

Sufficient reason to de-normalize a field?

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One for the gurus:

I've got a great database design. Normalized as well as I can in any event. However, I have a form where I save payment information and the payee might be an ad hoc individual — that is, it may be someone who does not exist in the database until such time as the payment is made. Thus, they could not be bound with say, a customerID or an employeeID, as I might do in any other circumstance. On the other hand, the payee will probably — in most cases — actually be an employee.

Furthermore, I have a stored procedure which spits out a SUM of payments made to employees. Thus, I need to pass in as one of the parameters the name of the payee when it is an employee. Yet the payee must be precisely named or else the input parameter would not find a match.

My plan is to use a combo populated with the employees, yet allow the user to input ad hoc names also and save the text value of the combo into the field in the payments table. Unfortunately, this still sticks me with the string search parameter.

In all other instances I've been able to tightly hold to the design of only saving ID numbers into subordinate tables. Is this a situation that would allow the likely redundant data that I propose?