

Portfolio Back-Testing with Portfolio Maestro: An Introduction to Portfolio Back-Testing

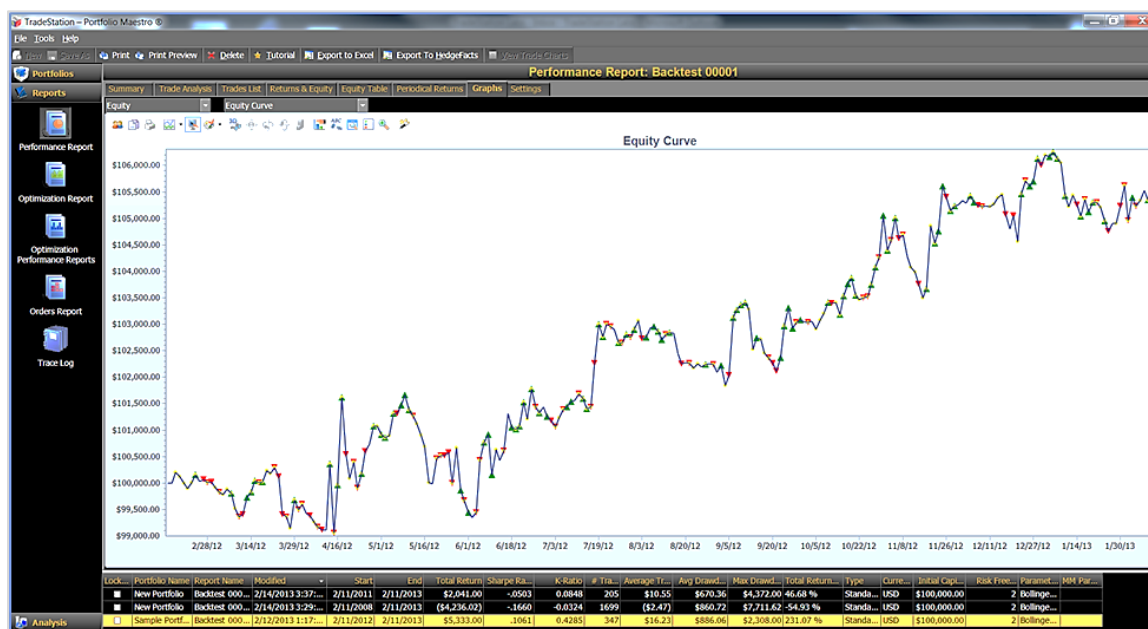
Frederic Palmidén, CMT
Senior Quantitative Analyst
TSLabs@TradeStation.com

Summary

Portfolio Maestro is a powerful way to test trading strategies at a portfolio level and generate advanced performance reports. Strategies that could only be tested in TradeStation on one security at a time are now applicable to an entire portfolio simultaneously. Money management and ranking rules, as well as commissions and slippage, can also be included.

This new series of papers will highlight the new state-of-the-art back-testing and reporting features of Portfolio Maestro, including real-world portfolio back-testing examples. In this introductory paper, a single strategy with a group of symbols will be utilized to demonstrate the basic functionality that powers Portfolio Maestro. Future papers will examine the program's more advanced features, such as money-management techniques and walk-forward optimization.

