste the Proxy as copied
8. Add a colon
9. Add the port



10. Select OK

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How to protect the output book

When using BIC, it might be necessary to protect the Microsoft Excel file from being edited by unauthorized persons.

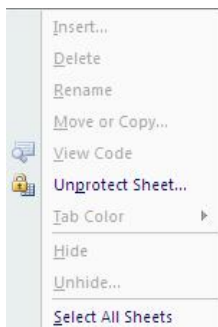
When you have protected the Microsoft Excel workbook the following occurs:

- When attempting to edit anything on the sheet, the below message will appear:



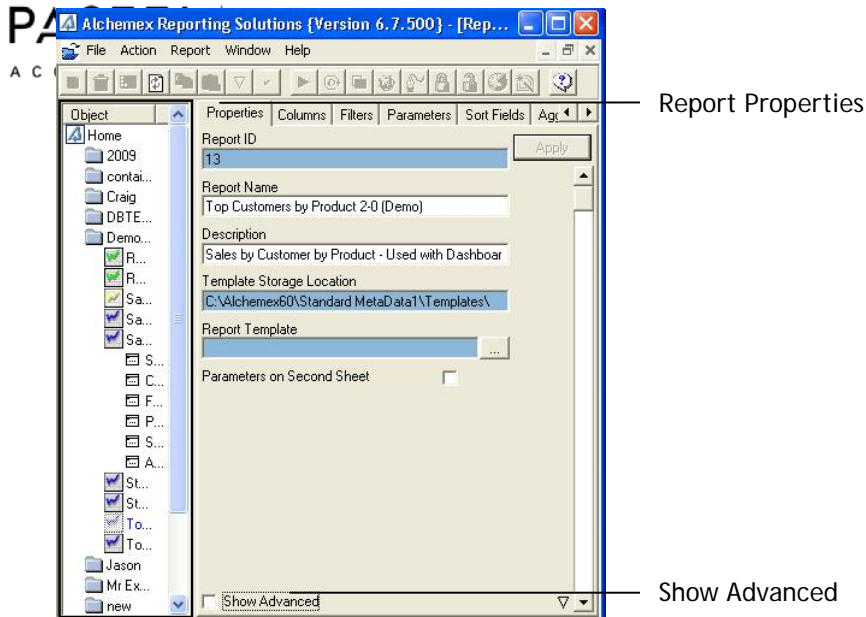
This applies to data input and formatting changes.

- The only available worksheet right click options are **Unprotect sheet** and **Select All Sheets**

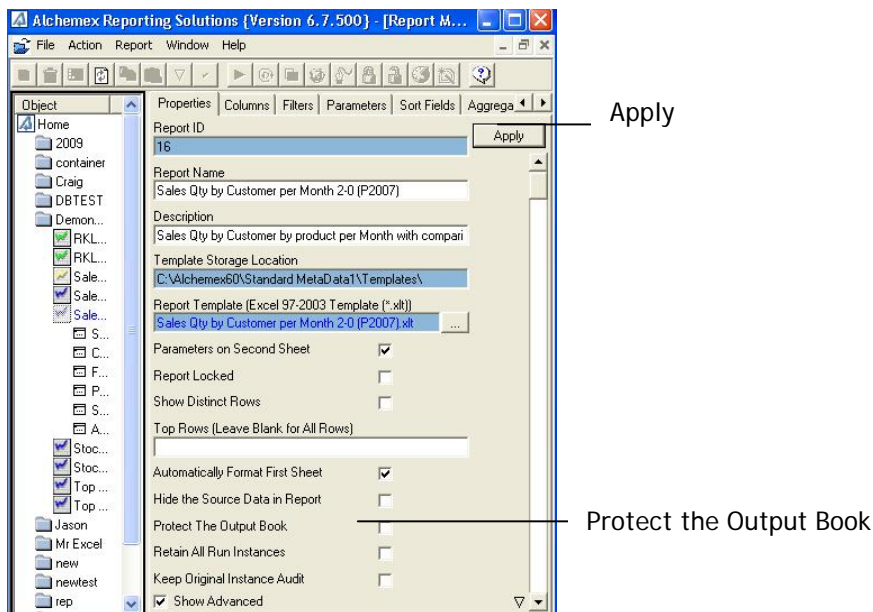


In BIC Report Manager, select the relevant report

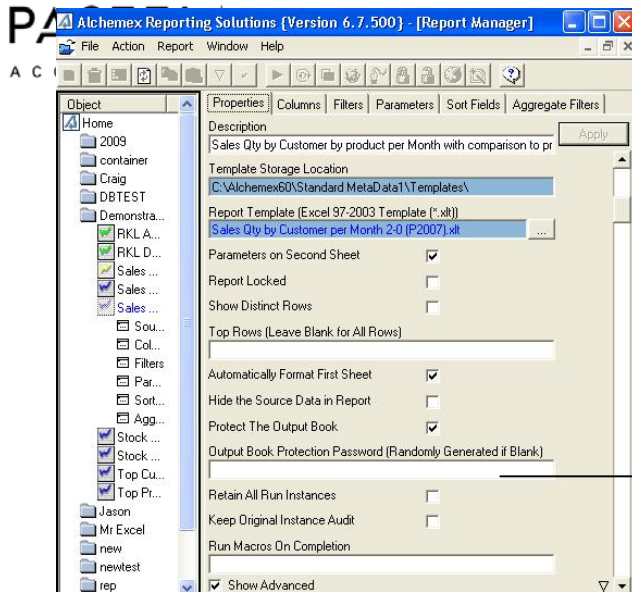
1. Under Properties, select Show Advanced



2. Select Protect Output Book
3. Select Apply

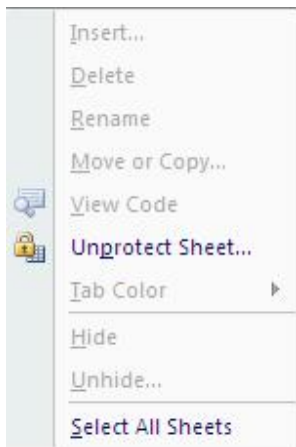


4. As soon as it is applied, a field called **Output Book Protection Password (Randomly Selected if Blank)** will become available, we recommend that you enter your own password into this field so that you are able to unprotect the output book at a later stage if required.

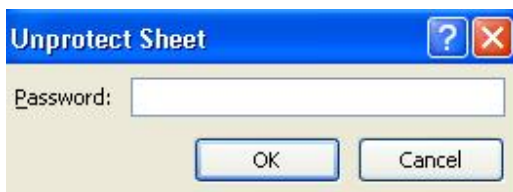


Password field

5. Insert a password, taking note that this field is case sensitive
6. Run the report as normal
7. Notice that no changes can be made to the Microsoft Excel Workbook
8. To unprotect the sheet, select the sheet and then select **Unprotect Sheet**



9. The following screen will open:



10. Insert the password and select **OK**

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ACCOUNTING

The worksheet is now unprotected and can be edited.

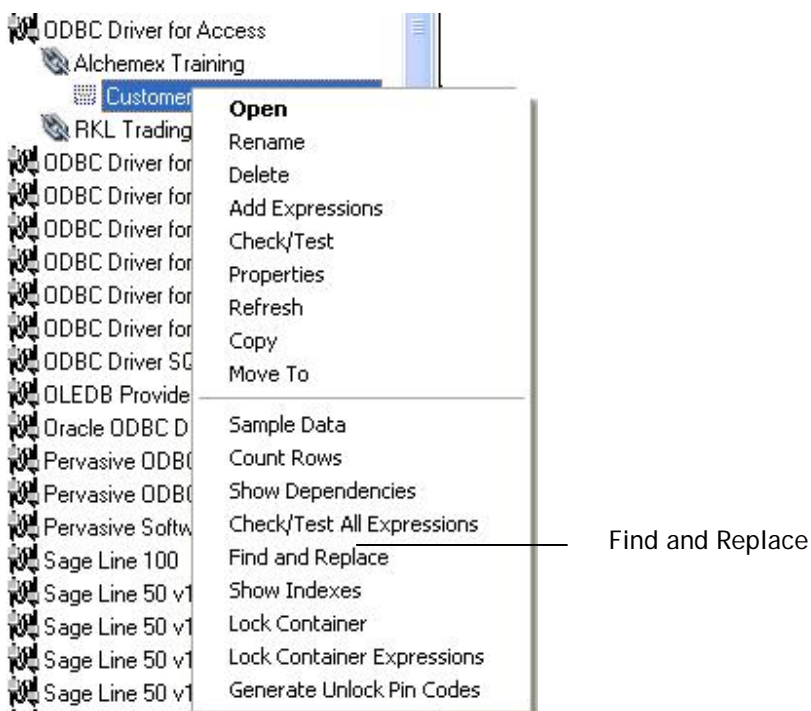
Using Find and Replace in BIC

The database we connect to via BIC has grown and we decided to change some of the table names. Is there a quick way of changing the database table names in a container in BIC?

