

Dimensions in Microsoft Dynamics NAV

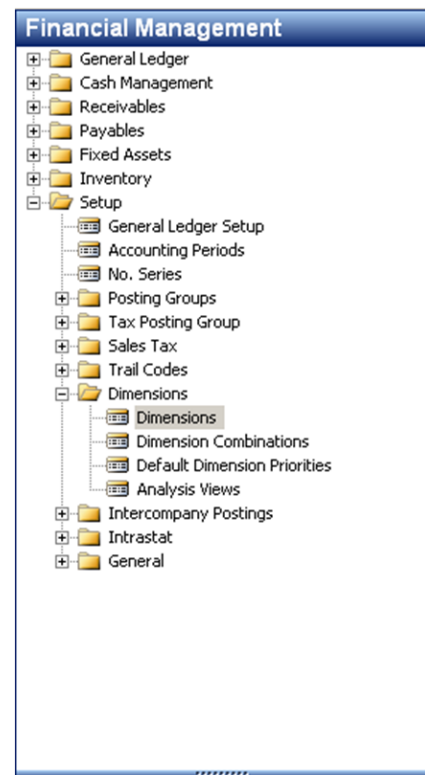
Another Dimension

Back in the early days of Navision, there were two categories for GL reporting: department and project. Today's Microsoft Dynamics NAV is much more advanced. While it is still possible to report on department and project, the limitations of just department and project have long since disappeared. Around version 3.1, Navision (now NAV) introduced dimensions. Dimensions allow information in the system to be tracked by any number of codes assigned during data entry.

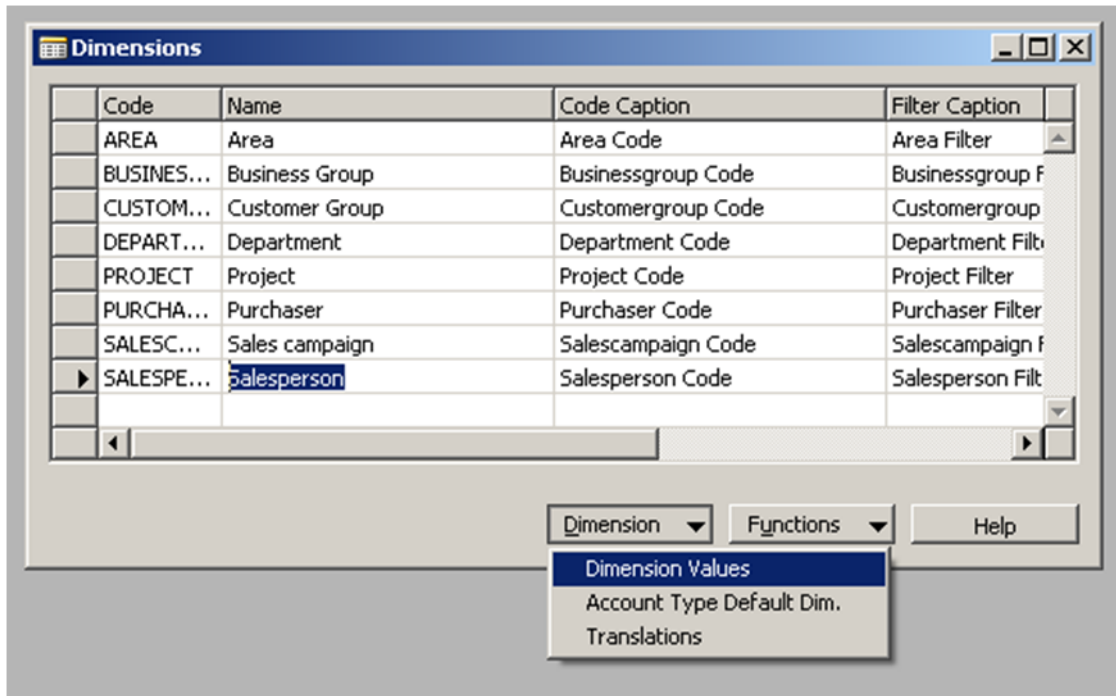
Creating Dimensions

Dimension setup can be found on the Financial Management menu, under General Ledger → Setup → Dimensions → Dimensions.

