

CODESOFT® POF Manager

A Non-middleware Printing Solution for Legacy Applications

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CODESOFT™ POF Manager

The middleware approach isn't always possible, and custom code becomes necessary.

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and other business management software provide businesses with greater control over their processes, but thermal printing of labels is often overlooked or inefficient. A common solution to this problem is to implement a middleware solution that bridges the gap between the host system and label printing software.

Teklynx provides a software add-on with CODESOFT Enterprise label design software, the Printer Object File (POF), which minimizes the amount of customization necessary and does not require any understanding of a printer's native code.

What is a Printer Object File?

The CODESOFT utility generates intelligent native printer code to a Printer Object File based on a CODESOFT label design. The POF has placeholders for variable data in the output code that allow the host application to "swap" field names within the output file with actual variable data from the legacy database before the code is sent to the printer. The information in the files is identified by delimiters that enable an analysis program to detect the data and replace it with the corresponding values.

CODESOFT POF Manager provides a viable alternative to completely custom code for driving thermal transfer label printers.

How it Works

First a label is designed with CODESOFT, and then the label is output as a native printer code file using the POF utility. This printer code can then be uploaded to the host system for integration into the existing code.

Once the POF file has been generated and incorporated into the host system, labels can be printed without a labeling software program, and can be printed from applications that run on platforms other than Windows. The relationship between CODESOFT, the POF file and the host system is illustrated in Figure 1.

Although this does provide a viable alternative to custom code for those that cannot use middleware, it is not an on-the-fly solution and requires a significant knowledge of the legacy system to properly prepare the analysis program.

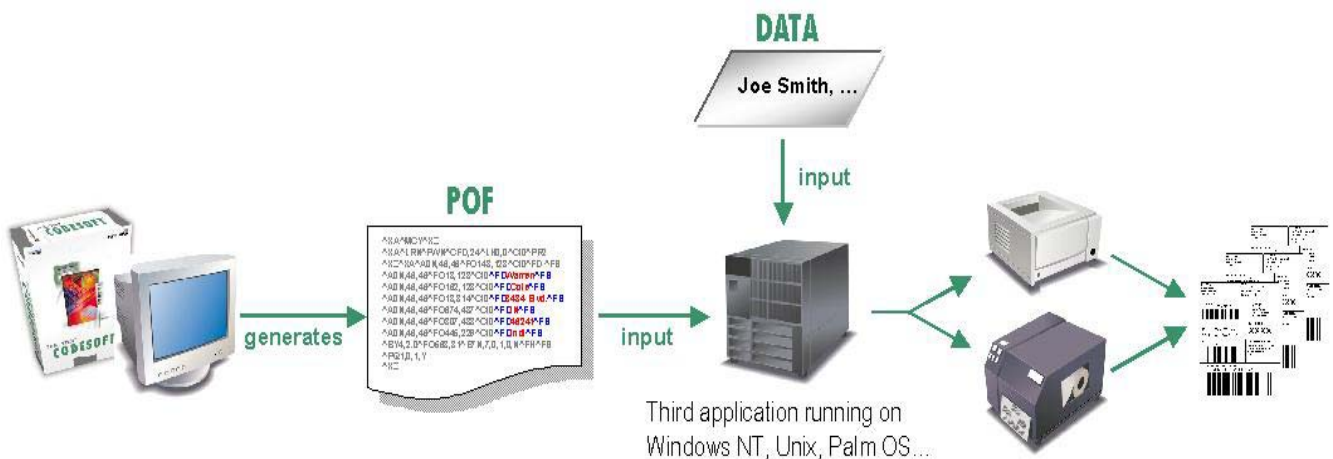


Figure 1: The relationship between CODESOFT, a POF file and the host system.

Generating a POF File

The structure of a POF file is determined by the configuration file (POC) that is used to generate it. A general configuration file is provided with CODESOFT; it can be used as-is or as the base for a customized configuration file.

Use the following steps to generate a POF file based on the general POC. An example of a CODESOFT label design and its corresponding POF file are shown in Figure 2.

1. Design a label using CODESOFT, adding as many fixed or variable text, bar code and graphic fields as needed. Test and fine-tune the design by printing to the printer using CODESOFT.
2. Select **Export** from the **File** menu.
3. A sub-menu will appear; select **as a Printer Object File (POF)**.
4. A list of configuration files will appear; select **Tk1common GENERAL.POC**.
5. The **Save as** dialog appears.
6. Assign a name to your file and save it in the folder of your choice. The file will be saved with the extension ".pof."



