



Liposuction for Your QuickBooks® File

In the last column I discussed ways to keep your QuickBooks® file from growing “out of its britches”. But **what if your data file already exceeds 50, 60, or even 100 megabytes?** If that's the case, then it's time to consider more drastic measures because (as discussed in our last edition) you are now at a higher risk for:

- Data loss and/or corruption
- Slower transaction entry and report processing
- Faulty backups

There are a variety of reasons that your file may be too large, and you should thoroughly explore the situation before proceeding further. Once you have obtained an understanding of how you arrived in your current condition, **here are five “surgical-style” alternatives** to dealing with an overgrown QuickBooks® file.

Disclaimer and warning: *Although you may be tempted to take on this project in a do-it-yourself mode, I recommend that you undertake the following measures only with professional assistance. I'm sharing these approaches primarily to let you know that there are viable ways to move forward once your data file has become too large. These fixes can be tricky and, if not properly handled, could leave you with undesirable results and/or data loss.*

Option 1. File Rebuild (primarily for Pre-2006 Versions)

You can close all open reports and windows in QuickBooks®, then go to **File**, then **Utilities**, then **Rebuild Data**. You will be asked to create a backup, and the rebuild will begin. I have seen client file sizes reduced significantly simply by re-building. (I often tell clients this is similar to re-packing a messy suitcase after you've been on the road for a week or so!)

Even though you haven't reduced the actual amount of data in your file, you will now have a better picture of your exact file size.

Option 2. Portable Company File Restoration (2006 Versions Only)

If you have upgraded your company file into QB 2006, you may have noticed that your file size increased rather significantly. (The new SQL database is supposed to handle larger file sizes, but it also apparently creates larger file sizes as well.)

Here's an approach that I just applied to my company data file (beginning file size was 113,172K):

- First, I created a Portable Company File (PCF).
-To do this go to **File**, then to **Portable Company Files**, then to **Create File**. You will be asked to create a backup, and then the creation of the Portable Company File will begin.

Results: My newly-created Portable Company File size was 20,459K – significantly smaller than a standard backup file. (Please note that Intuit does not recommend using the PCF instead of a standard backup.)

- The next step was to restore the PCF.
-To do this go to **File**, then to **Portable Company Files**, then to **Open File**. You will need to choose the PFC that you want to restore from, and select the location and name of the file that you want to create. To be extra safe, rather than writing over my original .QBW file, I named the “restored” file with a different name. (Note: If you have restored QuickBooks files from backups before, this process is very similar.)

Results: My newly-restored file was 74,812K: **34% smaller than my original file!**

- This process is similar to the re-build process because even though you haven't reduced the actual amount of data in your file, you will now have a better picture of your exact file size.

An additional note regarding the "re-build" process in 2006 QuickBooks files: I tested the re-build process on my 2006 Enterprise Solutions file and found that, instead of reducing the file size, it actually increased it slightly. I can't predict that you will have the same outcome but that was my experience.

WARNING: When you have multiple QuickBooks® “working” files on your computer or server (files with an extension of “.QBW”), you run the risk of creating “rogue” files. I.e., These occur when users enter data into different files without realizing it.

If you create your new smaller file under a different name, and if you are happy with the results after you have checked the file contents, rename your original file to something like “PRE Date Company QB file.QBW”, and then rename the smaller restored file the same name as your original company was named. (Be sure the “.QBW” extension is included in the file name.)

Giving the prior file a different name, coupled with giving the new file the name previously reserved for the “old” file, will allow current QuickBooks users to automatically open the correct, updated file.

Option 3: File Archive & Condense

This process condenses all “closed” transactions that have posted to individual accounts, removes all details (such as vendor, Customer:Job assignment, and Item) and posts them as summary journal entries (1 entry per account per month for the time frame you indicate). You are still able to run reports that show account balances from prior periods, but the condensed periods won’t display detailed transactions. You will, however, have an archived file to access for details from prior-periods.

Tip: Be very careful about condensing **as you will lose all job costing detail** in the condensed file. This can impact the detailed job cost reports. (Of course the data will always be accessible in your archived file, but you may need to look at two separate reports to see everything.)

- I therefore always suggest leaving at least a full fiscal year’s worth of detail in the current file. For example, in April of 2006, you might condense through December 31 of 2004.
- **But** if you have jobs open in the current period that started prior to that time frame, and you want to run complete reports from the new, condensed file, move your condense date to a time period prior to the start of those jobs!

Option 4: Open a New QuickBooks® Company File

You can create a new company file, enter opening balances, and roll forward. This requires some focused startup time, but if your prior file structure was not providing the results you were looking for, you now have the opportunity for a clean start! (Keep your prior file on your computer and access the data at will.)

If you like your current file structure, you can make a copy of your current file, then use the Archive and Condense feature to help strip out existing transactions. There are some tips about how to handle this most efficiently that I’ll save for another article.

Option 5: Move up to QuickBooks Enterprise Solutions

Intuit now offers this enhanced, “bigger engine under the hood”, edition of QuickBooks. Our evaluation:

- It looks and acts just like QuickBooks® Pro and/or the Premier Editions.
- It offers improved multi-user performance.
- It’s available in 5, 10, or 15-user versions so that the licensed number of users can access the file simultaneously.
- The list limits have doubled.
- Key reports run up to 50% faster.
- I queried technical support about file size limitations and (although I haven’t personally experienced anything close to this file size), they indicated that it could handle up to 4 gigabytes. (A huge improvement in file size capacity!)
- There is now no need for most mid-sized companies to go through the process of starting up a new company file every few years. Simply install the system and open your prior QuickBooks file.

It may initially seem a bit pricey at \$3,000, \$4500, and \$6,000 respectively (**before** the discounts of \$450, \$675, and \$900 which are available through our website), but in the world of accounting systems, if it gives you the fire-power you need, and you don’t need to pay consulting fees for new company startups every few years, it may still be a bargain.

(Original Word Document – revised after placed in Biz-Actions) Liposuction for Your QuickBooks® File



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Giving the prior file a new name, coupled with renaming the new file the same name as the old file will leave all automatic file opening processes the same on various users’ computers.

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