

# GENERAL FAQ'S

## "FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS"

### STAR RANGE OF POS PRINTERS

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#### ANSWERS

1. **WHY SHOULD I USE STAR RIBBONS AND NOT CHEAPER RIBBONS MANUFACTURED BY ANOTHER COMPANY?**

There are a number of reasons why Star printers should only use Star manufactured ribbons purchased from genuine Star resellers. Only Star can guarantee that a ribbon has been manufactured to the correct specifications required by each type of printer and print head. Ribbons manufactured by other companies may damage the print head or the printer mechanism due to the wrong type of ribbon fabric, ink or ribbon winding mechanism being used. If this is apparent during the first year of use, then the printer warranty will be in jeopardy. However quite often this damage does not show until after the first year of use when the printer will need to be repaired at the user's cost.

(Please note Star is one of the few POS printer manufacturers to guarantee the print head for the first year. This shows the faith we have in the Star manufactured ribbon).

## **2. WHY USE THE PURPLE RIBBON?**

Quite simply the dye based purple ribbon has a longer life; i.e. can print more characters, than the pigment based black ink. However the advantage of using black ink is that it has more impact and is therefore more visible.

## **3. WHY DO MANUFACTURER'S RELIABILITY FIGURES (MCBF) DIFFER SO WIDELY? I ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD THAT STAR PRINTERS WERE AMONG THE MOST RELIABLE ON THE MARKET.**

Up until two years ago, the major POS printer manufacturers all measured the reliability of their printers using the same methods and printers could be compared on a like-for-like basis.

NOW some manufacturers have decided to change their method of reliability evaluation in order to artificially increase their reliability figures. Star has been forced to do the same, raising the reliability of market leading known products such as SP300 from 8,000 lines MCBF to 18 million Calculated Real Time, making them STILL some of the most reliable POS printers on the market.

However Star is anxious that it's customers are not confused by the mixed marketing messages being put out by the printer manufacturers and is therefore quite clear on all it's promotional material as to how the Star reliability figures are calculated. Star will always now quote the traditional standard MCBF figures as well as the Calculated Real Time MCBF figures.

## **4. CAN THE STAR AUTOCUTTER CUT THICKER MATERIAL THAN SPECIFIED?**

The Star Autocutter is able to cut thicker material than specified. However in order to guarantee the specified life of the Autocutter, users should stick to the specifications.

With regard to labels, the printer should be set up to cut between labels and not through them in order to guarantee the specified life of the Autocutter.

## **5. WHY DOES MY STAR RECEIPT PRINTER PRINT QUESTION MARKS AT THE BEGINNING OF A PRINT RUN?**

Star receipt printers communicate via either serial or parallel ports. All serial printers use DIP switches to configure the various serial communication parameters. The serial communication parameters set on the printer must match those set on the computer in order for their communication to be successful. When the serial parameters on the printer do not match those on the computer the printer will illustrate this by printing question marks whenever a print-job is initiated. The problem can be corrected by matching the serial parameters as set on the printer to those set on the computer to which it is connected. By default all Star serial printers are configured at 9600 BAUD, 8 Data-Bits, No Parity, and 1 Stop-Bit.

## **6. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “REFLECTIVE” AND “TRANSMISSIVE” SENSORS, AND WHAT ARE THEY FOR ?**

The terms “Reflective and Transmissive” relate to the method of aligning the “Top of Form” on many Ticket or Label applications. If the application needs to print onto pre-printed stationery, or fixed size stationery (Typically Pre-printed Tickets or Labels), one of the most reliable methods of ensuring the correct alignment (Top of Form) is to print a “Black Mark” on the rear of the stationery that corresponds to the Ticket (or Label) length. In order to “Read” the Black Mark, the selected printer must be set to “Reflective”.

A second method is normally used for blank labels, where again it is important to be able to accurately locate the Top of Form (e.g. the start position of each label.). Selecting the “Transmissive” method means that the printer will be set to locate the Gap between the Labels.

Therefore, when the printer is set to “Reflective Mode”, the printer will locate the Top of Form by sensing a “Black Mark”, and when the printer is set to “Transmissive Mode”, the printer will locate the Top of Form by sensing the Gap between Labels.

Printers in the Star Range that are able to use the “Reflective” mode are :- TSP-400 series, TUP-400 Series and the TSP-800 Series. The TSP-400 series is the only Star Printer that is able to use the “Transmissive” mode. Please refer to the appropriate Technical Manual for details on selecting and setting-up the required sensors. The Star SCP-700 is also available in “Label” mode, but the Reflective sensor used is Pre-set, and no adjustment is required.

#### **7. WHY IS MY DIRECT THERMAL PRINTER FEEDING PAPER BUT NOT SHOWING ANY PRINT?**

The most common cause of this problem is that the Thermal paper is “wound the wrong way”, or the paper has been loaded incorrectly. Thermal paper has a “Heat Sensitive” coating that must come into direct contact with the Thermal Head of the printer. As Thermal printers vary with respect to the actual Head orientation, it is critical to use thermal paper suited to the selected printer.

TUP / TSP-400 series use “Internally” wound thermal paper, the TSP200, 550, 800 and 2000 Series thermal printers use “Externally” wound thermal paper.

#### **8. WHAT DOES “EDS” SETTING MEAN, AND HOW DO I SET IT.**

The term “EDS” relates to “Electronic Dip Switches” and are used to set selected function within many Star Printers. The main difference between “Electronic” and “Manual” Dip Switches is that Control Codes are required to change “Electronic” Dip Switches, and the settings are stored in the Non-volatile Memory of the printer, whereas “Manual” Dip Switches are physical switches that can be set by moving the appropriate switch.

The details of the “EDS” settings for each printer can be found in the “Memory Switch Tables” located on this CD.

#### **9. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A “DIRECT” THERMAL AND A THERMAL “TRANSFER” PRINTER.**

All the Star range of Thermal printers use the “Direct” Thermal principle, this means that special “Thermally Coated” paper must be used, and that the Thermal Head must come into “Direct” contact with the paper. With Thermal “Transfer” printers, it is not required that Thermally Coated paper is used (but, the paper must be very smooth), however, the Thermal “Transfer” printer requires a separate “Thermal Ribbon” that is located between the Thermal Head and the actual paper. In this case, when the Thermal Head “heats” the Thermal Ribbon, the image is “Transferred” to the paper.