

Retail STAR Newsletter

July, 2007



The Four Ways Of Communication

If you are a multi store retailer, then one of the most important operations in Retail STAR is the Communications Module. Found under the Remote Operations menu, this is part of the system that allows you to send and receive data to and from your remote stores in order to keep the databases at all of your locations completely synchronized. If you have been using Retail STAR for a while, you probably already have your communication settings configured, but did you know that there are multiple ways of communicating?

Modem Communications

Communicating to your stores via modem is perhaps the method by which you are most familiar. In order to communicate by this method, you must have a supported modem installed at your main store and each of your remote stores, and each modem must have it's own dedicated phone line.

When your system begins its communication session, the main will dial your remote stores modems, one at a time, and exchange data over the dial-up connection. While this method is slower than other methods, it is often the only viable method in areas where there is no Internet access.

FTP Communications

FTP Communications is a popular method of polling data to and from your remote stores. In order to use this method of polling, you must have an FTP server available to you. If you are an i.STAR user, then your i.STAR server also acts as your FTP server, otherwise you can elect to configure a FTP server at one of your locations (typically the main), or you can secure an FTP server from various service providers.

With this method each store, including the main, uploads its data files to a folder on the FTP server, and it also downloads any files that have been placed there for download. This is particularly useful if you have remote stores that span multiple time zones, or if your communication schedule is tight.

TCP/IP Communications

This method is somewhat similar to Modem Communications in that the main must 'dial' each store in order. The difference is that this method uses high speed Internet instead of dial-up modems. To do this, you need high speed Internet at all your locations, and you also need a 'Static IP Address', which is available from your Internet Service Provider.

Network Communications

Network Communications can be used when you have remote store servers sitting on the same local area network (such as a store connected directly to the main office), or where you have a more sophisticated wide area network, such as a VPN setup. This method allows you to simply specify a network share where data files can be uploaded to and downloaded from.

If you have any questions regarding these different methods, or want further information, please call one of our Support Technicians at 1-800-949-1470, and select option 6.

The Jargon Buster

Decoding some of those cryptic words...

Some of the terms used when dealing with communications can be confusing if you don't know what they mean, so use this guide as a reference!

FTP = *File Transfer Protocol. This is a method by which files can be moved from one location to another.*

TCP/IP = *Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol. This is a method of networking that is very common and in fact is the backbone of the Internet.*

LAN = *Local Area Network. This is a network that exists in one geographical location, such as an office or a store.*

WAN = *Wide Area Network. This is a network that exists as an extension of the LAN, such as a 'VPN' to a remote store.*

VPN = *Virtual Private Network. This is a method used to connect two or more locations securely by creating a secure 'tunnel' over the Internet.*

IP Address = *When you connect your computer to a network or to the Internet, it requires an Internet Protocol Address; a way of identifying your computer on the network.*

DHCP = *Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol. If you don't have a static IP address (as provided by your Internet Service Provider or your IT Manager), then your system is assigned on dynamically using a DHCP service.*

STAR Word Search

S M O D E M A M D C D C S
N D I A L L F T N I N A U
O K R O W T E N A L P C E
I R O L P C U C T W T D I
T P W N O P W R P E I N L
A R S W L I D A N T W P O
C N D O T P R R S U E T I
I P A D D R E S S N A D N
N D C W V T V I N P R T N
U O E H N E R A D E I E U
M A N I D I E V N T R I N
M I E R A A S T E N F A S
O M M T R C N F N D A A A
C I T A T S O C P S P M S

IPADDRESS FTP DIAL
MODEM LAN DHCP TCPIP
WAN STATIC DOWNLOAD
COMMUNICATIONS SERVER
UPLOAD INTERNET NETWORK