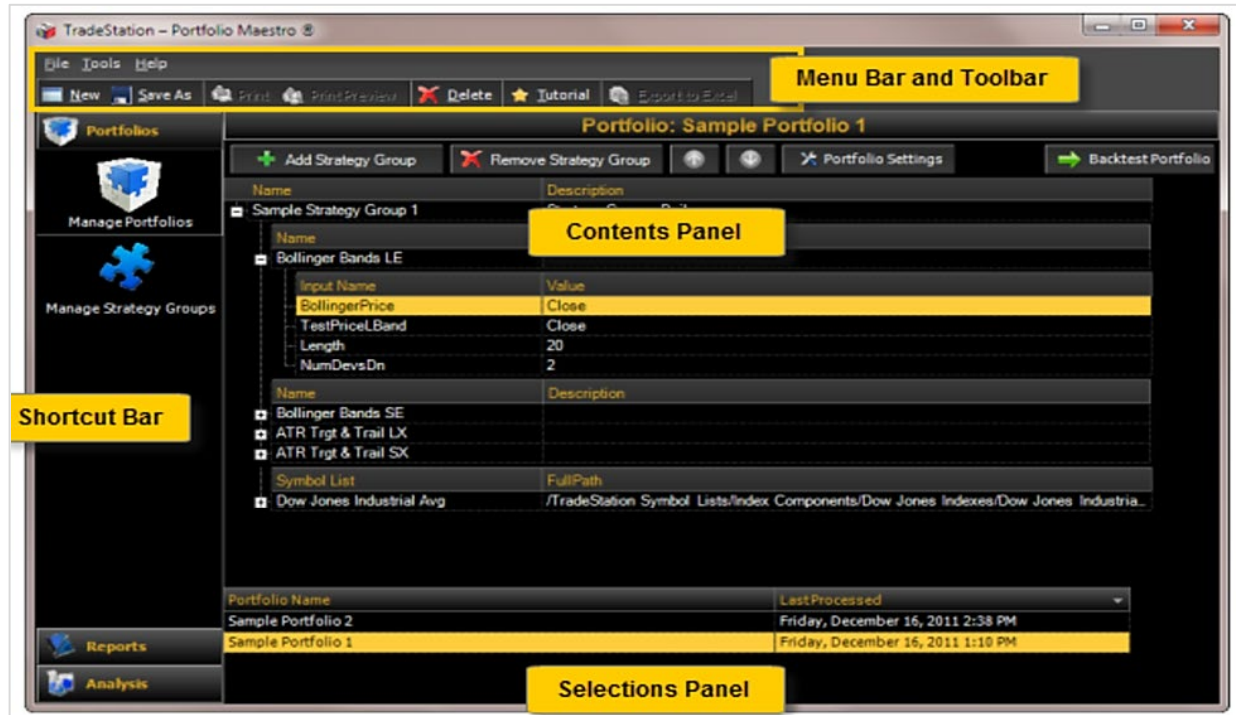
Figure 1: Portfolio Maestro Equity Curve



Geography and Terminology

Before diving into Portfolio Maestro, it is important to understand the program's general layout and terminology. As far as the geography is concerned, the design is similar to the TradeStation desktop, with a Shortcut Bar on the left side of the screen, a Contents Panel in the center and a top Menu Bar (see figure 2). What is a little different is the Selections Panel in the bottom portion of the screen.

Figure 2: Portfolio Maestro Layout



The top Menu Bar offers basic controls that allow you to create new content, print and save. The Shortcut Bar helps to quickly access Portfolio Maestro tools, from managing portfolios to viewing performance reports. Notice that the Shortcut Bar has a “Manage Portfolios” icon as well as a “Manage Strategy Groups” icon. These two terms are very important in understanding how Portfolio Maestro works. A Strategy Group contains a least one strategy component with at least one symbol, whereas a Portfolio contains at least one Strategy Group. Therefore, in order to build a portfolio, at least one Strategy Group would have to be already created.

The Contents Panel displays the contents of a selected Portfolio or Strategy Group, and also helps to display different settings. The Selections Panel contains a list of Portfolios, Strategy Groups and reports that can be displayed in the Contents Panel.