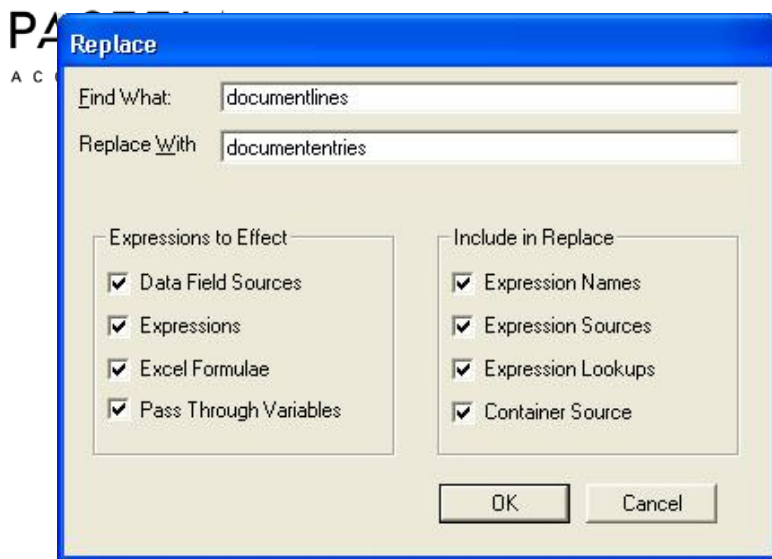
Yes, by using the Find and Replace feature.

Method

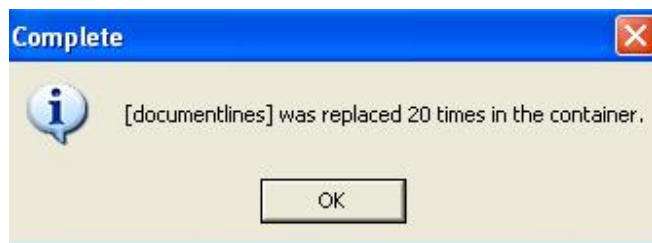
1. Right click on the container
2. Select Find and Replace



3. Enter the existing table name under **Find What** and the new name under **Replace With**



4. Tick all expressions you would like to effect and also select what to include in the Replace by selecting the relevant tick boxes.
5. Select OK
6. The following screen will confirm that the find and replace was successful



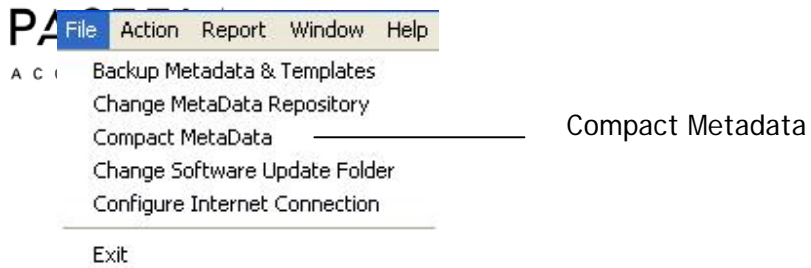
Compact Metadata Functionality

This functionality is handy when Time-out errors occur at runtime as a result of a large and sluggish alchemex.svd file.

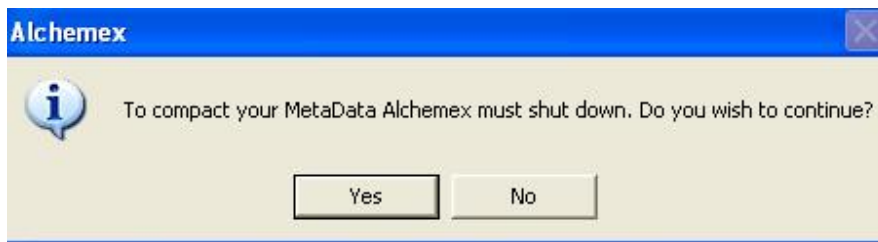
Compacting the alchemex.svd file will reduce the size of the file as it removes any unnecessary unassociated connections that were recorded, as well as any other background files.

Method

1. Select File
2. Then select Compact Metadata

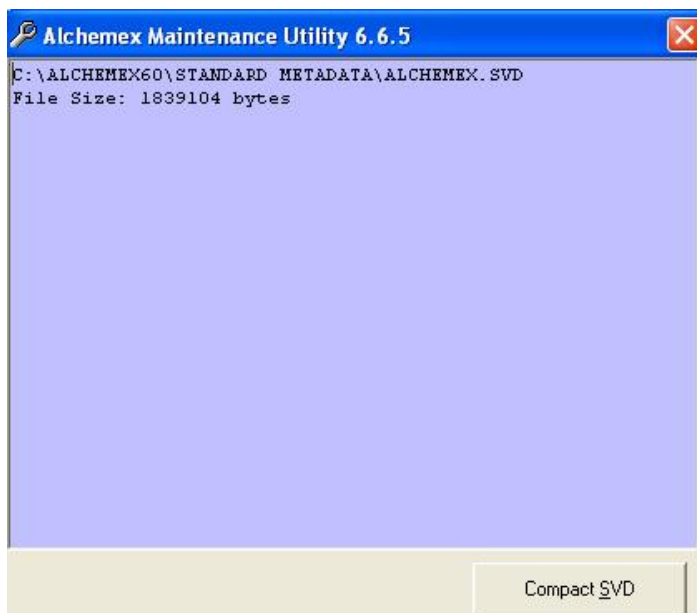


3. A message that BIC must shut down will appear



4. Select Yes

5. The following will then open

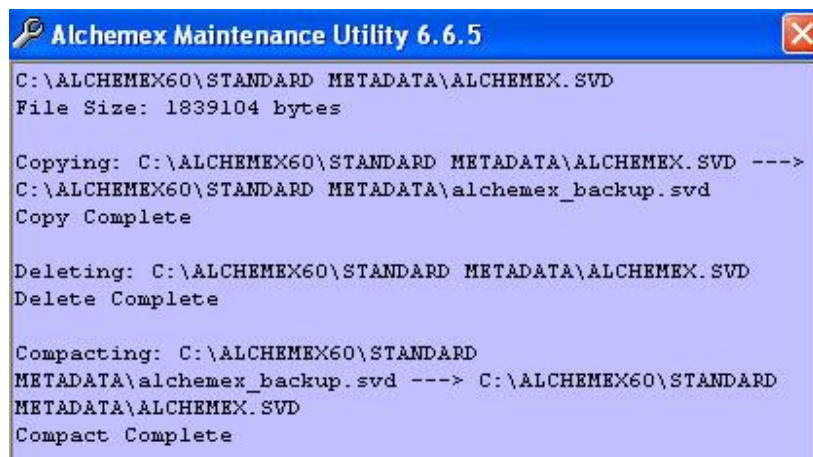


6. Select Compact SVD

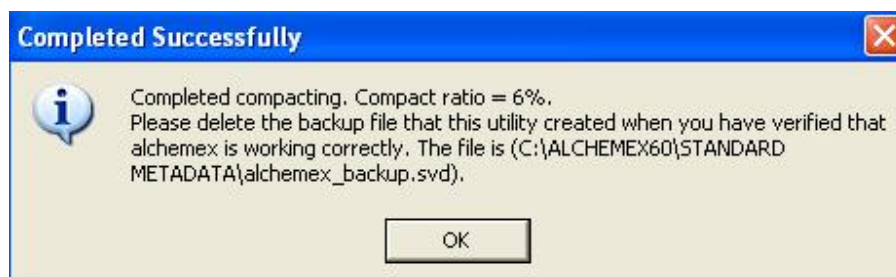
7. A Confirm message box will open



8. Select Yes
9. The BIC Maintenance Utility window will be populated with commands as it gets executed



10. When it has completed, the following message will appear, asking you to delete the backup file after verifying that BIC is working correctly



11. Select OK
12. The backup file can either be deleted or kept as an additional backup

PASTEL | EVOLUTION Picklist Functionality

It is sometimes useful for reports to prompt for connection information at runtime. This way a user can specify where the data is coming from.

