MAESTRO* GO-LIVE

SUMMARY

WHAT IS A GO-LIVE?

What we commonly call a Go-Live, here at Maestro, is actually the official start-up date of the software; it is not the date where employees start entering data in **maestro*** per se, but more the date where all new transactions must be entered and done in the software[1]. Normally, at this stage, all preparatory tests and configurations have been done. All transactions done as of this date are there to stay and users are finally officially working with **maestro***. In sum, the Go-Live date corresponds to the accounting cut-off date.

It goes without saying that the Go-Live is a moment which demands adequate planning; the implantation's success depends on it! Many elements are to be expected or taken into account from the beginning of the implantation and/or once the Go-Live date has arrived.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When does the Go-Live Take Place?

The go-live date is ideally set for the first day of the new month, when the clients are finally ready. Why the first day of the month? Because it will therefore be simpler to close the accounting period in the previous system used. Same for tax rebates and other transactions to be processed.

There are many theories on which month should be chosen to do so. Some go for the first day of the new financial year, saving them from having to close the year in two different accounting systems. Others favour the beginning of the new calendar year to begin inputting a payroll year in **maestro*** and avoid having to enter payroll balances in the course of the year. Some more would say that it is even better if both dates (the beginning of both the financial and calendar year) are synchronous. In any case, it is important to set a date that will facilitate the transition between the current system and **maestro***. The main issue consists of setting a date that will make it possible to benefit from the time required to configure **maestro***, validate the many processes, and correctly train the users.

What is a Go-Live per Phase Approach?

The Go-Live per phase approach consists of gradually starting up the different functions in **maestro***. Are first launched the software's essential functions, then, afterwards, are integrated the desired functions that are not essential. For example, the **Estimating** module can be integrated once users are familiarized with the **maestro*** base system. The use of secondary financial options, such as the **Depreciation Book** and **Loan Management** options, can be initiated in phase two or three.

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[1] *For example, if the date of a company's go-live is a Friday, it is possible that few entries will be made by employees in **maestro*** on said Friday. However, all bills received as of Friday will eventually have to be entered in **maestro***, even if the data entry is only done the following week.*

Which Functions Should We Find in the First Start-Up Phase?

The first **maestro*** start-up phase should include all functions mandatory to the good operation of the company's administration; at least financial management and the replacement of the actual financial program. In no case should a company reduce or cease any tasks necessary to its proper functioning. It is therefore required to identify, at the start of the Go-Live, everything the actual company system does, to make sure every corresponding **maestro*** functions be included in phase one. To the latter will often be added the **maestro*** functions which led to the system change.

In short, the content of the first **maestro*** start-up phase is constantly revised during the configuration and training period. Some functions, which were initially planned for the first phase, can be deemed non-essential to the program's start-up. Even the start-up date can be changed to ensure the conversion's success.

Getting Ready for the maestro* Go-Live

Being thoroughly prepared for the Go-Live date means first being up to date in all data entrance, but, more importantly, having practised and done the most test possible before the big day. Experience has shown that the more users are ready to work with **maestro***, the easier the transition is. On the contrary, when only few tests have been done beforehand, the transition from a system X to **maestro*** is much harder.

It will be recommended by your implementation specialist, for each meeting done during the implementation process, to perform tests related to the configurations done and the functions and options seen during each session. These tests can consist of entering orders, invoice types, creating a fictional project, printing reports, etc. In sum, you will be invited to reproduce, in **maestro***, the different entries made in the legacy system, as well as those generated by the use of **maestro***. Furthermore, to maximize training time with your implementation specialist, you will be asked to complete come configurations between two training sessions. The purpose of this "homework" is to:

- Review what the trainee has learned;
- Review every possible case and scenario;
- Review any questions if needed;
- Allow the learner to gain a minimum of experience with **maestro*** before the big day;
- Make mistakes and correct them before they have a real impact;
- Ensure the learner's independence;
- Finalize all configurations, which are numerous and repetitive;
- Give the learner the tools needed to add or modify parameters;
- etc.

There is no point in rushing the **maestro*** implementation and training process. Experience has shown that a run-in period is needed. Furthermore, performing the tests and/or homework assigned by the implementation specialist between sessions takes time, added to the ongoing daily operations of the company.

Can every employee work in maestro* on the day of the Go-Live?

Technically, yes. However, employees usually start working in **maestro*** gradually. Some departments, such as the Purchasing Department, for example, will start placing orders and making purchases in **maestro*** from day one. The Accounting Department, however, will continue to enter previous month invoices in the legacy system until the closing of the financial period (often around the middle of the month). It is common to see users from the Accounting Department working in both **maestro*** and the legacy system for about two to three weeks maximum.