Strategy Testing Example

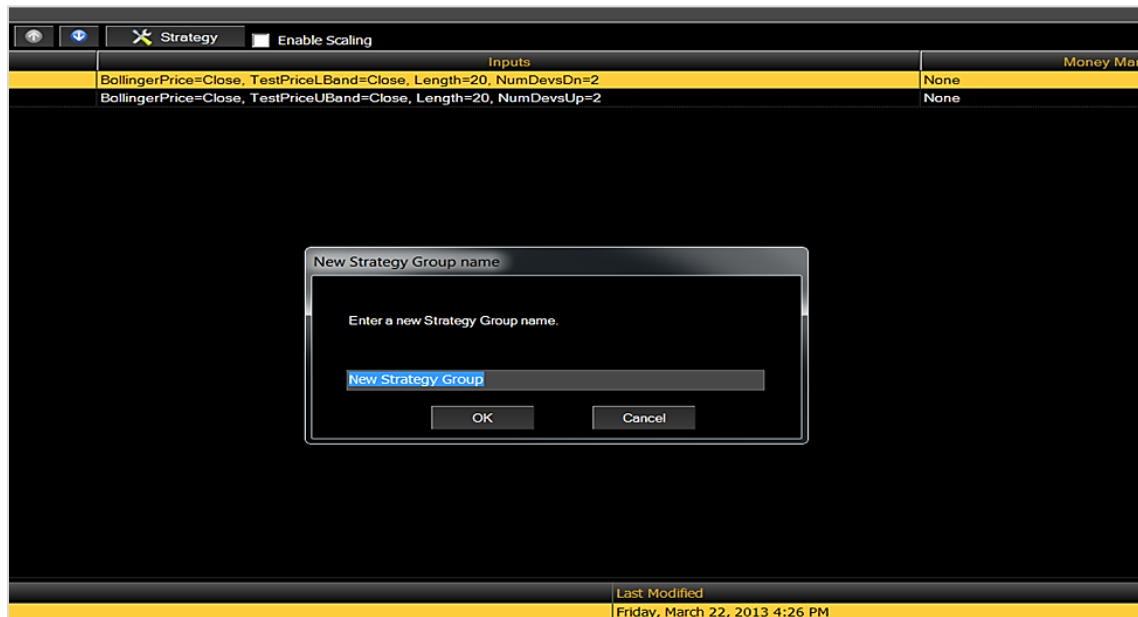
To fully understand the basic functionality of Portfolio Maestro, we will analyze a simple example step by step. In this example, the familiar supplied Bollinger Bands strategy components are selected and applied to the Dow Jones Transportation index, which includes 20 stocks.

To back-test the portfolio, we employ the following five steps.

1. Create a Strategy Group

The first step in the portfolio back-testing process is to create a Strategy Group by clicking on the Manage Strategy Groups icon in the Shortcut Bar. Then click on “New” at the top left corner of the screen. A dialog opens to name the new Strategy Group (see figure 3 below). Once named, the new Strategy Group is listed in the Selections Panel.

Figure 3: Naming a New Strategy Group



Next, click on “Add Strategy,” and select Bollinger Bands LE and Bollinger Bands SE in order to take long entries as well as short entries. For the purposes of this example, the default settings will be used (i.e., Length = 20 and NumDevsUp/NumDevsDn = 2). The different settings are viewable by clicking on the “+” sign next to the strategy component name and may be adjusted if needed (see figure 4).

Notice that there are three separate tabs within the Strategy Group. The Strategies tab was used to insert the strategy components. The Symbol Lists tab will be used next to specify which symbols to use. After clicking on the tab name, click on “Add Symbol List” and select Dow Jones Transportation within the Dow Jones Indexes, inside the Index Components, under TradeStation Symbol Lists. The members of the index are then listed in the Symbol Lists tab (see figure 5).

The last tab is the Ranking tab, which can be used to limit the number of long and short entries. For instance, a Percent Change (%) criterion may be selected in order to limit the number of positions. The functionality becomes especially helpful when large number of signals are generated and when only a certain number of positions can actually be taken (due to capital requirements, for example). No ranking techniques will be used for this example.

