EXPENSES MANAGER V1.2 (S3A Only)

Following the success of my Home Accounts program S3ABANK, a number of people have suggested that I issue some of the optional modules as standalone programs. This is the fifth of these modules (the others are the Investment Tracker, S3AINVx.ZIP, the Financial Planner, S3APLANx.ZIP, the Fuel Consumption monitor S3AFUELx.ZIP and the Home Inventory, S3AHOMEx.ZIP, where 'x' is the version number). This program allows you to keep track of your Expense Account, accepting expenses by category, and automatically calculated vehicle journeys.

To Install the program, do the following:

1. Put S3AEXP2.APP into any \APP\ directory .
2. Put S3AEXP2.OVL into an \APP\S3AEXP\ directory.
3. If you have a Company Vehicle and would like to use the optional vehicle monitor put the S3ACAR2.OVL module into the \APP\S3AEXP\ directory as well.
4. If you want to use the optional On-Line Help (Highly recommended) put the file S3AEXPH.OVL into the \APP\S3AEXP\ directory.
5. If you want to use the optional Print option put the file S3AEXPP.OVL into the \APP\S3AEXP\ directory and the file S3APRINT.DYL into an \OPD\ directory. Note that this file is common to all my programs, so if you have more than one of them you only need one copy of this file.
6. Install as usual, using <PSION-I>.

Now go into the program, ideally using <PSION-N> to name the file for the first trip, although the default name EXPENSE is used if you just press <ENTER>. The 'nag' screens can be removed by registering the program, which will also allow you the full 200 entries/trip. The unregistered version allows you just five entries, to see the capabilities of the program, and a limited number of categories.

You will then be asked for a title for the trip, the overall allowance for the trip, either per-diem or total (leave this at zero if it is not applicable), the vehicle rate (for example, 25c/mile would go in as 0.25, although again, leave at zero if it is not applicable) and the symbol for the Currency in use. If you are never going to use multiple currencies this can also be left blank. If you have loaded the optional Vehicle Monitor module, you will also be asked if you wish to add a monitor page to this trip, and if you say 'yes' you will be asked for the Vehicle name and number and whether you wish the program to start up in the Expenses screen or the Vehicle Monitor screen.

Working through the MENU commands will show you the capabilities of the program, but to get the best out of it, I suggest you go through the following mini-tutorial.

First thing to do is add a few Categories using <PSION-M>. I suggest Food, and Car Park as a start. Now put in some dummy entries, either from the Menu, the 'hot key' <PSION-E>, or just by pressing <ENTER>. I suggest you put in one Car Park bill, ensuring it is a 'Spend' and the category is 'Car Park', and two Food Bills with the category set to 'Food'. Now enter a vehicle journey, again either from the Menu or the 'hot key', <PSION-J>. You will see that the cost is evaluated automatically, depending on the Vehicle Rate you entered at the start. Finally, enter another Food Bill, but set it as a refund, to demonstrate money received back from the Company. Note that this is the limit for the unregistered version. If you register you will be allowed 200 entries.

Now, from the Category menu, select 'Category Filter' or <PSION-C> and select 'Food', leaving the Date Filter OFF. Pressing <ENTER> now gives you a display of only those entries associated with that filter. Now select the filter again and reset it to 'None'. Note that selecting the filter to 'Distance' will show just vehicle journeys. The additional Date filter can be used if, for example, you wish to see Food bought in just January.

How you subsequently treat the program when you have submitted the claim is up to you. However, I have provided 3 suggested methods:

1. Start a new file for your next trip, using the Menu, or <PSION-N>.

2. Draw a line under the final entry, using the Menu, <PSION-L> or just <L>.

3.   Reconcile those entries that have been claimed, using the Menu, <PSION-R>,<R>, or just the <Space Bar>. This is the method I recommend.

For the purposes of the demonstration, reconcile the three food entries.

If we now assume that the claim has been paid, we need to remove the entries, so press <PSION-A> to archive them. Note from the dialog that you actually have various options available, but for now use the 'Archive Reconciled Entries' option. Because this is the first time the option has been used, you will be prompted for a file name for the Archive. This will not occur in subsequent uses of this option. Now, you will be asked to select which Archive to use, although at the moment you only have a choice of one, and whether to Append or Overwrite. Again, this is a personal decision. Some people are happy to run just one Archive file, some people prefer a file for each type of claim. Some like to just keep the last set of records, some like to add the new ones onto the old ones. For the demo, leave it at Append, and press <ENTER>.

We can now look at the Archive file using the Menu or just <PSION-SHIFT-A> or the diamond key. This simply displays the information with a header giving details of when and where the entries originated (and the currency, if that was selected). Note that under the 'Special' Menu, you still have the Category Filter option, and that full Search facilities are available under the 'Search' Menu (But only if the Filter is turned 'off'). If you do run multiple Archive files, then the 'File' menu gives you the appropriate options you will need.

Now return to the main screen, either from the Menu, <PSION-SHIFT-E>, the Diamond key, or just <Esc>. Note that in this main screen entries can be updated or deleted by using the options in the 'Edit' menu, or <TAB> or <Delete> and that <PSION-P> will print out the entries.

If you have more than one Trip or more than one Archive, there are various switching methods. In the case of Trips, use <PSION-O> to open an existing trip. In the Archive, use <PSION-S> to switch between archives. In both screens, the L/R arrows will also cycle through trips/archives.