In any case, new transactions are usually entered in **maestro*** from the official launch date. The legacy system us still used to enter transactions from previous periods, until these are closed in the old system and then the balances transferred to **maestro***.

"The secret to a successful implementation is to perform as many tests as possible before the Go-Live. That's the moment to try, perform tests, and train users."

Michel St-Jacques, Implementation Specialist

What happens during the first month using maestro*?

Some monitoring and follow-up time is always planned with the implementation specialist during the period following the Go-Live; we call this the stabilization period. The latter is an accompaniment period with the client and their new system until they are comfortable enough to proceed independently. It can happen that some settings are modified so as to better benefit users. Sometimes an oversight can also lead to the re-explanation of the functioning of an option. Finally, it rarely happens that clients have no questions in their first few days of using **maestro***; a period that can be very stressful for new users.

If conditions and scheduling allows it, and if it is needed, an implementation specialist can be available for one day a week during the first month. Once the preceding month is closed in the legacy system, the various balances are imported in **maestro***. A Maestro professional usually helps the client with the generation of their first two payrolls and, if needed, also helps with the closing of the first financial period to search for any financial gaps.

WORKING WITH TWO SYSTEMS IN PARALLEL

Other than for particular situations where it is necessary, it is recommended for users to only work in one system at a time for the following reasons:

- A new work approach, the use and learning of a new program already represents work overload;
- The use of two systems in parallel increases the risk of data entry mistakes in either system;

- Time can be lost when reconciling the data in both systems and searching for the mistakes, missing entries, or duplicate ones.

The phrase *burn the ships*[2] applies to all system changes; you must look forward and leave the past behind!

A SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE: CHANGE MANAGEMENT!

Talking about it is one thing, living it is another. Managing change is probably one of the most important elements related to the go-live. Many books have been written on the subject. All system changes automatically gives rise to some resistance; it necessarily generates the adjustment of procedures, daily tasks, and therefore, learning efforts. It is not always simple in the context of a work overload.

It is imperative to continuously follow up with employees and reassure them about the implementation progression. That said, a start-up in phases can be appropriate so as to integrate a portion of **maestro***, have some small victories, and then focus on the more complex functions of the program.

> *"Having already been there, I must admit it is very important to get in a learning mode during the implementation. One must take the time to dig further, ask questions, and understand the logic and the why of things. Learning, it's not jus tmemorizing a certain number of clicks. It is first and foremost knowing why we make a click." - A translation*

Tiberiu Fatan, Implementation Specialist

GO-LIVE PREPARATION

In preparation for the go-live, the company in **maestro*** is reset, meaning that all master files and configuration remain but all transactions are purged. This preserves all the configuration set up and data imported during the implementation phase. However, the transactions that were used for training or to test the configuration are removed. This preparation process in anticipation of the go-live day generally occurs at the end of the month preceding D-day.

> **Master Files**
>
> Master files refer to all files that contain reference/relatively permanent data. Here is a non-exhaustive

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[2]*This phrase means doing something and not being able to go back. It refers to the landing of Hernando Cortés in Vera Cruz, Mexico, in 1519. He had more ambition than army and wanted to conquer the whole Aztec Empire. Before marching on, he told one of his men to burn all the ships. That meant there would be no turning back. Thus, the "ships" represent the way back and the " burning" represents the will to not go back, to move forward.*

Source: https://chipmonkbaking.com/blogs/updates/burn-your-ships, 10-06-2020

list of this type of files:

- Customer list and contact details
- Supplier list and contact details
- Employee list and contact details
- Chart of accounts
- Item catalogue
- Asset list
- Etc.

There are six important steps before the go-live target date:

- Creation of a test company
- Initialization of the company
- Checks and refinement
- Balance transfers
- Physical inventory
- Importing employee cumulatives

Here are additional details on each of the go-live prepatory steps.

Creating a Test Company

Maestro* allows the creation of test companies. The creation of a test company consists of defining a new company (identified as a test company) from a pre-existing company (identified as the source company), and copy all data found in the source company. Just like a copy paste.

A test company allows a user to test various functions at all times, without having any impact on the real/original company. Thus, once the system is live, the users will be able to continue testing or simulating transactions as they need, in the test company.