Figure 4: Strategies Tab Settings within the Strategy Group

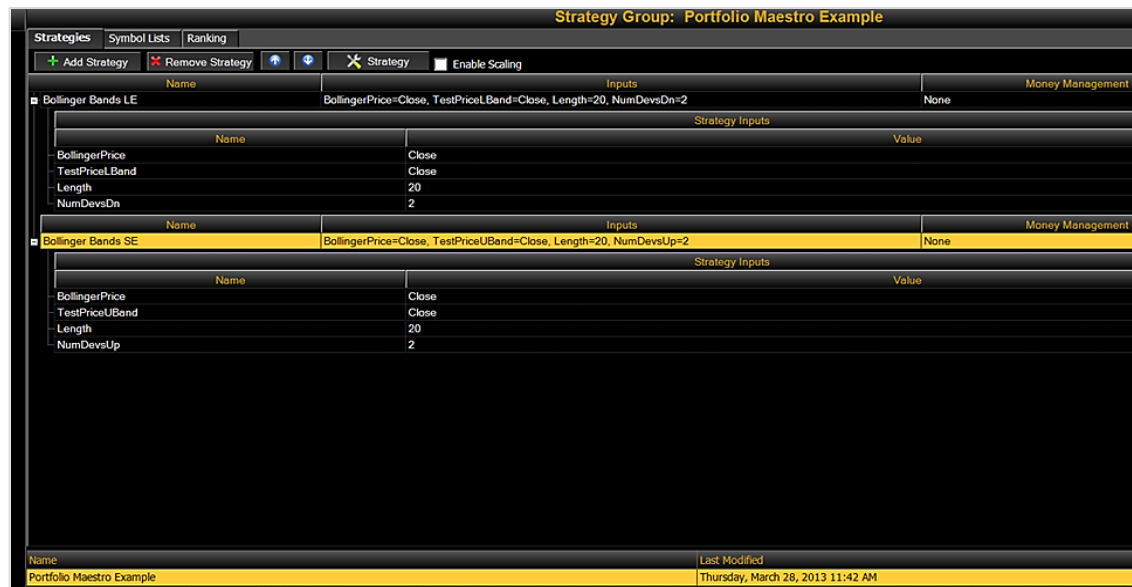



Figure 5: Symbol Lists Tab Settings within the Strategy Group

Portfolios		Strategy Group: Portfolio Maestro Example	
 Manage Portfolios  Manage Strategy Groups	Strategies	Symbol Lists	Ranking
	+ Add Symbol List - Remove Symbol X Interval		
	Name	Full Path	
	Dow Jones Transportation	/TradeStation Symbol Lists/Index Components/Dow Jones Indexes/Dow Jones Transportation (21)	
	Symbol	Description	
	ALK	Alaska Air	
	CHRW	C.H. Robinson Worldwide Inc	
	CNW	Con-Way Inc	
	CSX	CSX Corp	
	DAL	Delta Airlines Inc	
	EXPD	Expeditors Intl of Washington	
	FDX	FedEx Corp	
	GATX	GATX Corp	
	HNTI	Hunt(J.B.)Transport	
	JBLU	JetBlue Airways	
	KIR	Kirby Corp	
	KSI	Kansas City Southern	
	LSTR	Landstar System	
	LUV	Southwest Airlines	
	MATX	Matson Inc	
	NSC	Norfolk Southern	
	R	Ryder System	
	UAL	United Continental Hldgs Inc	
	UNP	Union Pacific Corporation	
	UPS	United Parcel B	

2. Create a Portfolio

Once a Strategy Group has been created, the next step is to create a Portfolio. First, click on the Manage Portfolio icon in the Shortcut Bar. Then click on “New” at the top left of the screen, which will open a dialog to name the new Portfolio. Once the new Portfolio is named, it will appear in the Selections Panel. The next step is to link the Strategy Group to the new Portfolio. Click on “Add Strategy Group” at the left side of the screen and select the Strategy Group that was created earlier. The Strategy Group that was created earlier is now part of the new Portfolio and the Portfolio is ready to be back-tested.

3. Back-Test the Portfolio

To back-test the Portfolio, click on the “Backtest” button at the top right corner of the screen. A dialog opens with four separate tabs with multiple options (see figure 6 below). The look-back period for the back-test, as well as the type of back-test, can be specified in the Settings tab. For this example, two years of history will be used and a standard back-test will be employed (default settings). The other default settings will be used in the other tabs as well, such as a fixed shares amount of 100 per trade in the Cost and Quantity tab. In the same tab, commissions and slippage can be specified per share or per trade. Notice also that the back-test will be saved by default, but a specific name can be indicated for future reference. To start the back-test, click on “Perform Backtest” on the lower side of the window.

