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Headline News

Sage Accpac 200 ERP 5.5 received a perfect 5-Star review overall in *The CPA Technology Advisor*. The 2008 review of mid-range accounting systems marks the eighth year in a row that the software has received the 5-star overall rating. The software was evaluated in five key areas: Modules and Notable Features, Integration and Import/Export, Reporting, Support and Training, and Relative Value.

The Benefits Of CRM For Accounting And Finance

Accounting operations were one of the first business processes to be automated with computers, and it makes sense—number-crunching is one of the things a computer does best. As a result, accounting software such as Sage Accpac ERP is highly evolved to be very flexible and capable. CRM (customer relationship management) software is a more recent innovation, and can play a pivotal role in the success of sales and marketing departments. But how can your accounting and finance teams benefit? In this article, we will discuss five areas where CRM can be just as important for the finance team as for the front-office team. And we will show how tight integration between Sage Accpac ERP and SageCRM can facilitate smoother operations.

Reduce Outstanding Receivables

By integrating SageCRM with your back-office system, you eliminate the need to double-enter invoices—once in CRM when the opportunity closes and a second time in Accounts Receivable. When invoices are incorrectly entered, customer payments are delayed while the errors are sorted out. If you avoid the inevitable errors that come with double entry or trying to decode a hand-written order, invoices can be in the customers' hands days earlier and are more likely to be accurate and paid promptly.

SageCRM workflow can keep everyone on task with automatic alerts and notifications. The system can be configured to proactively



send e-mail messages to both customers and sales representatives before the invoice is due. Automatic follow-up reminders can be sent internally and to customers to keep the collection process moving.

Using Calendar and task management tools in SageCRM, you can go beyond the printed aging report. You can use more sophisticated calendar tools to prioritize collection calls, make sure follow-ups occur, escalate accounts, and send automatic e-mail messages.

With SageCRM, customer communications are centralized. All types of communication with the customer, whether e-mail messages, phone calls, notes, or letters, are saved in one central location to maximize effectiveness. Accounts Receivable collections staff benefit from the centralized access to all

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The Benefits Of CRM For Accounting And Finance

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customer-related information. Collections staff will be fully informed when talking to the customer, with all transaction and contact history ready and accessible. You will be able to avoid duplicating efforts and ensure customers aren't bothered twice.

With fewer errors, automated reminders, and staff from all departments fully informed, you can't help but improve collections and lower outstanding receivables. And lower outstanding receivables is cash for your bottom line. Consider the following example: A company bills about \$5 million annually and its average AR balance is \$550K—with a daily sales outstanding (DSO) of 40. Collecting bills just five days earlier gives the company about \$68,000 more cash each month.

Streamline Customer Credit Approval

Using the workflow automation in SageCRM, you can create a button that, when pushed by your sales team, will trigger the credit approval process for the customer. SageCRM can send out the application automatically, and send and receive calendar tasks and reminders to responsible parties at each stage of the application. The resulting approval is kept in a centralized place so that sales can check it on behalf of the customer.

If you were able to shave just three days off each customer's credit application approval process, you could invoice and collect revenue three days earlier. Think how this could improve your cash flow.

Spend Less Time On The Phone

With secure access to the accounting transactional information they need, your sales and customer service teams will no longer need to contact accounting staff for answers to customer inquiries. This frees up time for your

accounting staff. And permission-based access assures sensitive information is kept private.

Suppose you have an Accounts Receivable clerk who spends an average of just 30 minutes a day answering routine questions from customer service and sales representatives. That time—which might cost the company an average of \$2,400 a year—can be better spent ensuring that invoices are paid on time and payments are promptly deposited.

Save Time On Data Entry And Troubleshooting

With back-office integration to SageCRM, you can safely give sales and customer service representatives permission to input orders and RMAs at the source and pass them to the accounting system. This reduces the risk for data errors and eliminates the need for duplicate data entry. You also can have customer address and phone number changes entered by the front-office staff who are talking to customers every day anyway, to ensure the information is accurate and up-to-date and that invoices are sent to the correct place.


The finance team will be able to troubleshoot discrepancies more quickly by researching all transactions and communications with a customer—not only the ones that are normally visible to accounting.

Integration with SageCRM will allow you to provide better customer service and will help streamline operations and save administrative time in your accounting and finance operations. For example, by saving time on invoicing, the AR staff has more time to focus on collections so that collections are more timely and effective. And by utilizing your resources more effectively, your company will be able to handle increased workload without the need to add staff.

Streamline And Save On Purchasing

The calendar and task management tools in SageCRM can be used by the purchasing department as well. They can keep track of each step in the purchasing process and set tasks in the calendar to make sure they are accomplished. All vendor communications—phone calls, letters, e-mail messages, RFQs, and contracts, can be stored in one place, instead of in folders, binders, and spreadsheets. With a comprehensive record of communications, you can ensure that requests are handled promptly and misunderstandings with vendors are avoided.

