
TI Server FAQ

Q: What is TI Server?

A: TI Server is a Transaction Import Engine that automates data import into any Solomon screen. It works in conjunction with Solomon's Transaction Import (TI) but provides many additional features. Automation of imports reduces the human effort, errors and delays of manually setting up imports.

Q: What screens can TI Server import into?

A: TI Server can import into any Solomon screen. If Solomon's Transaction Import can import into a screen, then TI Server can import into it too. This also includes custom screens.

Q: Is TI Server available for sites outside the United States?

A: Yes. TI Server has been installed in many Solomon locations around the world including Japan, England, Mexico, Canada and the United States.

Q: Will TI Server be available for future versions of Solomon?

A: TI Server was originally developed in 1997 and has been available for every version of Solomon since then. We always get early copies of new Solomon releases so we can have an updated version of TI Server ready the same day Solomon releases their product to the general public.

Q: How and when are updates issued?

A: All TI Server installation programs, updates and documentation are available for download on our FTP site. Periodically new versions will be released, new features will be added or corrections will be made. These are always available for download, free of charge, for those who are on current maintenance plans.

Q: How can I know if an import has failed?

A: There are four main ways to detect failures. 1) TI Server processes the Solomon import log file so only errors are saved. If there are no errors, the log file is deleted. Successful imports leave no logs. So one way to tell if there was an error is to see if there are any log files. 2) TI Server can send Email alerts after either a failed or successful import. 3) The TI Server activity log will contain errors encountered by TI Server, whether or not they are related to an actual import and 4) TI Server can run a custom post-process to take any action necessary. This would be a program developed specifically for this purpose.

Q: Is there a demo version available?

A: Yes. There are three ways we can deliver fully functional demo releases:

1) Unlicensed - This will run when Solomon is in Trialoc mode. Just as all Solomon modules are available when the access count to a database is between 1 and 20, TI Server will also run when the access count to a database is between 1 and 20. No license file or registration information is needed.

2) Temporary Dealer License - This would be a license that would be valid for one month. This would be licensed to a single, specific Solomon reseller registration.

3) Dealer License - With your first sale, you will receive an unrestricted license for your customer and one for your own, Solomon reseller registration.

Contact Carl Kuczun at ckuczun@compup.com if you would like a demo license.

Q: Is there any protection to make sure a file is not imported twice, like when an import fails?

A: Absolutely. Un-intentionally processing an import file twice would be a critical mistake for an automated solution. Special care has been taken to make sure that TI Server only processes a file once. There are several options that can be set to ensure this. Data files will either be archived after processing to another directory, or deleted, depending on your setup. If an archive directory is used, the data file will be moved there whether the import was successful or not. If TI Server is not set up to archive data files, it will delete them after processing. This ensures that a data file will only be processed once.

There is a special case where a single data file can be intentionally used as an import to multiple screens. For example, a voucher import may want to use a data file to import the vendor first, then the voucher. In this case, the data file still can only be imported once by each screen and it is either archived or deleted at the end.

The last feature to address this is TI Server's ability to run external processes before or after importing. You can develop your own programs for TI Server to run after importing each file. Separate processes can be developed to be run on the event of a successful import or a failure. TI Server can already send conditional Email alerts, but you can add your own procedures to handle any special needs.

Q: The program that exports my data for Solomon can not put it into the right format. Can TI Server still import it?

A: Yes. This can be handled two ways. First, if the data is close to being formatted correctly, but may be missing some fields, TI Server can use a default file to fill in missing information in the data file with values from the default file, e.g. if a terms code is missing, a default value can be inserted, or the period to post can be forced to be the current period of the appropriate module, for example.

Second, an important feature of TI Server is the ability to process data in unlimited formats by launching a pre-process program that TI Server can execute before importing. This is a simple program that is easily written that bridges the differences between your data and what is required of Solomon.

Q: Does TI Server keep a log of its import activity?

A: Most certainly. TI Server actually uses two logs. One is the Import log, the other is the Activity log. A huge emphasis has been put on TI Server logging because, when a process is automated and runs unattended, it is very hard to know what has been occurring, if any errors have happened, how well has it been working or if any improvements can be made.

The import log contains the results of all the import processing for each line in the import data file. If the cull file option is used, then TI Server will cull, or remove, all 'normal' messages from the import log, leaving only the messages that are unexpected, or what would be considered errors. This does two things. First, if there are import errors, then the log will contain only the lines that pertain to the errors. This makes it very easy to read the log and determine what failed. Second, if there are no errors, then TI Server deletes the log file. Since only imports that had errors will leave logs, it is easy to tell if any errors occurred. So, a quick check of the log directory will show if any log files exist which would mean there was an error and they are easily viewed to determine the problem.