Figure 6: Backtest Portfolio Dialog Window

Backtest Portfolio - Portfolio Maestro Portfolio Example

Settings Costs & Quantity Strategy Inputs Symbols

Report Name: Backtest00041

Initial Capital: 100000 Currency: USD (United States Dollar)

Date Range: Custom

From: 3 / 28 / 2011 To: 3 / 28 / 2013

Backtest Type: Standard

Perform Backtest Cancel

Thursday, March 28, 2013 12:52 PM
Friday, March 22, 2013 4:27 PM
Wednesday, February 20, 2013 4:26 PM

4. View the Performance Report

Once the back-test is complete, there is an automatic option to either view the analysis immediately or later. Selecting view the report immediately opens the Performance Report, which contains multiple tabs. The performance report in Portfolio Maestro offers a wealth of information – not only on a portfolio level, but also per symbol. The Summary tab provides a snapshot of the overall performance of the Portfolio for the time period covered (see figure 7). The Trades List tab shows the trades for all symbols within the Portfolio, including entry and exit dates, and profit or loss per trade (see figure 8). Advanced performance information is available by security as well, including drawdown and run-up data in currency or in percentage terms. Keep in mind that a Strategy Performance Report in TradeStation only lists trades for one security.

Performance data is also available in other tabs, such as the Equity Curve for the Portfolio as a whole in the Graphs tab (see figure 9) and weekly return data in the Periodical Returns tab. Keep in mind that the equity curve represents the performance of the Portfolio as a whole for the time period covered in the back-test. Profit and loss data is also viewable by symbol by selecting “Total P/L by Symbol” and by selecting individual symbols from the portfolio (see figure 10).

