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Advisor Answers

FoxPro 2.x and Visual FoxPro

Q: Our customer would like to use old FoxPro programs and VFP 5.0 programs simultaneously. In other words, both programs have to share the same .DBFs. Is this possible?

–Francis Cheng (via Internet)

A: Yes, FoxPro 2.x, VFP 3.0 and VFP 5.0 programs can share the same tables. However, you have to be careful. Tables created in VFP have a different format than those created in FoxPro 2.x and earlier versions. A number of VFP commands convert tables to the VFP format. In particular, any command that recreates a table (like PACK) or that adds a VFP-only feature to a table (like null support or one of the new field types) changes it to the VFP format. So, it's important that your VFP code not make these kinds of changes.

The most significant thing that changes a table to VFP format is adding it to a database. Tables in a database cannot be shared with FoxPro 2.x applications. Since the database features are a key part of VFP, this could be a problem. However, there's a reasonable compromise that makes sharing tables a lot easier.

While FoxPro 2.x tables cannot be added to a database, views based on those tables can. Create a database for the VFP applications and add to it a view of each of the FoxPro 2.x tables. Then, have your VFP apps work only on the views while the FP2.x applications continue to operate directly against the tables. Many of the database features are available for views as well as for tables, so you can take advantage of VFP's improvements while still maintaining FP2.x data.

Finally, if you should accidentally convert a table to VFP format, there is a way back again. The TYPE FOX2X clause of the COPY TO command lets you create a FoxPro 2.x-type table from a VFP-type table. For example, to create a FoxPro 2.x copy of a table called MyTable, you'd use:

```
USE MyTable
COPY TO MyNewTable TYPE FOX2X
```
Of course, any of the VFP features are lost in the copy.

–Tamar