Are you using QuickBooks' Reminders?

How do you know when it's time to pay a bill or follow up on overdue customer payments or print payroll checks? If you are still using a paper calendar and sticky notes and file folders, there is a good chance you are missing some important deadlines on occasion. Manual methods are often not effective (or accurate) enough when you are dealing with your business finances and you could experience the following scenarios:

- Credit problems
- Overextended customers
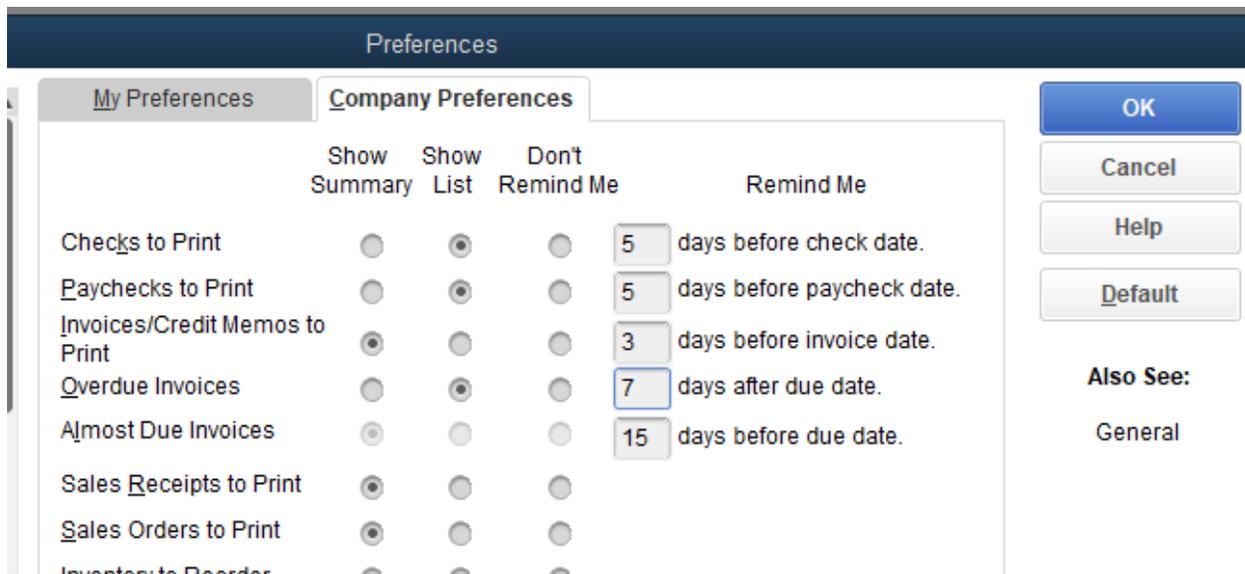- Unhappy vendors and employees

If you are missing the mark frequently, you won't be able to get a true picture of your financial status, and your cash flow will suffer.

Use QuickBooks' built-in reminders to avoid this unnecessary drama. Here is how they work.

Totally Customizable

To start setting up Reminders, open the **Edit** menu and select **Preferences**.

Click **Reminders** in the left vertical pane. With the **My Preferences** tab highlighted, click in the box in front of **Show Reminders List when opening a Company file** to create a checkmark. Then click on the **Company Preferences** tab to open this window:

*Figure 1: When you're setting up your **Preferences** for QuickBooks' Reminders, you can customize each type in multiple ways.*

As you can see in the above image, QuickBooks lets you create reminders for a wide variety of actions. For each, you can indicate whether the Reminders window will display a summary or a list, or whether that particular activity will not be included. For those that are time-sensitive, like **Checks to Print**, you will also be able to specify how much warning you will get and how many days in advance each item will appear in the Reminders list.

My Preferences vs. Company Preferences

If you haven't worked much with QuickBooks' **Preferences**, you may not understand the difference between the two tabs that appear in each window. Only the QuickBooks Administrator can make changes on the **Company Preferences** page since these affect company-wide settings. All users, though, can change any options that appear in the **My Preferences** window.