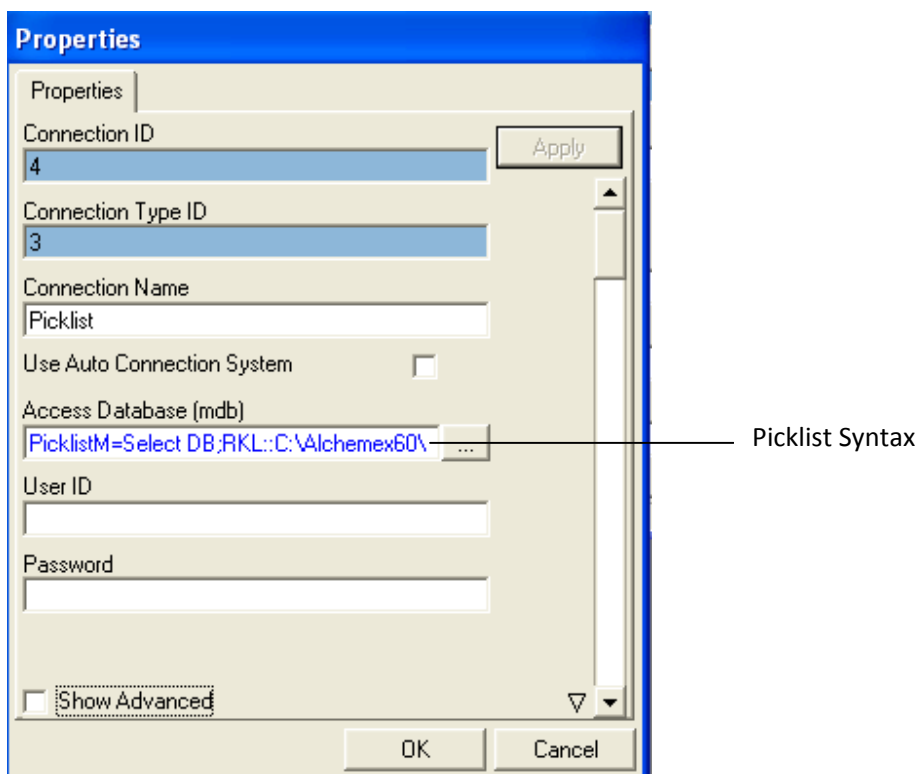
A connection needs to be modified in the Administrator Module to be dynamic. The properties of this connection need to be modified to use PICKLIST functionality.

The PICKLIST supplies a user with a choice of databases when running a report, giving the user the option to select which databases to run a report from.

Sometimes this Picklist does not work as expected, even though the syntax is correct, especially when running off a number of companies.

This raises the question whether there is a limit to the amount of companies/databases BIC can connect to using a Picklist?

The only limitation however is the number of characters allowed in defining a lookup for an expression such as the syntax for the Picklist.



Previously the limit was 255 characters.

With the release of BIC version 6.7.0.515 this number was increased to 65 000.

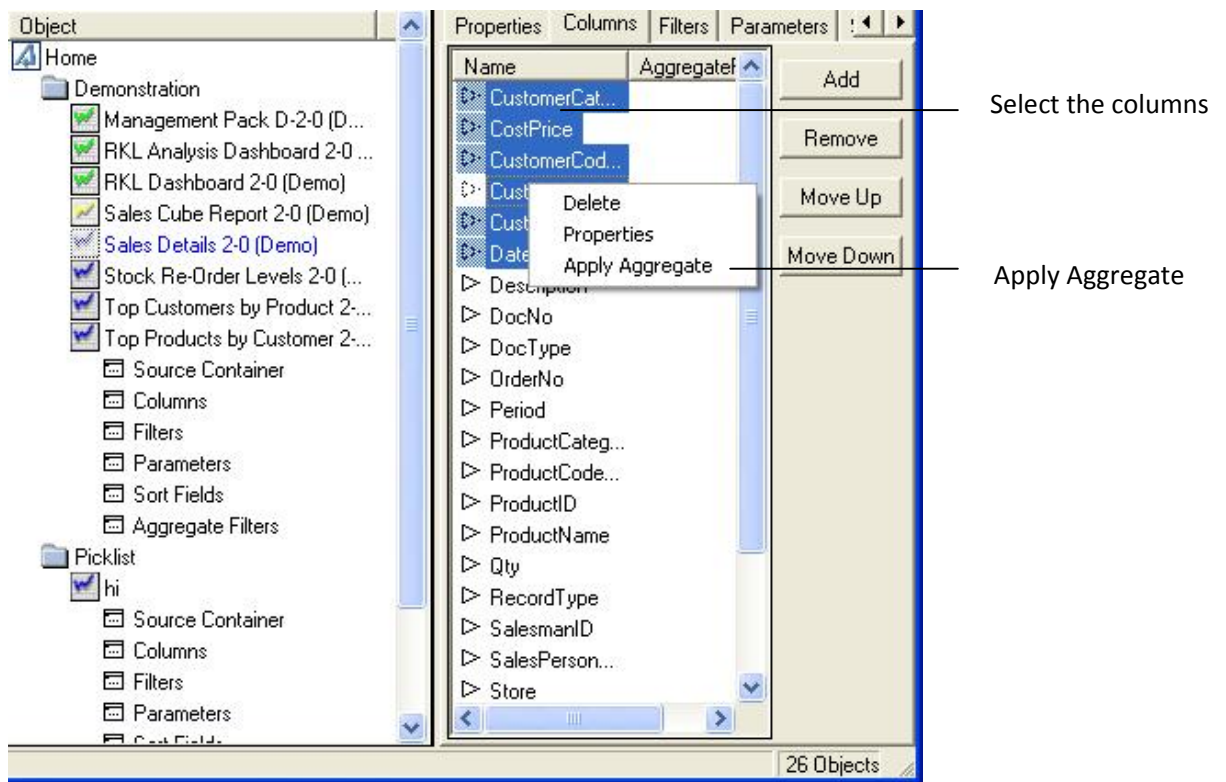
Aggregate Filter

I would like to apply an aggregate filter (Count) to a number of columns. Is there a quick way In BIC to apply the aggregate to multiple columns?

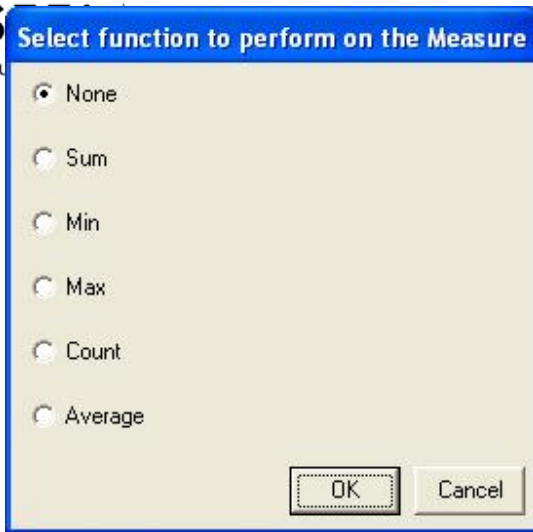
Yes, by right clicking on the selected columns and applying the aggregate filter.