So as to facilitate the creation of the test company, the task has been automated, therefore offering the guarantee of the data's integrity and making sure that the data copy is always done from the real company to the test company, and never the other way around. During the data copy, **maestro*** also ensures that no user is using or logged into the software. Users also benefit from an option in **maestro***, called **Copy the Source Company**. The latter subsequently allows the update of the test company with the new data entered in the source company.

Only users who have an administrative type access can create a test company. Please read the **maestro***security management document for more information.

Initializing the Company

The initialization of a company allows the deletion of the selected company's transactions. It goes without saying that no user must be working in **maestro*** when this operation is taking place.

> ⚠ Warning! This operation cannot be reversed. It will not be possible to retrieve deleted data.

When initializing a company, **maestro*** stores all information and content in the following options:

- All options in the **Maintenance** menus;
- All files found in the **General Settings**;
- All master files (**Customer Management**, **Supplier Management**, and **Employee Management**);
- The general ledger's annual budget;
- The starting funds in the **Depreciation Book** option;
- All project budgets;
- All work order templates;
- All quotation templates;
- Catalogue items (except quantities and stock values, which are reset to zero);
- Invoicing contracts (**Contract Management**, **Progress Billing Contracts**, **Cost Plus Contract Management**);
- Property management (**Property Management**, **Unit Management**, **Create a Lease**);
- **Customer/Supplier Discounts Table**.

> ⚠ The documents found in the **Document Management** and values in additional fields are deleted during a company's initialization <u>if the transactions to which they are linked are deleted</u>.

"Some clients find it expensive to pay for the training of employees regarding a new software. In my experience, mistakes cost a lot more when they happen during production! And if employees did not get the chance to practise before the go-live, mistakes make the stabilization period a lot longer." - A translation

Michel St-Jacques, Implementation Specialist

Checks and Refinement

Customary checks, such as validating the customer and supplier discount tables, closing and deleting test projects, as well as reviewing the catalogue, must be completed in **maestro*** before using the system for the actual business transactions.

Physical Inventory

On the last day of the month preceding the go-live, it is imperative to perform a physical inventory of the company's various items and assets. This inventory is required to enter the inventory balances (as well as quantities if the catalogue is used) as of the first day of the month in **maestro***.

Transferring Balances

The process that involves transferring the current values and the legacy system's balances to **maestro*** is generally performed two to three weeks after starting to use **maestro***, which is once the previous financial period is completed in the legacy system.

> The data extraction and importation process must have been validated during the configuration and training phase. This is important because it ensures that the legacy system's data is adapted to the file formats required by **maestro***.
>
> Also, and particularly if **maestro*** is used gradually (through an implementation carried out in a phased manner), some balances can be transferred during a second or third phase.

As with several operations that must be executed in the software, several approaches may be used to transfer balances, however, each one having its pros and cons. The table below introduces the one recommended by Maestro. Nevertheless, your implementation specialist is the most qualified person to discuss the process and iots alternatives with you.

Values to be transferred	Details
Trial Balance	Depending on the official use of **maestro*** start date, it is necessary to import either the year's closing or opening trial balance during the first month. An *Excel* file containing the balance of each general ledger account is imported into **maestro*** through the **Advanced Project-to-Project Transfer** option. Two projects should be created: a first one named *Balance Sheet* for balance sheet accounts, and a second one titled *Opening Balances* that can be used for revenue and expenditures accounts. Other users choose to create a single project for all accounts. In any event, if the go-live corresponds to a year closing, only balance sheet accounts must be impported. **Produce comparative financial statements for the previous year (legacy system) and the current one (maestro*)** Users that wish to produce financial statements comparing the previous and current year through **maestro*** must import the trial balances for each month of