Figure 2: A CODESOFT label design file and a POF file exported from the label design.

Customizing POF Output

The POF configuration is completely customizable.

POF files are written in a printer language enriched with specific information. Each POC file contains definitions for attributes such as the field separator, end of field identifier, substitution characters, quantity identifier and variable identifiers. It also contains a user information section that contains file description fields that can be modified by the user.

CODESOFT Enterprise includes a utility, POF Configuration Manager, which is used to create a custom configuration file. When POF Manager is started, the configuration parameters are set with defaults that can be edited to make the POF file compatible with any host specification. In addition to editing the parameters, the configuration settings can be reordered using drag and drop. Figure 3 illustrates the POF Manager user interface.

To generate a custom POC file:

1. Select POF Manager from the CODESOFT Program folder.
2. All possible configuration parameters will appear in a tree

- structure. Select a field to be edited and enter or select the value in the text entry box that appears above the tree.
3. Drag and drop to rearrange the fields if necessary.
 4. Save the new configuration file.
 5. When exporting a label to a POF file, select the new configuration file as the template.

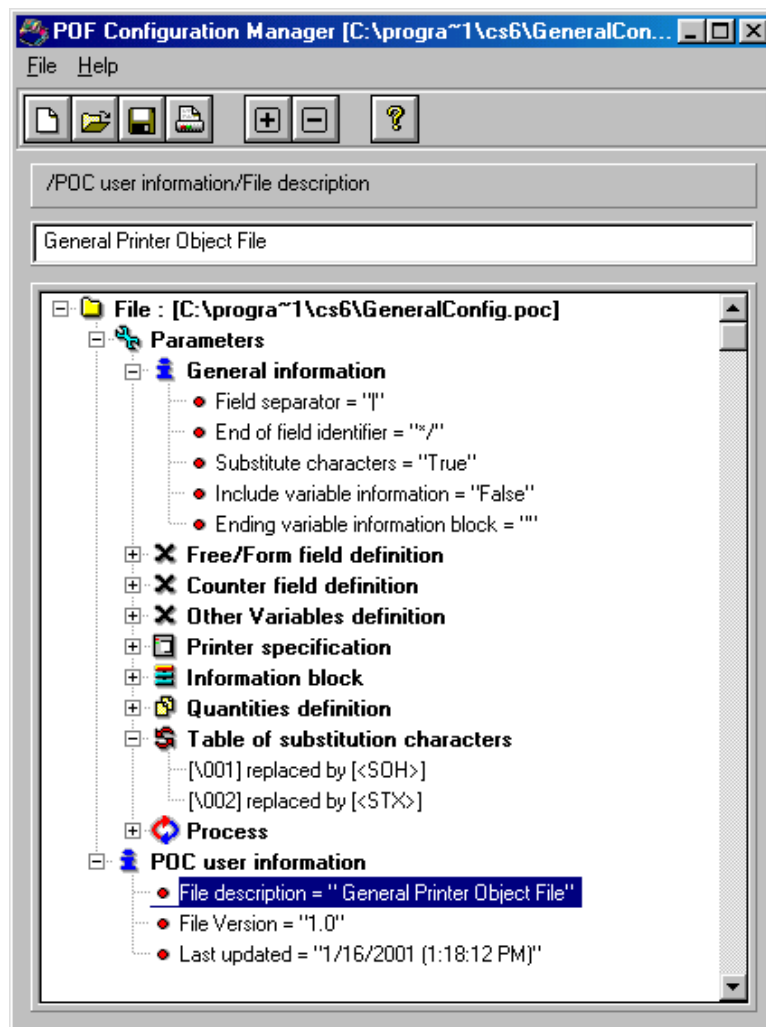


Figure 3: The POF Configuration Manager, used to configure POF file settings.

POF can minimize the amount customization necessary when implementing label printing.

Conclusion

For many companies that have legacy systems or databases in place there are few alternatives to custom written code for implementing thermal transfer printing of labels. Making use of the CODESOFT POF Manager utility can be an effective solution that minimizes the amount of customization necessary.

CODESOFT POF Manager provides a non-middleware solution for legacy applications that does not require the end user to understand printer code and can be easily integrated into an existing system by swapping out variables.

More information on www.teklynx.com

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