Method

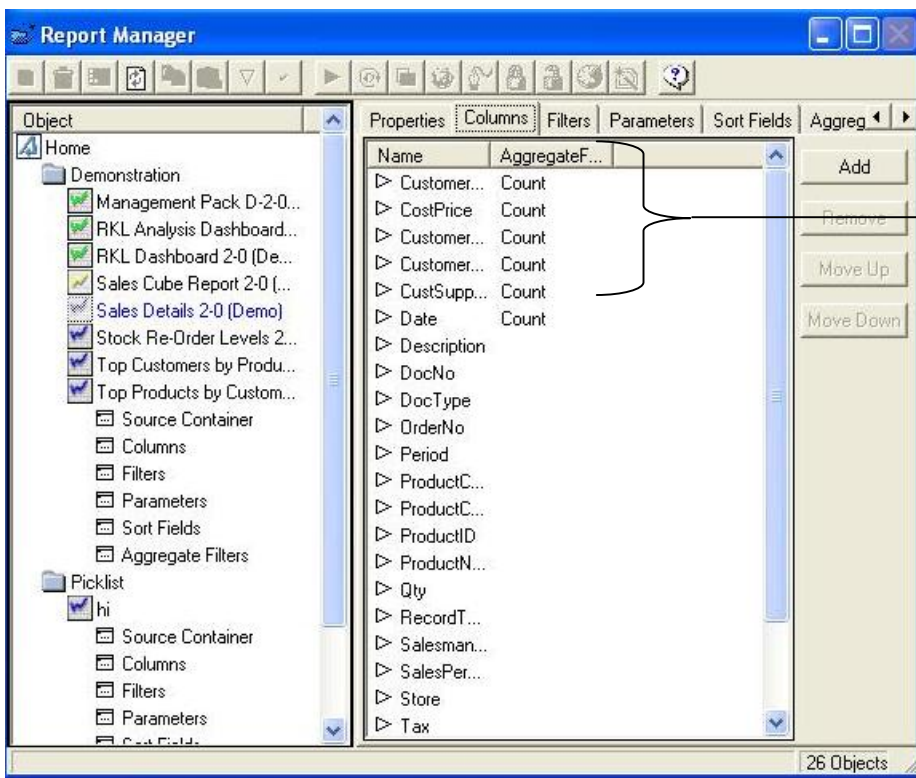
1. Select the columns
2. Rightclick and select Apply Aggregate



3. Select the function you would like to apply across the columns



4. Select OK
5. The aggregate function will now be applied to multiple columns



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Add Dataless Report

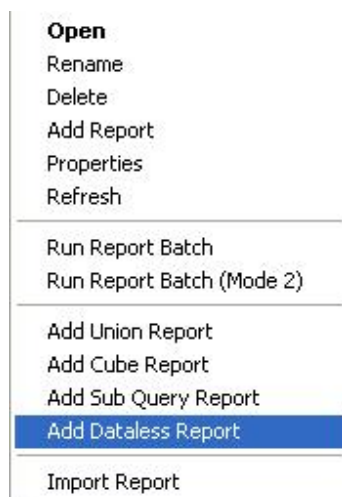
Picklists allow you to consolidate data from same and disparate databases. What if you need to consolidate data from sources other than a database?

BIC allows you to add a Dataless Report for the purpose of consolidating data from sources other than a database.

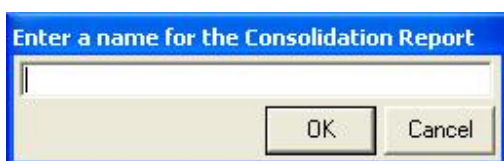
The Dataless report does not access any database but rather activates an Excel workbook that contains Macros designed to consolidate information from workbooks that you have stored previously in other reports.


Method

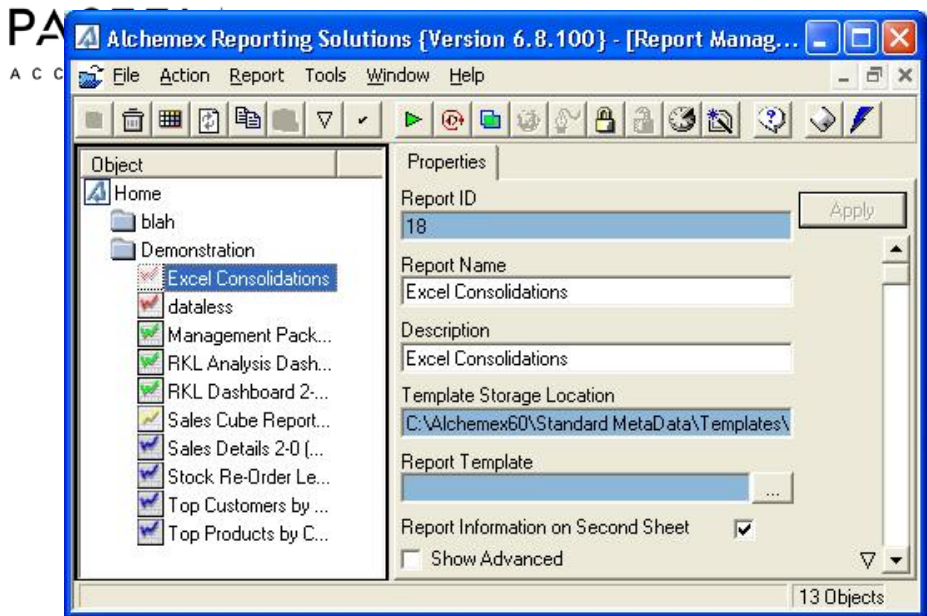
1. In the Report Manager Module, right click on the report folder
2. Select Add Dataless Report



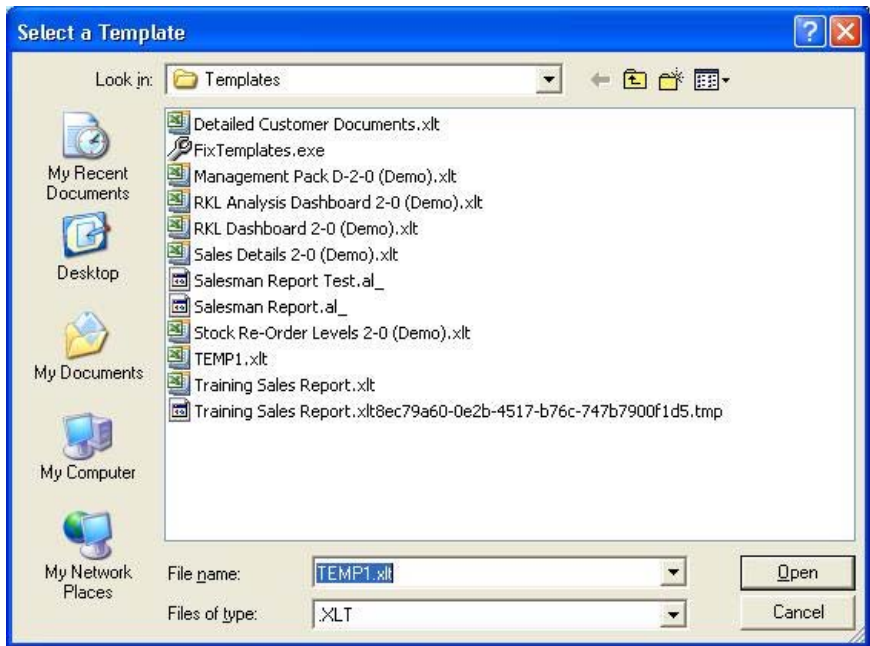
3. Enter a name for the Dataless report in the displayed box



4. Select OK
5. Notice the report icon  , indicating that it is a dataless report
6. You will now need to link this Dataless report to an Excel book that contains the functional macros
7. Select the Report and then select the browse button next to the Report Template