The other log is the Activity log. This is a time-stamped record of everything that TI Server is doing. When TI Server starts, it logs the start time, the TI Server version, Solomon version, installation paths and INI file settings. As features are selected by the user, they are logged. When TI Server is put into an import mode, it will automatically record its own activity. This would include a log entry each time TI Server checks a directory for import files. As files are processed, TI Server logs the data file name, the screen that it will be imported into, when the import starts, when it finishes, where the data file is archived, the success or failure of the import, and the duration that the processing took, including the average import time. There are 10 separate programs that make up TI Server and they each log their own activity into the one Activity log.

Additionally, the Activity log is used for recording whether emails are sent on success or failure of an import. If the Multi-Company Edition is running, it will record each time it switches to a different company or database. If TI Server runs a pre-process, a post-process or an error-process this activity is also logged. All log lines are time-stamped so it is clear which actions were taken and when, and the time-stamping can also be used to analyze durations, or heavy use periods, which can show where improvements might be made.

There is one more key use of the Activity log. This is where TI Server will record any anomalies it encounters. If TI Server raises an error, it will put information into the log that pertains to the error. When something does go wrong, this log is critical in understanding what happened. When there is an issue that requires TI Server technical support, there is a TI Server setup option called "Verbose Log." When this option is selected, TI Server floods the log with all sorts of additional information that will help us track exactly what programming steps are being executed within TI Server.

This very robust logging provides invaluable information so you can be confident in the tasks that are being performed and it has allowed very quick resolutions of any issues that have occurred.

Q: We don't want importing to occur during the day, or when backups are running. Is this possible?

A: Yes. There is a built-in scheduler that can be used to tell TI Server when it should process imports, and when it shouldn't. So you can process imports after business hours and yet still avoid the time window when your backups will be running.

Q: I create a huge Sales Order import each month. Is TI Server fast?

A: TI Server uses Solomon's screens to do the importing, just like Transaction Import, therefore the actual import takes about the same amount of time. The advantage of automation is that the importing begins as soon as the import files are created and it doesn't need anyone to start the import. So if your files are created in the middle of the night, like a web-based order system would do, the importing can happen as the orders are created and be already in Solomon when business opens in the morning. Automation can complete imports sooner because it can start importing sooner.

Another suggestion is to break up the import into smaller, separate batches so you don't have to wait for the full import to complete before you get anything. Again, automation would be helpful because the individual imports will be completed sequentially automatically.

If you can create the orders periodically throughout the month in smaller batches then each batch can begin importing while the next batch of orders is being created.

One last suggestion is to distribute the importing to multiple workstations. TI Server could be setup to run on several machines, each one simultaneously importing some of the transactions.

Q: We have multiple databases. Do we need a separate TI Server for each one?

A: No. The Standard Edition of TI Server will only import files into a single Solomon company. Whatever company Solomon is logged into is the company that will receive the imported data. The Multi-Company Edition adds the capability of automatic imports into multiple Solomon IV companies. This provides for importing into either multiple companies in a single Solomon IV application database, or importing into companies in multiple databases. Importing can also be performed to databases and companies on multiple servers. This functionality is controlled by a single TI Server Multi-Company Edition installation.

Q: Can we have the same information imported into multiple Solomon databases?

A: Yes. Multiple Solomon databases, or companies, can be synchronized with the same data. This is done using the Multi-Company Edition of TI Server and the cascading data file method.

Q: Does TI Server import files in the order it finds them?

A: No. There are specific rules that TI Server follows regarding the order that files are to be imported. Each import type can be given a sort order, or priority. TI Server will only import a data file when all higher priority imports have been completed. When multiple import files exist at the same priority, they are imported by their creation date, oldest first.

Q: What happens if our network server (that is running TI Server) is restarted? Does TI Server need to be restarted?

A: No. TI Server can be set to automatically start after a reboot and resume automatic importing according to its internal scheduler.

Q: We need a pre-process but don't have the staff. Can you help with custom programming?

A: Yes, we have done many custom pre-processes, post-processes and error-processes. Estimates for custom programming are calculated at an hourly rate and will be provided before work begins.

Q: Before importing a voucher, Can TI Server verify that the vendor exists?

A: Yes. A single import file can be used to import into several screens. This is called data file cascading and is explained in detail in the User Manual. First, TI Server would use the data file to make sure the vendor existed in the AP Vendor Maintenance screen. Then, it would import the voucher into the AP Voucher and Adjustment screen, assured that the vendor was valid. This process could also be used to create new sub-accounts, terms codes, etc. before importing.

Q: If TI Server is running on our network server, in a locked room, in another building, how can it be configured or controlled?

A: Any workstation can run the remote control version of TI Server. This permits all settings to be configured, new imports to be created, even the shutting down of TI Server or the transfer of TI Server's processing from one computer to another, all by an independent workstation. These remote control changes are passed to the computer that is actually doing the imports, no matter where it is.

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