Figure 9: Performance Report Equity Curve

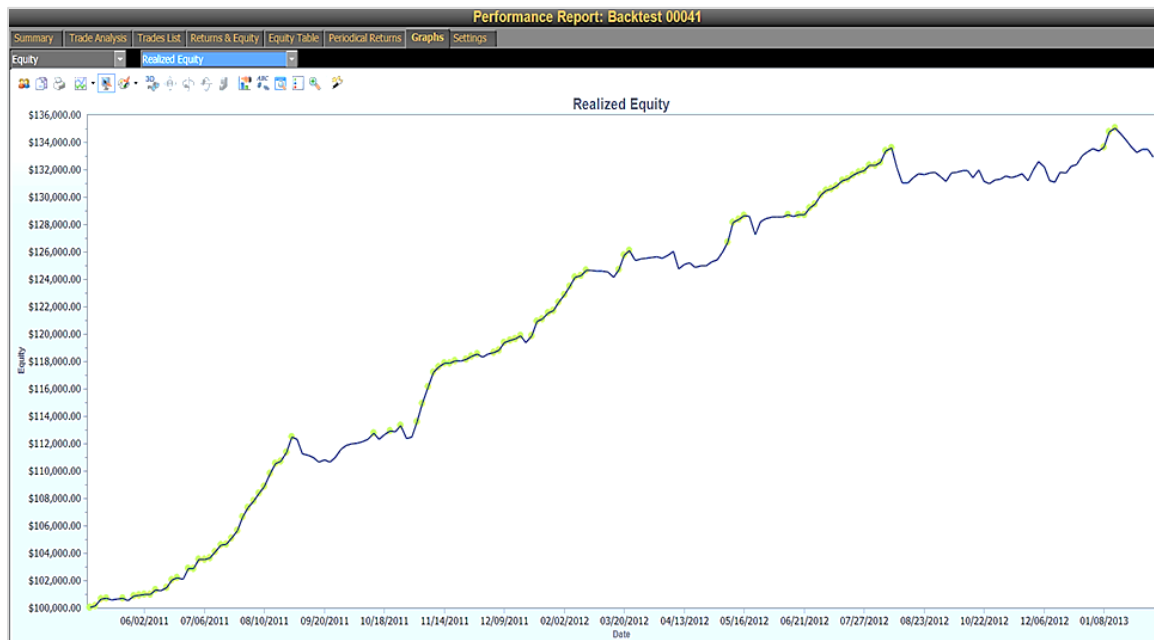
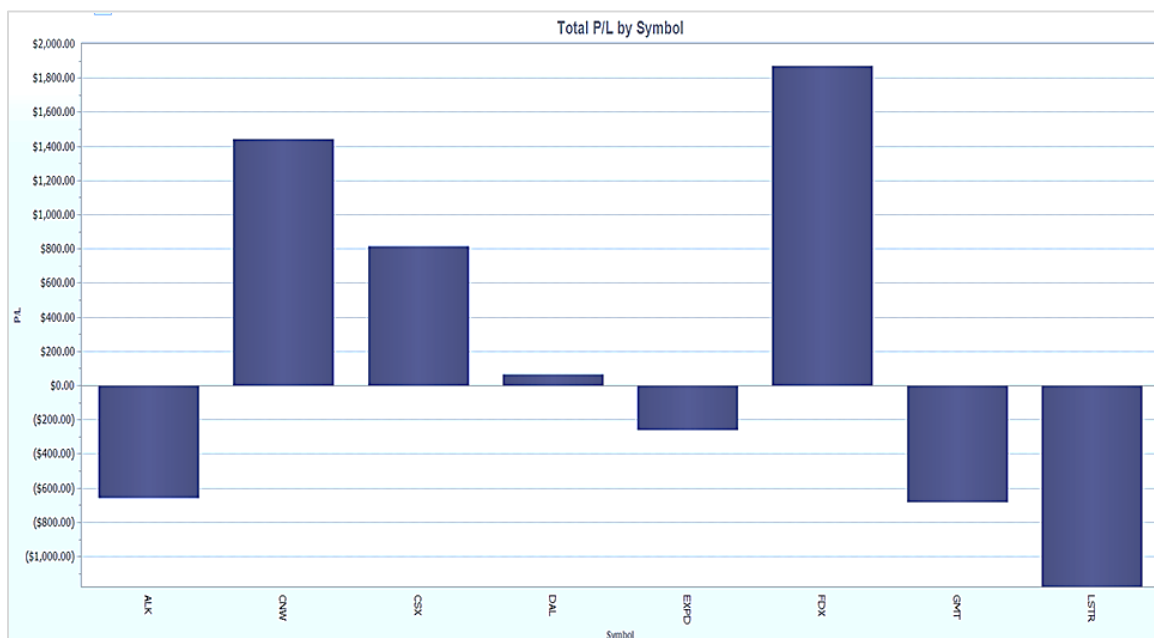





Figure 10: Performance Report Total P/L by Symbol



5. View Current Positions

Finally, in order to bridge the theoretical back-test and live trading, an Orders Report is available, which lists current positions as well as open orders as of the time the back-test was performed (see figure 11). The Positions tab shows if a long or short position is held in each symbol within the Portfolio as well as the current profit or loss per symbol, as of the time the back-test was performed. Notice also that there are Filled Orders and Cancelled Orders tabs, which can be used to view filled or cancelled orders, again as of the time the back-test is performed.