8. Navigate to the report that contains the functional macros



9. Select Open

10. The report will now be linked to the Dataless Report folder:

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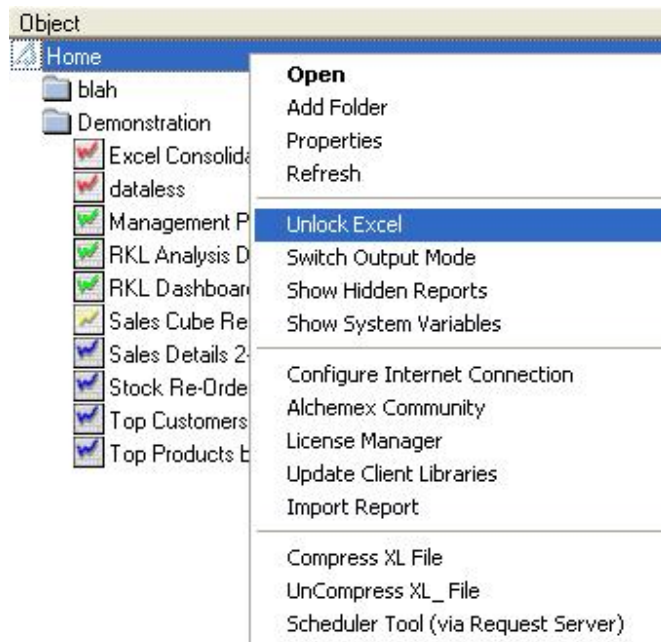
Unlock MS^oExcel

I made some changes to a report, now when the report runs, Excel is frozen. How can I unlock Excel?

When BIC runs a report out to Excel it takes control of Excel and prevents user interaction with Excel. If a report runs into rendering problems, it is possible that Excel can be left locked. Excel can however be unlocked in BIC.

Method

1. In the Report Manager Module, select the Home object
2. Right click and select Unlock Excel



3. Excel will now be unlocked and user interaction will be allowed again

PASTEL | EVOLUTION System Variables

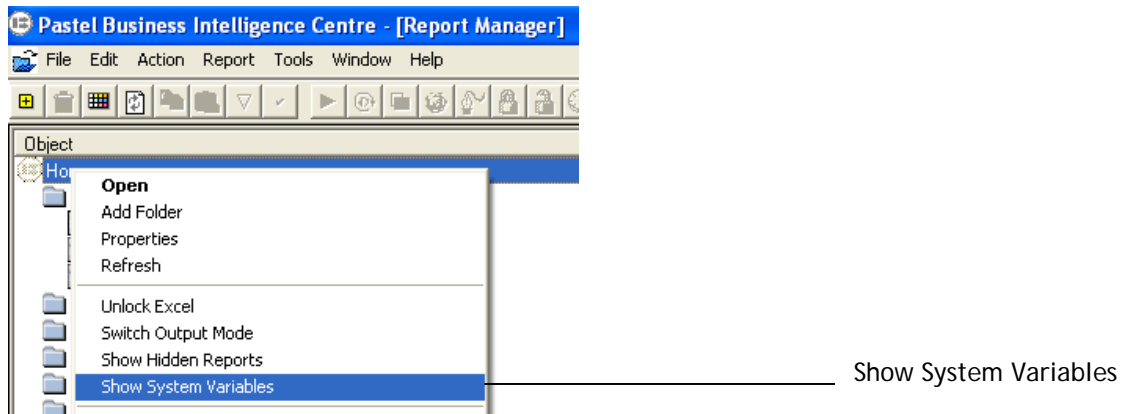
I am using Windows Scheduler to run my reports unattended. Is there a way of adding the run date of these reports to the filename?

Yes, by using a System Variable.

Method

View System Variables

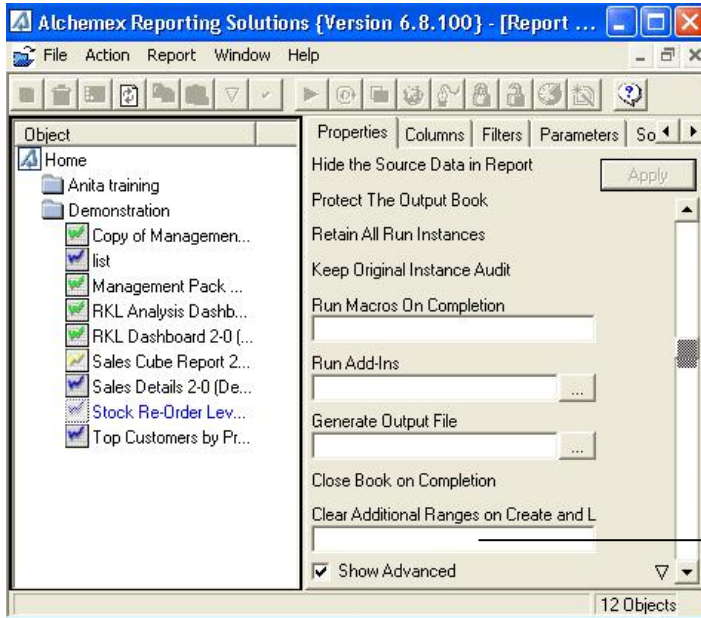
1. View the available System Variables in BIC by right clicking Home in the Report Manager module and selecting Show System Variables



2. A list of available System Variables will be displayed, note the name and the field Current Value of the variable:

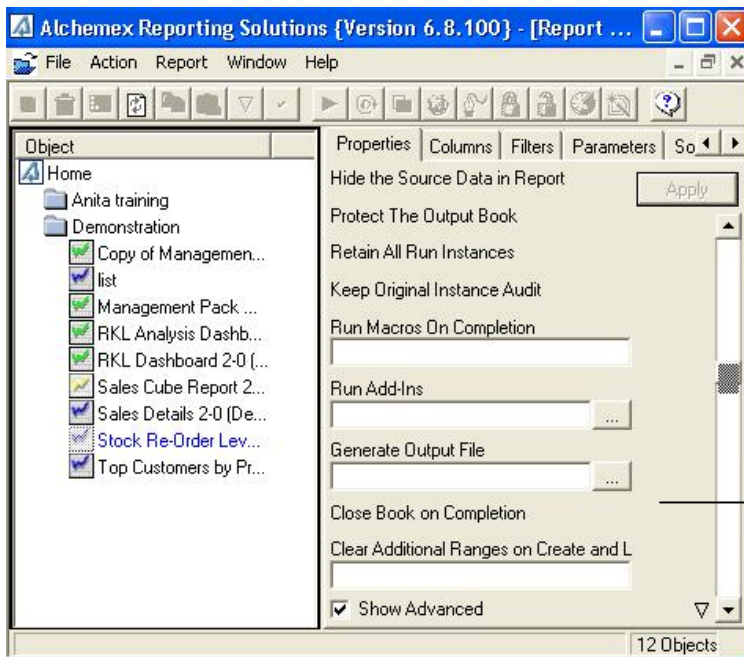
ID	Name	Current Value	Type ID	Type
0	@DATE@	21 August 2009	1	Standard
1	@YEAR@	2009	1	Standard
2	@MONTH@	8	1	Standard
3	@DAY@	21	1	Standard
4	@MONTHNAME@	August	1	Standard
5	@WEEKDAY@	6	1	Standard
6	@DAYNAME@	Friday	1	Standard
7	@MONTHSTART@	01 August 2009	1	Standard
8	@MONTHEND@	31 August 2009	1	Standard
9	@PRIORYEAR@	2008	1	Standard
10	@PRIORYEAR1@	2008	1	Standard
11	@PRIORYEAR2@	2007	1	Standard
12	@PRIORYEAR3@	2006	1	Standard
13	@PRIORYEAR4@	2005	1	Standard
14	@PRIORYEAR5@	2004	1	Standard
15	@NEXTYEAR@	2010	1	Standard
16	@NEXTYEAR1@	2010	1	Standard
17	@NEXTYEAR2@	2011	1	Standard
18	@NEXTYEAR3@	2012	1	Standard
19	@NEXTYEAR4@	2013	1	Standard
20	@NEXTYEAR5@	2014	1	Standard
21	@TIME@	11:46:40 AM	1	Standard
22	@QUARTER@	3	1	Standard
23	@SYSTEMUSER@	Myrtle	1	Standard
24	@WORKSTATION@	RECEP\JHB	1	Standard
25	@LOGINNAME@		1	Standard
26	@APPPATH@	C:\Alchemex60	1	Standard
27	@APPEXE@	Alchemex.exe	1	Standard
28	@APPVERSION@	6.8.100	1	Standard
29	@DLLPATH@	C:\Program Files\Common...	1	Standard
30	@USER_ACCESS_LEVEL@	0	1	Standard