Values to be transferred	Details
	the year preceding the go-live into **maestro***. Remember however that this optional task can be done a few months after the the big day.
	⚠ Like the chart of accounts that generally needs to be reviewed during the implementation, the legacy system's trial balance must also be adapted to fit the new account structure.
	To access the *Excel* file format required to import every GL account balance, click **HERE**.
Accounts Receivable	Once the financial period has been closed in the legacy system, the accounts receivable (AR) data must be imported into **maestro*** using an *Excel* file.
	To access the *Excel* file format required to import the AR, click **HERE**.
	*Warning! Do not forget to record the AR holdbacks. Maestro recommends recording the AR balances and holdbacks into two distinct files: one for the balances of accounts receivable and a second for the holdbacks. In addition, receipts can only be carried out in **maestro*** once the AR have been imported. It is therefore imperative to close the final month in the legacy system as soon as possible.*
Accounts Payable	Once the financial period has been closed in the legacy system, the accounts payable (AP) data must be imported into **maestro*** using an *Excel* file.
	To access the *Excel* file format required to import the AP, click **HERE**.
	*Warning! Do not forget to record the AP holdbacks.Maestro recommends recording the AR balances and holdbacks into two distinct files: one for the balances of accounts payable and a second for the holdbacks. In addition, disbursements can only be carried out in **maestro*** once the AP have been imported. It is therefore imperative to close the final month in the legacy system as soon as possible.*
Outstanding Cheques	**Maestro*** provides the possibility to enter and manage **outstanding cheques** in the option bearing the same name.
Project Costs	Once the financial period has been closed in the legacy system, the projects' total costs data must be imported into **maestro***. It is suggested to only import projects that have a significant lenght.
	Since the project's structure may have to be modified during the implementation, some adjustments may be required.
	*Note: In rare cases, and especially for projects with very long durations, some users prefer importing detailed costs. It requires more work, but it is possible to enter expenses as financial adjustments using the **Project-to-Project Transfer** option.*

Values to be transferred	Details
Order Balances	As a rule, the remaining orders' balances are entered into **maestro***, or in some cases, an overall progress invoice. However, when long-term contracts are involved, and mainly for subcontracts that must be entered into **maestro***, it may be useful to keep the payment history. Maestro sometimes recommends entering all past invoices and payments related to a customer's contract into the software. This approach allows: • profiting from having every transaction related to a contract in **maestro*** and being able to view the contract's billing history as well as all payable holdbacks, all properly accounted for; • practicing and validating **maestro*** functionalities; • simplifying holdback management and tracking. The financial resultant of these transactions will be manually cancelled as the financial adjustments will be completed through the importation of the trial balance. Though accessing the payment history in **maestro*** is preferred by some clients, not everyone chooses to do so. It all depends on the projects' lentght, the quantity of data to enter, etc. Others opt to enter the information into **maestro*** after they have been using the system for a few weeks.
Progress Billing Contracts	With regard to the progress billing contracts, it is recommended to enter the balance of each contract in **maestro***; customers may require progress billing invoices.
Depreciation	The equiment's net value must be entered in the assets. The depreciation calendar has to be adjusted according to the time of the year when the system is changed. It is also necessary to take into account additions and provisions.
Loan Management	If needed, loans can be entered in **maestro***.
Preventive Maintenance	If needed, each equipment's meter value must be updated.
Document Management	**Maestro*** allows the batch importation of documents if some of them must be in the system.
Change Orders	Change orders that are pending at the time of the go-live must also be entered in **maestro***. Most of the change orders processed during the first month of officially using maestro* have been initiated during the previous month.

Importing Employee Cumulatives

Cumulatives up to that date must always be imported.

If the use of the **maestro*** payroll starts with the year's first payroll, vacations balances as well as other balances like accrued vacation must be imported.

If the use of the **maestro*** payroll starts during the year, all current payroll data must be imported, including information from the *Quebec Pension Plan* (QPP), the *Employment Insurance* (EI) program, the *Canada Pension Plan* (CPP), etc.

> Please note that all other balances must be entered in maestro* before the production of T4 and RL-1 slips.

REMINDER

- What Maestro commonly refers to as a *go-live* is in fact the date on which the software officially becomes operational, i.e. starts being used.
- The go-live occurs on the first day of the month, once the client is ready, after all configuration and tests have been completed and users were trained.
- The phased implementation approach consists in progressively bring **maestro*** functionalities into production.
- Being adequately prepared for the go-live day not only involves having the data entry as up-to-date as possible, but also having practiced and performed as many tests as possible before the big day.
- Change management is probably one of the most important elements related to the go-live.
- Six steps must be performed ahead of a go-live:
    - creation of a test company
    - initialization of the company
    - checks and refinement
    - physical inventory
    - balance transfers
    - importation of employee cumulatives

PLANNING THE MAESTRO* GO-LIVE - FOOD FOR THOUGHT

☐   What is the desired date for the **maestro*** start-up?

☐   What are the reasons behind this date?

PLANNING THE MAESTRO* GO-LIVE - FOOD FOR THOUGHT

☐   What are the start and end dates of your company's financial year?

☐   Have you considered a go-live per phase approach?

☐   Are your employees ready for this change period?

☐   Do you plan on training your employees yourself or would you like for them to participate in the training sessions offered by Maestro?

☐   Which functions in your current program are essential to the smooth operation of your company's administration?

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