Figure 11: Orders Report

Portfolios		Backtest 00041 Report For 3/27/2013									
Reports		Open Orders		Positions		Filled Orders		Cancelled Orders			
		Symbol	Entry Date	Profit	Symbol	Type	Price	Quantity	Strategy Group	Strategy	
Performance Report		ALK	9/28/2012	(\$2,798.00)	ALK	Short Entry	\$35.31	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	
		CHRW	3/19/2013	\$5.00	CHRW	Short Entry	\$59.20	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	
		CNW	1/7/2013	(\$577.00)	CNW	Short Entry	\$29.30	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	
		CSX	1/8/2013	(\$388.00)	CSX	Short Entry	\$20.47	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	
Optimization Report		DAL	10/9/2012	(\$648.00)	DAL	Short Entry	\$10.11	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	
		EXPD	2/20/2013	(\$687.00)	EXPD	Long Entry	\$42.60	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands LE	
		FDX	3/25/2013	(\$86.00)	FDX	Long Entry	\$98.51	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands LE	
		GMT	7/24/2012	(\$1,021.00)	GMT	Short Entry	\$40.93	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	
Optimization Performance Reports		JBHT	3/1/2013	(\$412.00)	JBHT	Short Entry	\$69.74	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	
		JBLU	12/24/2012	(\$110.00)	JBLU	Short Entry	\$5.80	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	
		KEX	12/24/2012	(\$1,446.00)	KEX	Short Entry	\$61.33	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	
		KSU	1/8/2013	(\$2,179.00)	KSU	Short Entry	\$85.95	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	
Orders Report		LSTR	2/15/2013	\$139.00	LSTR	Long Entry	\$55.31	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands LE	
		LUV	11/8/2012	(\$418.00)	LUV	Short Entry	\$9.01	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	
		MATX	2/28/2013	(\$153.00)	MATX	Long Entry	\$25.78	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands LE	
		NSC	12/7/2012	(\$1,479.00)	NSC	Short Entry	\$61.49	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	
Trace Log		R	8/1/2012	(\$1,989.00)	R	Short Entry	\$39.51	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	
		UAL	11/12/2012	(\$1,120.00)	UAL	Short Entry	\$21.13	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	
		UNP	12/20/2012	(\$1,508.00)	UNP	Short Entry	\$125.75	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	
		UPS	12/21/2012	(\$1,083.00)	UPS	Short Entry	\$74.60	100	Portfolio Maestro Example	Bollinger Bands SE	

Conclusion

Portfolio Maestro's powerful back-testing capabilities generate a wealth of information for portfolio analysis and evaluation. A simple strategy was utilized in this paper with a fairly short list of symbols for educational and demonstration purposes. However, keep in mind that a Portfolio can be very complex, with multiple Strategy Groups containing multiple strategy components with large lists of individual securities. Moreover, ranking, money management, portfolio constraints, portfolio targets and stops, portfolio optimization and walk-forward analysis can all be exploited. These different advanced topics will be explored in upcoming papers.

All support, education and training services and materials on the TradeStation website are for informational purposes only and to help customers learn more about how to use the power of TradeStation software and services. No type of trading or investment advice is being made, given or in any manner provided by any TradeStation affiliate.

This material may also discuss in detail how TradeStation is designed to help you develop, test and implement trading strategies. However, TradeStation does not provide or suggest trading strategies. We offer you unique tools to help you design your own strategies and look at how they could have performed in the past. While we believe this is very valuable information, we caution you that simulated past performance of a trading strategy is no guarantee of its future performance or success. We also do not recommend or solicit the purchase or sale of any particular securities or derivative products. Any symbols referenced are used only for the purposes of the demonstration, as an example—not a recommendation.

Finally, this material may discuss automated electronic order placement and execution. Please note that even though TradeStation has been designed to automate your trading strategies and deliver timely order placement, routing and execution, these things, as well as access to the system itself, may at times be delayed or even fail due to market volatility, quote delays, system and software errors, Internet traffic, outages and other factors.

TradeStation Group, Inc. Affiliates: All proprietary technology in TradeStation is owned by TradeStation Technologies, Inc. Equities, equities options, and commodity futures products and services are offered by TradeStation Securities, Inc. (Member NYSE, FINRA, NFA and SIPC). TradeStation Securities, Inc.'s SIPC coverage is available only for equities and equities options accounts. Forex products and services are offered by TradeStation Forex, a division of IBFX, Inc. (Member NFA).

Copyright © 2001-2013 TradeStation Group, Inc.