

Topshare Newsletter



No 1, August, 2004

Welcome to the first Topshare Newsletter. It's my intention to distribute these at irregular intervals, probably every two to four months. They'll only be a page or two in length, and will contain news about Topshare developments, and hints on using Topshare.

I hope you find it useful, and as always, I'm receptive to suggestions for improvement.

Chris Jackson

Topshare version 1.10 ready

I'm pleased to announce that Topshare version 1.10 was made available on the website on 9 August. This is an important release that includes the following major new features:

- Return of capital
- Non-dividend income categories, especially suited to trust distributions
- New detailed transaction report with more flexible printing
- Improved parcel allocation when selling shares, including fully automatic selection of parcels to minimise capital gains liability, and also manual allocation
- Fixed display problems with high-resolution monitors
- "Copy to clipboard" in Edit Database and Advanced Database forms
- Numerous minor improvements and bug fixes
- An error reporting system to help me track down those occasional elusive program bugs

Please update your copy of Topshare and give 1.10 a try. And don't forget to let me know what you think of it!

New Install or Update?

Some people have been confused about the difference between the two download options that are available on the Topshare website. It's really quite simple:

- If you've been using an earlier version of Topshare previously, use the **Update** option (download the file *TopshareUpdate110.exe*). Importantly, this will make any critical changes to your database structure that are necessary for the new version to run.
- Only if you've never installed Topshare on your computer before, should you use the **New Install** option (download the file *SetupTopShare110.exe*). This will install the most up-to-date copy of Topshare; and when Topshare starts for the first time, it will create a new, empty database.

Data management 101: backups and archives

One topic I get a lot of emails about is backups – either questions about Topshare's backup features, or requests for additional ones. Before discussing this, it might be helpful to think about just what we mean by backup, and why we do it.

Backup and *archive* are two related but distinct concepts in data management, both to do with long-term data security.

A *backup* is primarily protection against a computer or disk malfunction, or a user mistake that damages data. The frequency of backups should be related to the frequency of your data manipulation and the cost of re-doing this if the unthinkable happened. So if you're spending many hours entering and modifying data each day, it would be prudent to backup at least once a week; while if you do only a small amount of data entry at irregular intervals, it might be quite acceptable to backup only once a month. Backups are essentially a short-term concept. Typically, you will only keep the last one to three backups, since they will quickly get out of date. In fact the only reason for keeping more than one is for additional protection in case the most recent backup itself is damaged.

In contrast, *archive* is a long-term concept. This is the offline storage of data that, although it's important, doesn't need to be kept on your hard drive because it's only infrequently used. You might want to remove such data from your hard drive to conserve space, and to store it in an archive. Archiving is difficult and expensive because it's usually important to conserve the data for years or even decades. Magnetic media such as tapes, floppy disks and zip disks can't be relied on to hold data indefinitely – the information can become unreadable after years or even months. Even CDs and DVDs have a limited lifetime, or can get damaged. In addition, technological changes can mean your media becomes obsolete. Proper long-term archiving is a very expensive and time-consuming process involving regular “exercising” of the data – verifying its readability and copying it onto new media.

Because of the rapid advances in hard drive technology, leading to huge capacity and high reliability, many home computer users decide not to *archive* data but, instead, keep everything important online – reasoning that it's safer there than gathering dust on a CD in some bookshelf. A high level of *backup* protection can be provided by a second hard drive in your computer, and a system that regularly and frequently copies all your important documents to it. While it's unlikely that both hard drives would fail at once, this is possible; it's also possible that your computer might get stolen or your house burn down. So for the ultimate protection, you should also make an offline copy every few weeks, on media such as CD or DVD, and the most recent 1 or 2 of these should be stored off-site. A complete system to achieve this (second hard drive, DVD burner and software) costs only a few hundred dollars.

Now, how does all this relate to Topshare? Although I'm frequently asked to incorporate an offline backup facility, I haven't done so because the need to backup is not restricted to Topshare data – **it's something that you should be doing anyway**, for all your computer data. The Topshare “Backup” (renamed “Snapshot” in version 1.10) is an online system more akin to the “undo” feature in many other software packages – it offers you short-term protection against some operational error that damages data, and allows you to “step back” and restore the data to the state it was in some time previously. And, furthermore, archiving is not an issue for Topshare, because this program was

designed to (in fact, *needs to*) have the entire portfolio database online at all times.

Evaluation expired?

Maybe you've tried Topshare some time in the past and decided at the time, for whatever reason, that it wasn't for you. But perhaps you're more interested now – after all, there have been a lot of improvements over the last twelve months.

But you've got a problem: even though you've uninstalled the original version, now when you try the current Topshare you still get the message that your evaluation period has expired.

Well, all isn't lost. Send an email to support@topshare.com.au and we'll restart your evaluation.

Recent questions

Here are my responses to some recent emails...

Q: The Split or Consolidate screen does not allow for fractions of a share. I am trying to handle the Westfield merger of two trusts and their holding company into Westfield group where 1 unit in Westfield Trust (WFT) becomes 0.28 units in WDC (Westfield Group).

A: No problem. In the box labelled 'For every', enter 100. In the box labelled 'you now have', enter 28. The correct numbers should now be reflected in the grid on the right. If they're 1 out, try the different rounding options labeled "fractional shares".

Q: If I buy a new computer, how can I transfer the Topshare program and my portfolio data?

A: You first need to install Topshare on your new computer, using your existing Unlock Code for registration (this code isn't restricted to a particular computer.). Then run Topshare and shut it down - this will create a new, empty portfolio database. You now need to overwrite this database with the portfolio data transferred from your old system, which you could do using CD, Zip disk, USB drive or over a network. Topshare stores all its portfolio data in a directory in My Documents, so it's easy to find.

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