Why is my printer printing code?

Overview

This application note addresses some common reasons why a Zebra printer would print code (i.e. printer commands) as text rather than a properly formatted label. In addition, this application note will provide insight as how to resolve this problem.

A common issue customers face when using a Zebra printer is the printer prints actual ZPL commands as text rather than the expected label. There are typically two reasons this might occur:

1. The printer "device.languages" setting is incorrect
2. The customer's application requires that it use a generic text driver instead of the ZebraDesigner driver to communicate with a Zebra printer.

Incorrect "device.languages" setting:

A common reason why a printer might be printing code is that the printer is in "line print" mode. If a printer is configured for ZPL and an application sends ZPL data to the printer, the printer will just dump the ZPL commands to the line printer rather than process the ZPL commands. With ZPL enabled, the commands will be parsed and handled appropriately.

The command to configure a printer for ZPL is:

> ! U1 setvar "device.languages" "ZPL"
>
> Note: This command must end with a carriage-return/line-feed combination.

The command to query a Zebra printer to determine the "device.languages" setting is:

> ! U1 getvar "device.languages"
>
> Note: This command must end with a carriage-return/line-feed combination.

Example:

This is what I want to print: This is what actually prints:

```
^XA
^LH0,0^LL500
^FO20,20^AD^FDCode 128^FS
^FO40,40^BY3
^BCN,100,Y,N,N
^FD123456^XZ
```

Solution: set "device.languages" "ZPL" as described above.

Using a generic text printer driver instead of the ZebraDesigner driver:

Another common reason why a Zebra printer will print ZPL commands rather than a properly formatted label is because a customer's application is using the ZebraDesigner Driver instead of a generic text driver. If you have a file with some ZPL commands in it and then send it to a Zebra printer through the ZebraDesigner driver, the printer will print the ZPL. This is because any data sent through the ZebraDesigner Driver will be wrapped in ZPL commands. When a generic text driver is used, the data that is being sent through the driver will not be wrapped in anything. The generic text driver just passes data through without alteration.

Example: Using 'Notepad', I create a text file named "TestLabel.txt" with the ZPL commands to print a Code 128 barcode. Then I try to print this using "File | Print" and select the appropriate Zebra printer.

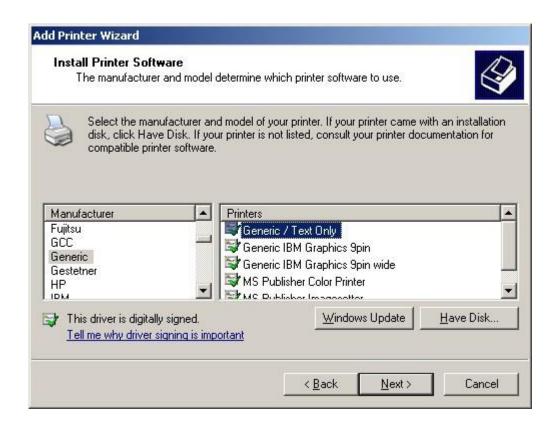This is what I want to print: This is what actually prints:

The reason the actual ZPL commands are printed is because the ZebraDesigner driver is being used. To correct this issue, re-install the printer using a "Generic / Text Only" printer.

The generic printer driver is not for any specific model of printer but it allows you to output your own printer codes. Usually you are not allowed to extract information from an application but with generic text driver you can because the output of the generic text driver is a raw text file.

Steps to Install a Generic Printer Driver

1. Click Start -> 'Settings'->'Printers and Faxes'
2. Select 'Add a Printer'
3. The Add a Printer Wizard will ask how this printer is attached, 'select local printer'
4. A list of Manufacturers and Printers show up, scroll down to select 'GENERIC'
5. Select the printer named 'Generic/Text only' in the list of Printers and click 'Next'
6. A menu will appear that will allow you to select this printer as 'Default' printer. Select 'NO' and click 'Next'
7. The Add a printer wizard will prompt you to print a test page, select 'No' and click 'Finish'

You now have a Generic text driver installed. Now when you select "File | Print" from "Notepad" and select the "Generic / Text Only" printer, the actual barcode, as shown on the under "This is what I want to print", should print.

See Also

- For any further information, sample code and solutions or to request further content, visit the Zebra Developer Portal.

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Document Control

Version	Date	Description
1.0	6th September 2012	Initial release
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