The first step to setting up dimensions, is to decide how you would like to track your data and create codes accordingly. Department and project are typical dimensions, but some businesses may want to track other information, such as salesperson or territory.

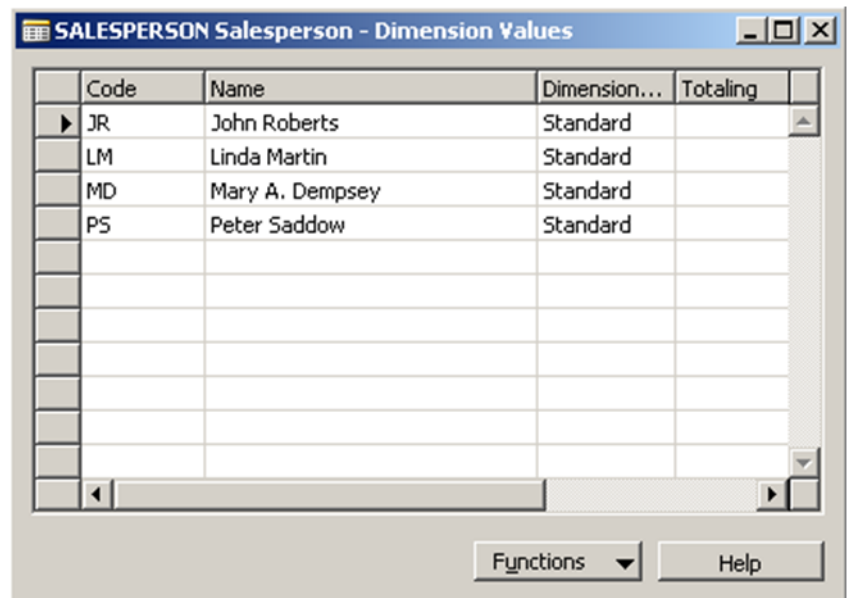


Once you have a list of dimension codes entered, you will want to assign a list of acceptable values for each code. In this case, we will enter salespeople under the SALESPERSON dimension code.



There are three fields that should be filled in for basic dimension setup. The Code, Name and Dimension Value Type. The Dimension Value Type is similar to a GL account type and determines how the code is used for totaling and grouping. Dimension setup can get quite advanced, but for basic setup, select Standard.

That is all that is needed to create dimension codes. The next step is to start using them.