The usual <CTRL-MENU> option is available to cycle through Status Windows. Note that the 'Distance' column is not available if the Status Window is selected 'On'.

If you specified a currency symbol during the initial setup of a trip, you will be able to use the 'Currencies' option under the 'Special' menu to specify a second currency. Simply enter the label and the rate relative to the original currency. For example, if your main currency is English Pounds and you add US$ then the rate figure should be about 1.5. If that is the wrong way around for you just select 'Inverse Rate' as your method and put the inverse in. Now, whenever you input an entry, you will have the option of using the secondary currency, and the figure will be automatically converted to the main trip currency.

Now, select 'Set Preferences' from the Menu or <PSION-Q>. This allows the following:

        Default Entries.

If you find you are entering the same details on a regular basis, you can set it up as a Default Entry . Select the option, and then the 'New Entry' option. Note that this menu also allows you to subsequently update or delete the entry. Now fill in the details, giving it a recognisable name. This entry can now be recalled by using the menu, or by using <PSION-G> instead of <PSION-E> or, most easily, by using Shift-Enter. After selecting the entry, the default values are filled in for you. If you want to set up a default journey, simply select the 'New Journey' option from the original menu instead.

        Default Archive File

If you use multiple archive files, the program will default to displaying the last used file. Using this selection you can change that so it always defaults to the same file, or asks you which one you want, every time.

        Step on Reconcile.

If you are reconciling a number of entries it is often useful to automatically step the cursor to the next entry after reconciling an entry. This option will allow that to happen automatically.

Printer Configuration

This is a repeat of the option available from the Main screen and allows you to specify the Printer type (Parallel, Serial, File)

Toggle Total/Balance

By default, the total column shows the overall spend. Use this option if you would rather it displayed the amount of your allowance remaining.

Toggle Total Sign.

Having used the program myself, I could not decide whether I wanted the Total column to be negative or positive. Simple solution was to make it configurable for either one.

Date Format

As various different date formats are used throughout the world, I have allowed for various options. If I've missed one, let me know.

Decimal Places

This allows configuration of the number of decimal places to display.

Font

Use this to specify Swiss or Roman font

Preference Repeat

If you would prefer to stay in the 'Set Preferences' menu while setting up the program, rather than having to reselect it, use this option.

Under the 'Special' menu option, the final 2 menu items allow you to toggle between large and small fonts for each screen, and to open up a word processor memopad, similar to that implemented in the Agenda, to keep text records. Personally I use it to record trip times for the subsequent claims.

There is also a 'Backup' and 'Restore' options under the 'Trip' Menu. This simply makes a 'mirror' copy of your data somewhere else on the disc, to restore if something goes adrift with the original data.

Note that the per-diem allowance is worked out by multiplying the number of days between the first and last dates in the entries by the per-diem figure. This works for my system where an overnight stop 'triggers' a day's allowance. If anyone does it differently, please let me know.

OPTIONAL VEHICLE MONITOR

Although the main screen can cope with occasional use of your own car at the Company's expenses, a number of people pointed out that it did not really help if you had a Company vehicle and you needed to keep track of ALL of the mileage covered. This, then is the purpose of the Vehicle Monitor screen. You enter every journey undertaken, with start and end values for the odometer, and you can allocate each trip to a category. There are 2 built-in categories, for Business and Personal, but you can add additional specific Business categories if you so wish. I think it's use is fairly self-explanatory, as it uses the same principles as the main program. However, as a tutorial, try this:

1. Create a new trip and say 'Yes' to the Vehicle Monitor.

2. Enter the Name and Number of the vehicle and specify whether you want Expenses or the Vehicle screen to be the primary screen.

There are 3 built-in Categories called 'Business', 'Personal' and 'Unallocated'. However, you have the option of adding extra categories, although these will all be treated as 'Business' for the purpose of display calculations.

3. Enter a couple of new categories - Client names for example.

4. Now press <ENTER> to start the log.

5. Enter all the details, with a description and using one of the categories.

6. Now enter a few more, using the 'Personal' and 'Unallocated' categories as well. Note that the 'Odometer Start' figure defaults to the previous 'Odometer Finish' figure, as it assumes you have to account for ALL the use of the vehicle.

You should now see how the module will work, with the distance totals permanently displayed at the bottom, and by using the filter, you can see how various distances are charged against different Categories.

I should point out that I see this not as a standalone function, but an add-on to a trip file. Normal expenses, Hotel, Food etc are still entered in the main screen, while you simultaneously keep track of the vehicle in the secondary screen. I do, however, see a linkage that might be needed to 'feed through' the journey entered in the Vehicle screen, to the main screen. I will work on that once some 'real' users have had a chance to comment and put it in V1.3.

If you find the program useful and wish to register it, please see the file REGISTER.TXT for up-to-date instructions on how to register. Apart from giving you a 'warm' feeling, allowing you 200 entries/trip, and getting rid of the 'nag' screens, registering will give you access to full support and notification (only by E-Mail I'm afraid) of regular, free, updates.   If anyone has any useful suggestions for improvements, I will always try and include them in the next version.

If you want to contact me, use the addresses in REGISTER.TXT, or I am always available on Compuserve 100023,543 or E-Mail on alanrichey@msn.com

Also, I now have a WWW Home Page at http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/alanrichey   I will always have news of the program, any bugs found, any enhancements planned, and the latest BETA test version for downloading, so please pay a visit.

Cheers

Al Richey