

Understanding Products and Stock records

Products

Products come into your shop as physical items – cans of beans, step ladders, Halloween masks, etc. Most products come with a unique bar code, an 8-13 digit number below a series of 'bars':



023942435372

The bars are simply a way of encoding the same number into a pattern of black and white that can be read by a simple electronic scanner – a bar code reader. The numbers are attached by the manufacturer and a system is in place to ensure that no two different products should have the same code. The digits are there so that if the bar code cannot be read by your scanner, the same number can be typed in on the keyboard.

The next thing a product has is a description:

Heinz Baked Beans In Tomato Sauce 440g

ProffittCenter has a nifty feature here - type the description all in lower case letters (i.e. small letters) and the program will capitalise the first letter of each word, to give a consistent look to the descriptions. Note that the bar code tells you nothing about the description or size.

The third thing that a product has is a price. Manufacturers no longer set prices; this is for you to decide. In ProffittCenter, money is always entered in pence – if the price is £1.23, you type in 123.

Stock or SKU

The next piece of information that you would want to store about a product is the quantity that you have in stock. This is not stored in the Product record but in a separate record – the Stock record. The reason for this is that you can have multiple products, all with different bar codes, but which are treated the same for stock counting purposes.

Consider a product such as a KitKat. One day you buy a case of KitKat as normal, but the manufacturer is running a special offer – the five-finger KitKat. These come with a different bar code. If you were to treat the products as separate for stock counting purposes, your automatic ordering would fail.

Day 1	KitKat Standard	Quantity=4
Order some more!		
Day 2	KitKat 5-finger	Quantity=48
	KitKat Standard	Quantity=2

Low on KitKat standard, order some more!

Wait! I remember getting these yesterday, I need to stop ordering these for now.

But wasn't the whole idea of EPOS to stop relying on memory? So stop counting these two products separately, but 'link' the two Product records to one Stock record, that contains the quantity. To link a new product in ProffittCenter, you simply select another product from a 'drop-down' box. As searching the whole Product table would be too time-consuming, in practice, first select a department, and then you only have to search through products in that department.

Products are linked to the Stock record by putting the unique common Stock ID code in a *field* in

the Product record called Stock.

Additional information stored in the Stock record is the department, the tax, a minimum level, and default case size and default Supplier. These defaults are used initially for ordering. When you have used the program for a while, these values are replaced by values entered in the delivery screen. Before rushing to set the minimum level, you should be aware that ProffittCenter will ensure few out of stock conditions with a value set to zero. Increasing this value above one will cost you money with no immediate return. Two more entries complete the stock record: the StockValueType and Stopped. Stopped is just that – tick the box where it says Stopped, and it will never be ordered again. StockValueType divides stock into four groups; normal stock, other people's stock, stock that is excluded from a stock take, and rental items. Other people's stock refers to items which are on loan from a supplier – you only pay when the items are sold. You need to exclude some items from a stock count. Say you charge for photocopying. You might need to know how many you had done, but you do not need to re-order because you have sold out! Rental items are much the same.

Another term for a stock record is an SKU or stock keeping unit.

Department

When we say the department is stored in the Stock record, we do not write 'Confectionery' in the space for the KitKat Stock record. What actually goes in the space is a number that is a unique ID for the department. In a database, this is called a *relation*. Of course, in ProffittCenter, you will never have to know this ID as you make the selection by selecting the right department in a drop-down box. The records in the Department Table have a Description, and default values for tax, margin and minimum. These defaults are assigned to the Stock record when you create a new stock record, to save you typing in unchanging information.

Vat

Taxes are set in this table. VAT is just one of the options in the program.

Conclusion

ProffittCenter has many more tables, but the ones given are the main ones to consider when starting out. The delivery screen adds Pack records with information about the size and content of packs, including any exterior bar code, and PackSupplier records which record the price and supplier for a particular pack. Further tables of records are used to store the history of what goes through the till, and orders as they are generated.