Not All Dimension Codes Are Created Equal

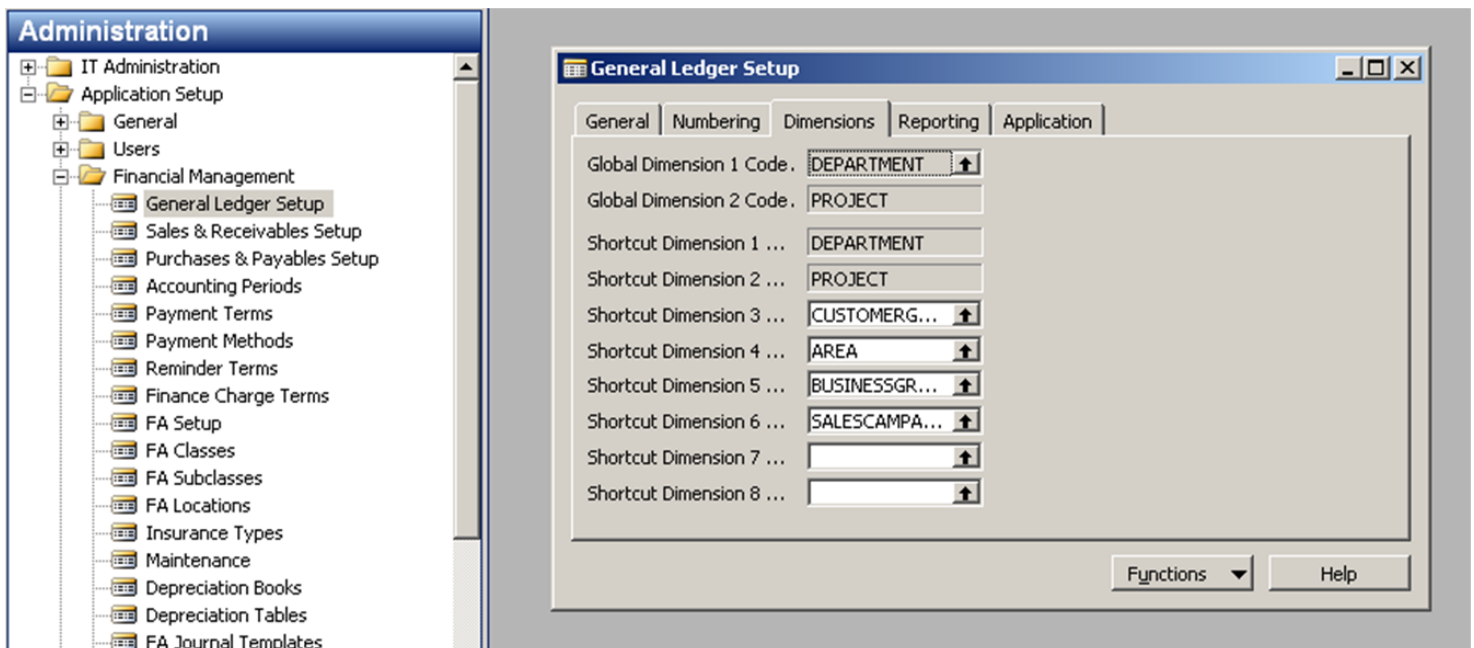
Unfortunately, there are some limits to how dimensions work. Two dimension codes can be selected as global dimensions and six more can be setup as shortcut dimensions. All others are just... well... dimensions.

Under Administration → Financial Management → General Ledger Setup on the Dimensions tab, dimensions can be assigned as global or shortcut. The global dimensions are also assigned as the first two shortcut dimensions, as global dimensions are really just a type of shortcut dimension.

Global dimensions are the most useful. They are actually stored in the tables they are entered into and behave just like any other field. Most screens and reports in the system can be filtered by global dimension and calculated values (flowfields) can often be filtered as well.

Shortcut dimensions are much more limited. As the name suggests, they merely present a shortcut, or quicker way, to the dimension value. These fields are only shown on a few screens in the system, usually journal entry screens like the payment journal or cash receipts journal. Unlike global dimensions, they don't represent actual fields in the database. Instead, they are fields programmed on the form itself. They are only available for filtering on account schedules, financial analysis views and reports that have been specifically written to use them.

Other dimension codes, while not global or shortcut, can still be entered and tracked throughout the system. The global dimension codes can be changed, although the process to change them can take quite a while as data from the newly selected code will be entered into all of the tables that it is linked to.



Using Dimensions

Unfortunately, there are some limits to how dimensions work. Two dimension codes can be selected as global dimensions and six more can be setup as shortcut dimensions. All others are just... well... dimensions.

Many areas in the system track dimensions. They are tracked by values such as GL account, customer, vendor and item. Under the customer card, dimension setup can be accessed under Dimensions option of the Customer menu button (Ctrl+Shift+D). Note that this step is not necessary to use dimensions, but it does insure that the desired dimension values are used. It would hardly be worth setting up dimensions if there were no way to enforce their use.