1. In the Report Manager module, select the report you would like to schedule and select Show Advanced on the properties of the report



Select Show Advanced

2. Select the Generate Output File field

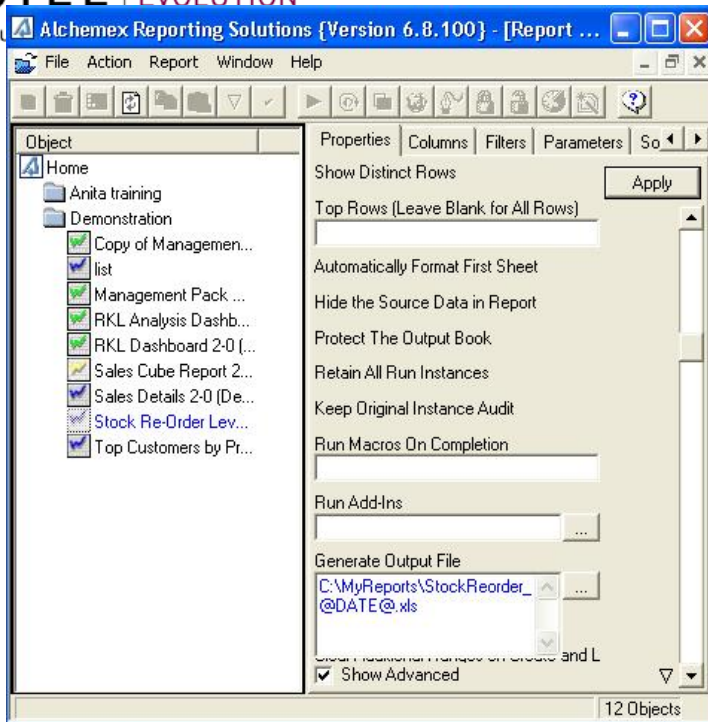


Select Generate Output File

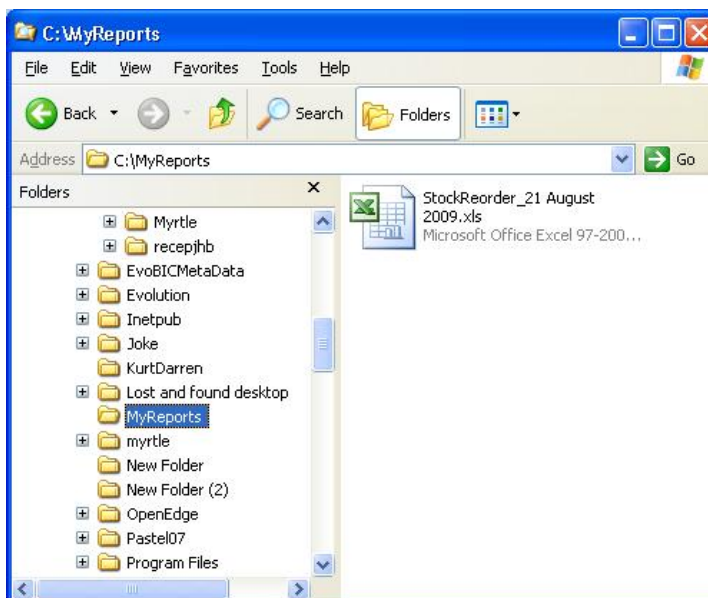
3. Specify a full file path and name for the file, include the @DATE@ variable, such as: C:\MyReports\StockReorder_@DATE@.xls

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4. The scheduled report will now be saved with the date included in the file name:



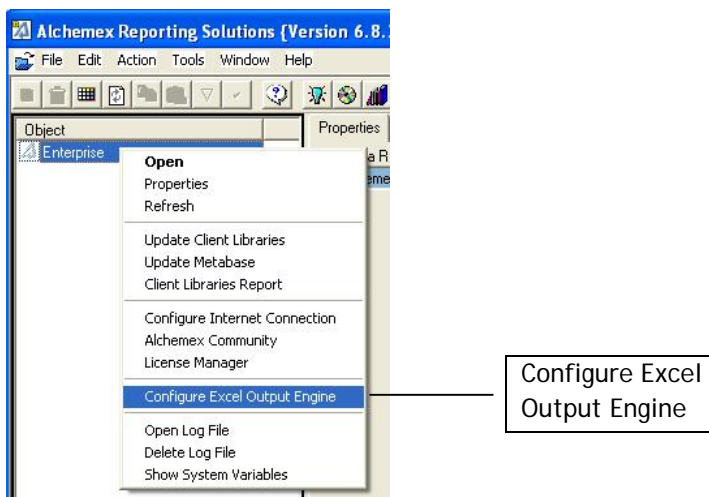
Activate Reports

I would like to ensure Excel is activated and brought to the front of my desktop when a report finishes running.

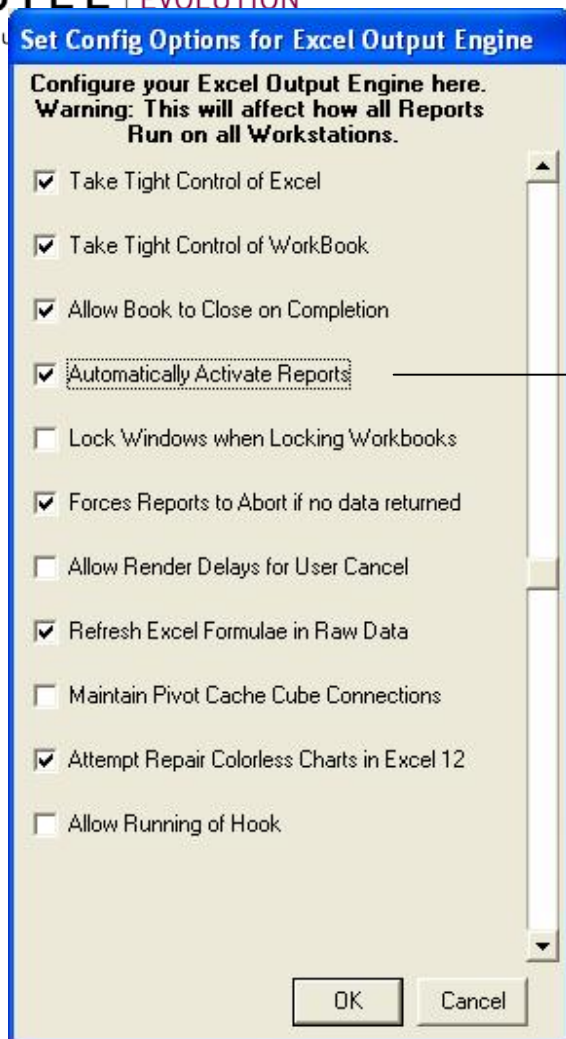
You need to ensure the Automatically Activate Reports Option is selected.

Method

1. When opening the Administrator Module, right click on Enterprise and select Configure Excel Output Engine



2. Make sure the Automatically Activate Reports option is selected (it normally is by default)



Automatically Activate Reports

3. Select OK
4. Now when a report is completed, Excel will be activated and brought to the front of your desktop session.

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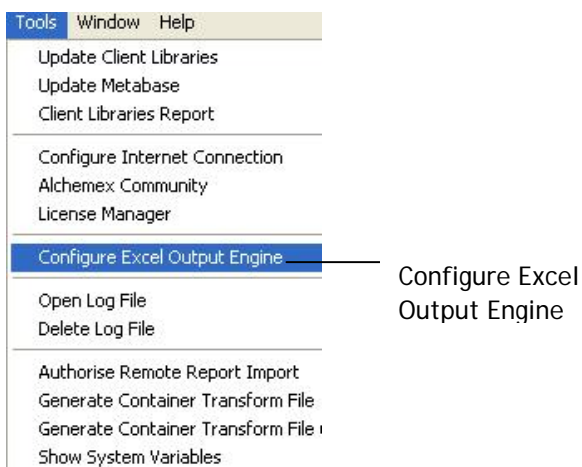
Delaying Recalculation

I have a large report with several companies that are being consolidated. Each time I run the report it renders and calculates data. Is there a way to force BIC not to calculate and then do the calculation by macro once all data has been rendered?