Here is an example of a **Preference (General)** where all employees can indicate how they want QuickBooks to work for them specifically:
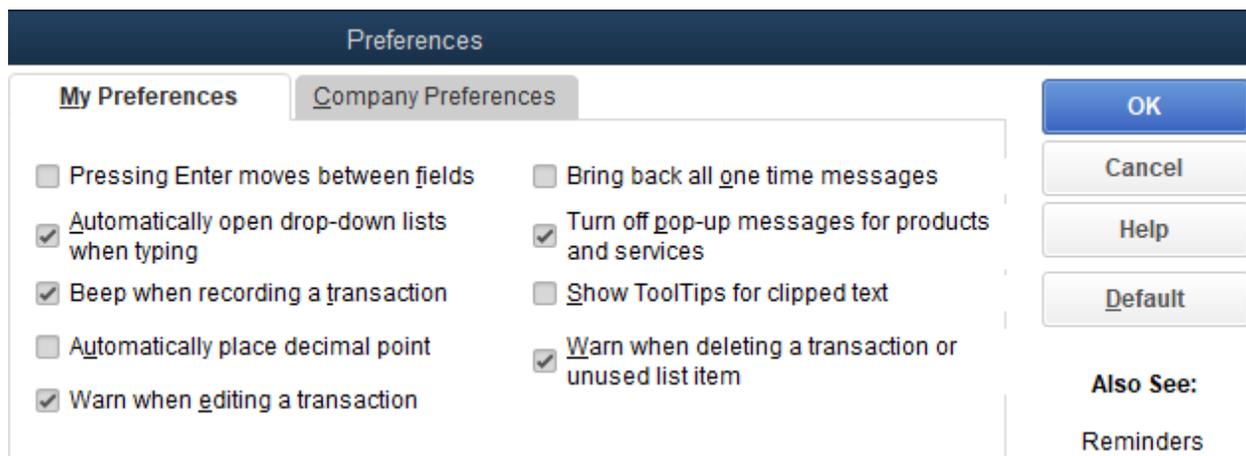

*Figure 2: Open the **Edit** menu and select **Preferences**, then **General** to open this window. Everyone who uses QuickBooks can set up their **Preferences** here, but only the administrator can modify **Company Preferences**.*

Using Reminders

If you indicated in **My Preferences** that you want the **Reminders** window to open every time you open your company file in QuickBooks, it should appear on top of your desktop. If you didn't, or if you need to see it after you've closed it, open the **Company** menu and select **Reminders**. A link should also be available in the toolbar.

Using the **Reminders** tool is like using any other interactive to-do list.

*Figure 3: QuickBooks' **Reminders** window displays the tasks you need to do today and in the near future. You can click the arrows to the left of each boldfaced category to expand or collapse the list.*

The left pane of the window displays tasks that must be done today, while the right shows upcoming tasks. Small arrows to the left of each task category expand and collapse each section when you click on them. Double-click a task (not the category label), and the relevant form or other document opens. When you've completed the chore, it will disappear from the list.

There are two icons in the upper right of the window (not pictured here). Click the **plus (+)** sign, and the **Add To Do** window opens. You can create six types of to-do items here: call, fax, e-mail, meeting, appointment, and task. Each can be assigned to a customer, vendor, or employee, or earmarked as a lead. You can designate a priority (low, medium, high) and a status (active, inactive, done) to each. You can also assign a time and date due, and enter descriptive details. Each to-do then appears in the appropriate place in QuickBooks.

The other icon, a small gear, opens your **Preferences** for **Reminders**.

The mechanics of setting up your **Reminders** window are not difficult. What can be a challenge is watching your cash flow as all these transactions occur. If you are struggling with that, call Alerding CPA Group and ask to meet with one of our QuickBooks ProAdvisors who will help you develop a plan for keeping your cash flow positive while meeting your financial obligations.

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