There are three fields on this screen. The Dimension Code is required and is the dimension code to track. The Dimension Value code is optional. If it is entered, it will be used as a default value for its dimension code. The Value Posting field determines whether or not the code must be entered the value that it can be.

- If Value Posting is left blank, any code can be used or no code can be used. The benefit to entering it is that the dimension and value are entered on all documents by default. That way if the user decides not to use that dimension, it must be intentionally deleted.
- A Value Posting of "Code Mandatory" means that some dimension value must be entered. There is no restriction as to which one, as long as it is entered.
- A Value Posting of "Same Code" means that the value must be the code entered into the Dimension Value Code field. This is useful when the dimension value will not change. For instance, in the example below, customer 10000 is assigned an CUSTOMERGROUP of 30. This type of entry is not recommended for something that might change, such as a salesperson, because changes for "Same Code" dimensions can cause problems with posting. If an invoice is created while the dimension is set to one value, it will not post if that dimension requirement is changed to a different value. The dimension value on the invoice itself would have to be changed to match the new dimension setup.
- The last Value Posting type is "No Code". This can be used in situations where no dimension is desired, such as a cash customer, a miscellaneous item or a clearing account.

Once the dimensions have been entered into the areas being tracked, they will flow throughout the system. An invoice for customer 10000 shows the dimension codes that were entered in the previous step, as well as one that was entered for that invoice. On most screens, dimensions can be accessed by pressing Ctrl+Alt+D.

Dimension Code	Dimension Value Code	Value Posting
AREA	30	Code Mandatory
CUSTOMERGROUP	MEDIUM	Same Code
DEPARTMENT	SALES	

Dimension Code	Dimension Value Code	Sales Line Order
AREA	30	
CUSTOMERGROUP	MEDIUM	
DEPARTMENT	SALES	
SALESPERSON	PS	

Microsoft Dynamics NAV

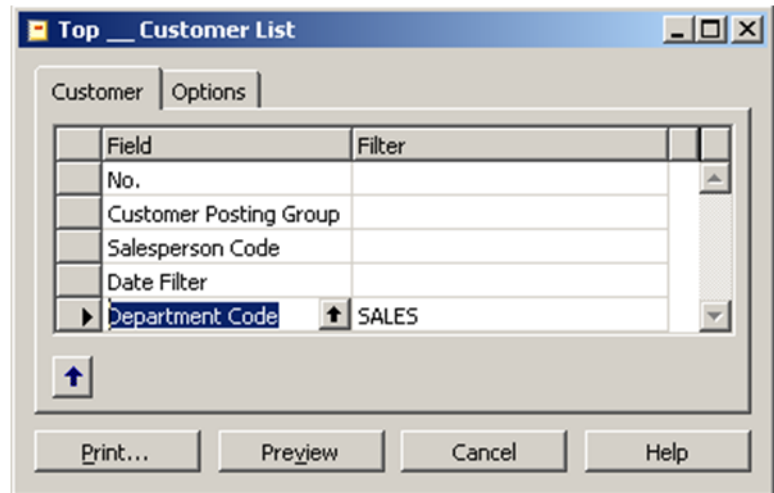
The dimensions used in Invoice 1006 are invalid. Select Dimension Value Code MEDIUM for the Dimension Code CUSTOMERGROUP for Customer 10000..

OK

Changing the CUSTOMERGROUP value on the screen to the left from MEDIUM to LARGE causes the following error when posting.

Because CUSTOMERGROUP was setup as "Code Mandatory", only the value of MEDIUM can be used here for customer 10000.

The data can then be reported on using global dimension codes for filtering. In this case, a Top Customer List. The Department Code is not initially displayed on the report filter list, but it can be added. This is typical of most reports in the system.



In Conclusion...

This only scratches the surface of what dimensions are capable of doing. In upcoming issues, we will look at more advanced uses for dimensions, such as grouping and prioritizing. If you think dimensions might be something you can use, give Gilbert & Associates a call, we are here to help.