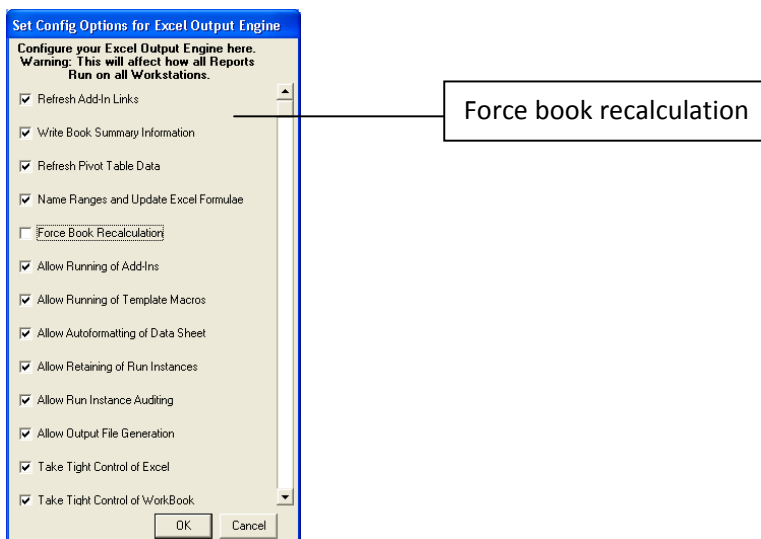
Yes, in BIC you can delay the recalculation.

Method 1

7. In the Administrator module, go to Tools, then go to Configure Excel Output Engine



8. On the Set Config Options deselect Force Book Recalculation



9. Select OK

Adding my own defined System Variables

Our company has worldwide branches and would like to cater for the different Month and Year ends.

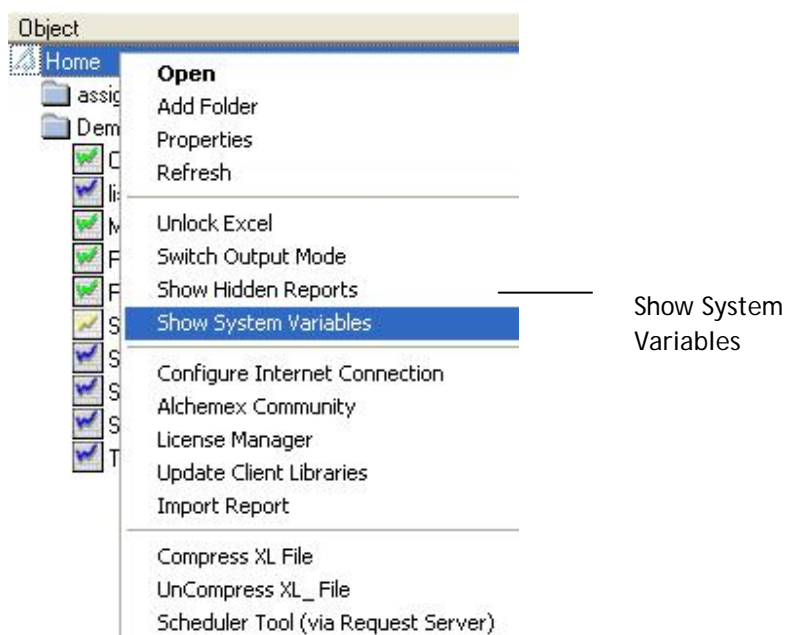
I am currently using the System Variable @DATE@, but can I add my own variable?

Yes you can, by defining the Variable in the BIC.ini file.

Method

To view the existing list of System Variables:

1. From the Report Manager Module, right-click on Home and select Show System Variables, or from the Administrator Module, right-click on Enterprise and select Show System Variables



2. This will show all currently defined System Variables

ID	Name	Current Value	Type ID
28	@APPVERSION@	6.8.100	1
29	@DLLPATH@	C:\Program File...	1
30	@USER_ACCESS_LEVEL_ID@	0	1
31	@SECURITY_MODEL_ID@	0	1
32	@CUBEPATH@	C:\Alchemex60...	1
33	@TEMPLATEPATH@	C:\Alchemex60...	1
34	@CURRCOMPANY@		1
35	@DATASETINDEX@	0	1
36	@AUTO_CONN_CATALOG@		1
37	@AUTO_CONN_SERVER@		1
38	@AUTO_CONN_USER@		1
39	@LAST_CONN_CATALOG@		1
40	@LAST_CONN_SERVER@		1
41	@LAST_CONN_USER@		1
42	@AUTO_CONN_DW_CATALOG@		3
43	@AUTO_CONN_DW_SERVER@		3
44	@AUTO_CONN_DW_USER@		3
47	@AUTO_CONN_CUBES_FOLDER@		1
48	@RANDOM_GUID@	d7b1f775-0b1c-...	1
49	@RANDOM_INTEGER@	7055	1

- To define your own System Variable, go to the Alchemex.ini file. By default this is installed under C:\Program Files\Pastel Evolution

```

L,PLSERIAL.DLL,PLUPDATE.DLL,PLINOUT.DLL,PLPLUGA.DLL
,PLPLUGB.DLL,PLPLUGC.DLL,PLPLUGD.DLL,PLPLUGE.DLL
AdminRequiredLibraries=
AddinLibraries=PLPVSSRV.DLL,PLDEALER.DLL
[Trigger]
FirstRunUpdates=NO
[Cube]
DefaultCubeFilePath=C:\Alchemex60\Standard MetaData\Cubes
[ETL]
ApplySQLTranslate=1
[GlobalSysVars]
Active=@COUNTRYAFINYEAREND@,@COUNTRYAFINYEAREND@
REND@
@COUNTRYAFINYEAREND@=01 June 2009
@COUNTRYAFINYEAREND@=31 May 2010
    
```

- Add the following, each variable must be added on a separate line, then save the file:

```

[GlobalSysVars]
Active=@COUNTRYAFINYEAREND@,@COUNTRYAFINYEAREND@
@COUNTRYAFINYEAREND@=01 June 2009
@COUNTRYAFINYEAREND@=31 May 2010
    
```

- The new variable will be added under the System Variables:

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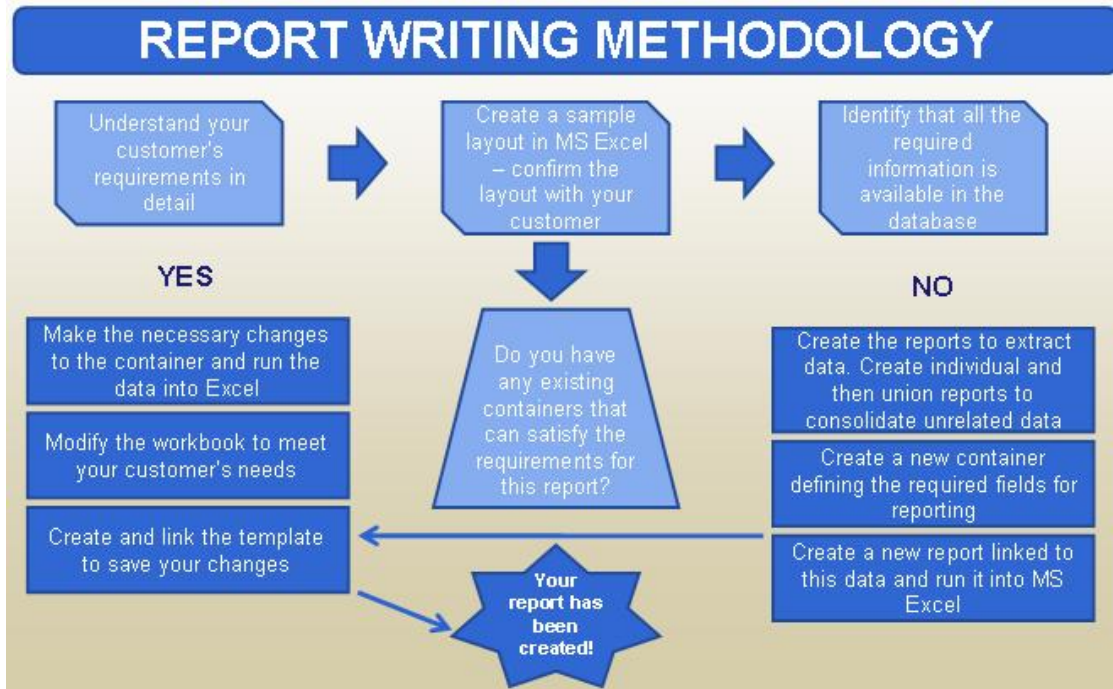
ID	Name	Current Value	Typ...	Type
33	@TEMPLATEP...	C:\Alchemex6...	1	Standard
34	@CURRCOMP...		1	Standard
35	@DATASETIN...	0	1	Standard
36	@AUTO_CON...		1	Standard
37	@AUTO_CON...		1	Standard
38	@AUTO_CON...		1	Standard
39	@LAST_CONN...		1	Standard
40	@LAST_CONN...		1	Standard
41	@LAST_CONN...		1	Standard
42	@AUTO_CON...		3	[Null]
43	@AUTO_CON...		3	[Null]
44	@AUTO_CON...		3	[Null]
47	@AUTO_CON...		1	Standard
48	@RANDOM_G...	7b514c81-a17...	1	Standard
49	@RANDOM_I...	7055	1	Standard
97	@COUNTRYA...	01 June 2009	2	Custom
98	@COUNTRYA...	31 May 2010	2	Custom

Please note that because the System Variables are defined in the Alchemex.ini file, Custom System Variables will vary from site to site. If they are used on a report intended for distribution then the same definitions need to be created at the destination site. Ordinary System Variables are available to all BIC sites without having to create them.

Report Writing

Report Writing Methodology

1. Always ensure you understand your reporting requirements in detail
2. Create a simple layout in MS Excel and confirm this is the layout required
3. Identify that all the information you would like in your report is available in the database.
4. Check if you have existing containers that can satisfy the requirements for this report
5. If you do have containers: Make the necessary changes to the container and run the data in Excel
6. Modify the workbook and the layout as required.
7. Create and link the new template
8. If you don't have a container: Create a new container defining the required fields for reporting
9. Create a new report linked to this data and run into MS Excel
10. You can also create individual and then union reports to consolidate unrelated data
11. The diagram below graphically represents this process:



Design Mode

I need to make changes to my original template. Is there an easy way to change the design of a report without having to run the report with all the data coming through?

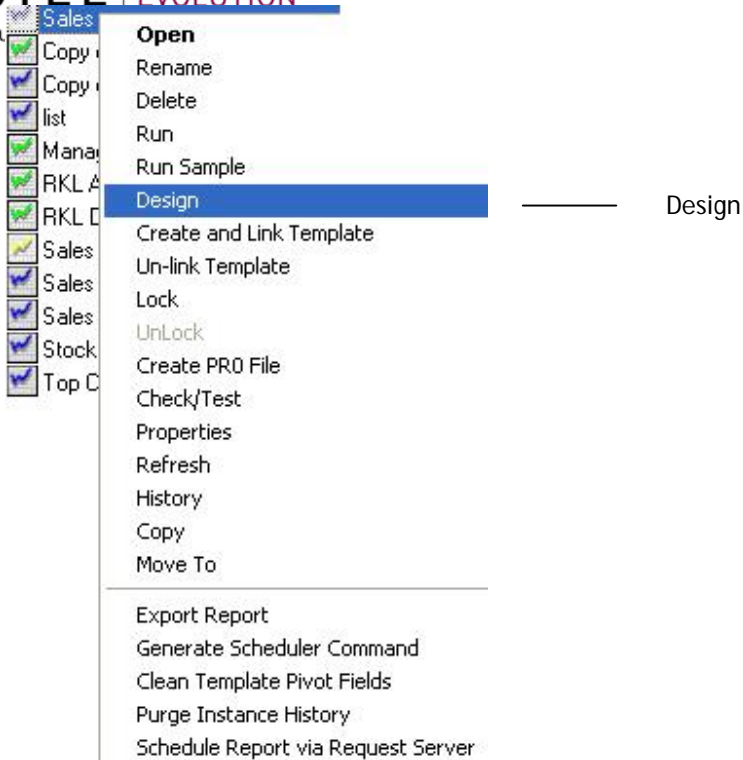
Yes, you can use the Design mode to make changes to a template without running a report.

Method

1. In the Report Manager Module, Select the report you would like to make design changes to, and right click on the report and select Design.

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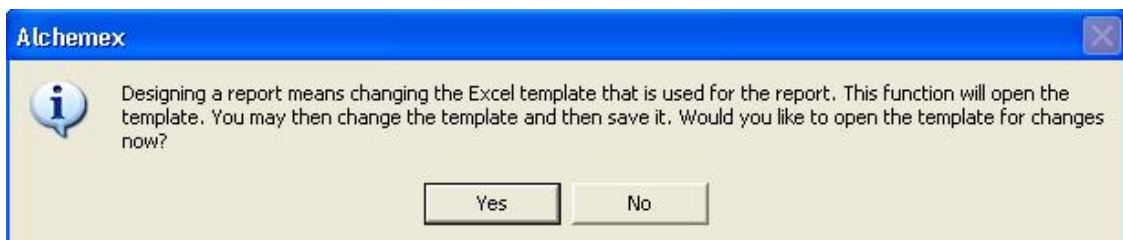
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2. Or, select the Design Icon from the Toolbar



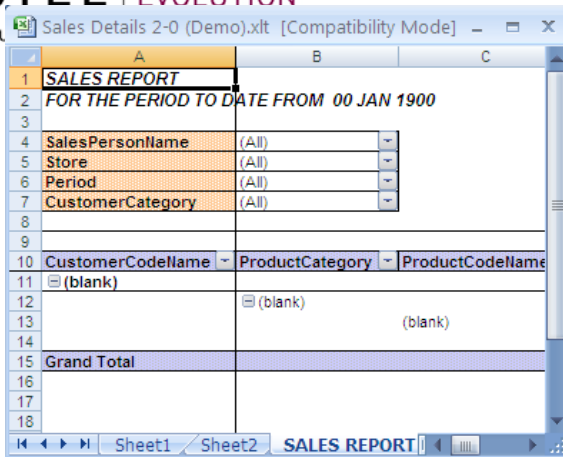
3. The following message box will open



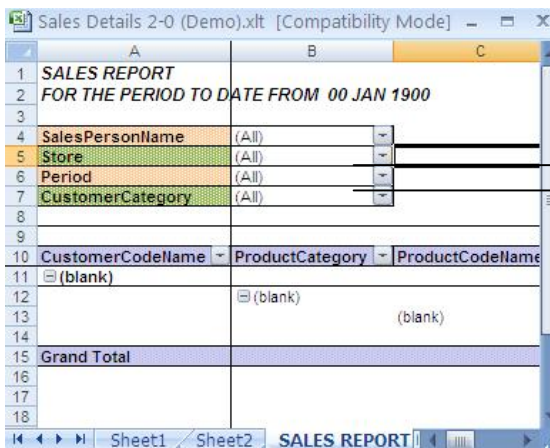
4. Select Yes
5. Your Template will then open

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6. Make your desired changes and save the workbook/template
For example, add company logos, change font, colour etc



Change
colour

7. Now run the report and notice the changes to your Template
8. You can now create and link your newly designed template.

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Useful Links and Contacts

website	<u>www.pastevolution.co.za</u>
email	<u>evolutionsales@pastel.co.za</u>
support	<u>evolutionsupport@pastel.co.za</u>
Evolution BIC Group	<u>http://alchemex.ning.com/group/pastevolutionbic</u>
BIC Training	011 – 304 1400
BIC online training Academy	<u>www.alchemexacademy.com</u>