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INTRODUCTION

Real Estate Assistant for Windows

Real Estate Assistant converts files captured during on-line sessions with local MLS and Tax Roll providers into a comma delimited format called ASCII. The need for such a conversion is due to the fact that most Real Estate data providers do not generate a common file format and therefore are not directly usable by commercial data base products.   ASCII file formats are a standard in the data base industry and provide a common platform for different programs to communicate with each other.

The formatted file generated by Real Estate Assistant can then be read or imported by data bases like Q&A®, FoxPro®, Access® and dBase® programs.   Any program that can import an ASCII file format can use the generated output from Real Estate Assistant.

For more information please read the Help file included with Real Estate Assistant for Windows.

Model Editor for Windows

Model Editor creates and modifies Model files for use by Real Estate Assistant.

Model files are template, or keyed files that tell Real Estate Assistant exactly which information the user wishes to extract from captured sessions with on line data bases.

For more information please read the Help file included with Model Editor for Windows.

Four Step Overview

1. Capture or log a session with an on line data provider, such as a MLS® or Public Record system to disk.

2. Use Model Editor to identify the information to be extracted and converted from the file.

3. Use Real Estate Assistant to process the file.

4. Import the processed file into your data base, contact manager or word processor.

You are finished.

Model File Button

The Model File button displays a dialog box that allows the selection of the template file to be used during processing.

Model files contain pertinent information that tell Real Estate Assistant how to extract and process data from the Source file.

Note: For more information on model files and processing Handles please see the help file documentation that comes with Model Editor for Windows.

Source File Button

The Source File button displays a dialog box that allows the selection of the file that was captured or logged during the on-line session.

Source files contain raw information from MLS or Tax Roll providers.

For more information on data capturing or logging a file to disk, please see your telecommunication program documentation or contact your MLS or Tax Roll provider for assistance.

Target File Button

The Target File button displays a dialog box that allows the designation of the target file name.

The Target file is the file that Real Estate Assistant generates during processing.   It is and ASCII comma delimited file, ready for import by the end application.

Note: Selecting an existing file as the Target file name for processing will cause the selected file to be overwritten.

Run Button

The Run button initiates processing of the Source file based on the parameters and instruction Handles in the selected Model file.

Exit Button

The Exit button terminates the program and returns to the Windows Program Manager.

Excludes Check Box

The Excludes check box tells Real Estate Assistant to verify the Source file against the lines of data found in the Excludes.FIL file.

The Excludes feature is used in conjunction with the ZAP and WatchFor handles.   For more information on these handles please see the help documentation file included with Model Editor.

Change Provisions

Neither BIDS Data Service, Inc. nor PathWay Solutions are responsible for changes in format that may be made to local real estate on line property listing or tax record systems after the creation, purchase or editing of Real Estate Assistant.

Important Notice and Disclaimer

Real Estate Assistant offers many powerful features and we strive to both improve and add to these. We do not claim that Real Estate Assistant features will handle your captured text files perfectly or as you desire. Data vendors employ different techniques and change these, often at the request of the associations they service, and when this happens, existing models may have to be changed. Variable length fields in captured text may not work. Your comments and suggestions for improving Real Estate Assistant are welcome.

Neither BIDS Data Service, Inc. nor PathWay Solutions shall be held liable for any damages, whether direct or indirect, special or consequential resulting from a failure of Real Estate Assistant or any associated program or module to operate in the manner desired by the user.

Neither BIDS Data Service, Inc. or PathWay Solutions shall not be held liable for any damage to data or property which may be caused whether directly or indirectly by use or misuse of Real Estate Assistant or any associated module. Under no circumstances shall BIDS Data Service, Inc. be liable to any user for damages, to include lost profits, lost savings or other incidental or consequential damages arising out of the use, misuse or inability to use Real Estate Assistant or any associated module.

Problems

Even experienced users encounter   problems establishing effective farming routines, gathering data, preparing letters, postcards, and producing these. Real Estate Assistant is but one tool used in these activities, and one that requires either some basic understanding of how computers use data and text or the willingness to learn. The following list of problems are the ones we encounter in phone conversations with users, along with the answers we give as a solution to try. Please call us if you find additional problems. Better yet, send us a copy of the source file you've captured and the model you're using on a floppy disk and we will let you know what the problem is. If the problem is ours, there's no charge. If not, we will let you know and adjust your model to work for you for a reasonable   charge.

Data is Not Correct.
The most common cause of incorrect data is an error in the Model File. Make sure the First Field is correct, make sure it is unique, as are the labels used to extract data. If there are wide differences in record lengths in the captured text file, make sure the longest one is used for MaxLines.

Greetings are not correct.
Many things can go wrong with greetings. Real Estate Assistant looks for key words, those most often used, and key phrases. Sometimes it finds data like The City of Whiz & Port Authority, and outputs a greeting that when combined with the extracted names results in "Mr. & Mrs. The and Port.". Users should scan their target file data before they use it and correct such errors. Another reason for scanning? To delete recognized names (such as competitors) that you do not want to farm. Female names are stored in a file called DAMSELS.NDX, if captured data has female names that are not in this list, simple add such names to the bottom of this file. Use an ASCII text editor to "open it", go to the bottom and add more. The maximum for this file is 1,500 female names.

Model does not work.
Some software programs supplied to on line clients insert characters into the text of your source label file that Real Estate Assistant cannot process. These characters are visible with ASCII text processors and include printer initialization strings, pagination characters, carriage returns. Solution: Use a personalized format or the "on line system prompts" to request the data that you normally capture as labels, then use Model Editor to prepare a model file to extract your data.

Mail Merge Letters are not correct.
Addresses, names, titles appear systematically but in the wrong places (skewed is a term used for this). Solution: Most probably your mail merge letter is not identifying all of the fields in your target file. Your model may have written ten fields into each target record, but your mail merge application only reads nine of them. In some programs, the data is skewed after the first record is used.
Solution: carefully count and "read" all target file fields, even if you don't actually use them in your mail merge document.

Model does not match source file error.
Real Estate Assistant has attempted to act on information in your model file and has found that the source file you've captured does not meet some of the requested criteria.
Solution: Use Model Editor to prepare a new model that matches your captured source data.

Source file is rejected.
Several error messages, depending upon the nature of the data, can result. One major cause is opening a source file with a word processor prior to using it with Real Estate Assistant. Some programs insert extra characters into data files, unseen on the screen but which cause problems for Real Estate Assistant. Solution: recapture the data and use it only as a source file for Real Estate Assistant or be sure to use a text editor that does not insert characters and changes

Acknowledgments