For example: Your company's IT manager requests 10 computers. This may result in dozens of e-mail messages and documents exchanged. By keeping all those communications in a centralized location, everyone involved can be informed of the progress. And by using workflow and calendar tools you can streamline every step of the process. The IT manager can easily see exactly when the computers were scheduled to arrive and be prepared to get them deployed immediately. You can see how on this request alone, the purchasing department might save several hours on data entry, filing, follow-up, and other administrative tasks.

SageCRM is part of the Extended Enterprise Suite, and is included with Sage Accpac 5.5. To discuss how SageCRM can make your financial operations more effective, please give us a call. 

Top Ten Reasons To Upgrade to Sage Accpac ERP 5.5

Sage Accpac ERP Version 5.5 was released earlier this year, and in previous newsletters we have told you about many of the new capabilities of this release. Those new capabilities are one of the top ten reasons to upgrade. In this article, we give you nine other good reasons to upgrade.

Reason #10

Many powerful new features, including GL Account roll-ups, enhanced multi-currency handling, integration between Project and Job Costing and Order Entry, and multiple customer billing.

Reason #9

Executive Dashboards. Up-to-date snapshots of your company's financial and operational status allow executives to make better-informed and timely decisions.

Reason #8

Improved integration with other software products from Sage Software.

- » The SageCRM integration includes increased ERP data access for CRM users, enhanced database security, and Sage Accpac national account information rolled into SageCRM.
- » The HRMS integration has increased data flow and enhanced mapping capabilities with Sage Accpac, and includes enhanced documentation and Help capabilities.
- » The FAS integration includes the ability to add fixed assets directly from Purchase Order Receipt entry, and can handle Intercompany Transactions.

Reason #7

Synchronized release. Sage Software put a priority on synchronizing with end-to-end solutions. As of August 2008, all end-to-end solutions are compatible with Version 5.5.

Reason #6

ISV Compatibility. Over 25 key ISV (Independent Software Vendor) solutions are compatible with Version 5.5. Sage Software worked closely with the ISVs to ensure their timely compatibility with Version 5.5.

Reason #5

Access to information. A new user community exists on the Internet where you can share information and learn how other customers are deploying Sage Accpac Version 5.5. Here you have access to the knowledge-base and a Web form that allows you to provide your feedback regarding Sage Software products and services. The site address is: www.sageaccpac.com/community

Reason #4

More value. In response to customer feedback, Sage Accpac is more cost effective. MS SQL pricing is now equal to Pervasive pricing, and 11 modules now are bundled into a core suite. Advanced capabilities are included in the 100 and 200 editions, such as more GL budgets and years of history. The 100 and 200 edition users also will be able to purchase the Project Job Cost module and utilize advanced features in Payroll.

Reason #3

CRM included at no additional charge. Every 5.5 System Manager now includes SageCRM 200 Server Version 6.1 and one Sage CRM 200 Named User.

Reason #2

Enhanced performance. The Sage Software benchmarks include 40 percent faster performance in Payroll processing and 28 percent faster posting of AR Documents. One customer reported that their time to process 4,000+ transactions went from 3+ hours to just 20 minutes.

Reason #1

A high-quality release. In addition to extensive internal QA testing, the Version 5.5 release also was field tested. In a controlled release, eight customer sites with 100+ total users ran the software live for several weeks prior to the official release. Please give us a call to schedule your upgrade. ✨

Did You Know?

Section 179 Tax Incentives

Section 179 of the IRS Code gives businesses with a small amount of annual property purchases the choice of expensing the cost instead of depreciating it. In 2008, the expense limit increases to \$250,000. Keep in mind that the total equipment purchases for the year cannot exceed \$800,000, or the amount you can directly expense is reduced by \$1.00 for every dollar you spend over \$800,000. A separate provision provides an additional 50 percent special depreciation for certain types of property, including software. So if you do spend over \$800,000, you can take a 50 percent depreciation for the amount above that which you can directly expense. For example, if your company purchases a single piece of property at a cost of \$450,000, \$250,000 of the cost could be immediately expensed (under section 179) and the remaining \$200,000 would qualify for 50 percent depreciation. The section 179 tax break is a great opportunity to acquire property to help run your business better. If you need to upgrade your hardware or database platform, now would be a good time to do it. NOTE: the incentive is for the calendar year, so regardless of your fiscal year, the equipment must be purchased by December 31, 2008 to get the tax break on this year's tax return.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

Sage FAS Asset Accounting Supports Economic Stimulus Act

It is common for organizations to lose or improperly record up to 12 percent of their assets. A typical company need only lose track of seven percent of fixed assets to significantly overpay taxes. Sage FAS Fixed Assets enables accurate tracking of fixed assets, and the latest version features a tighter integration with Sage Accpac ERP and full compliance with the money-saving benefits of the Economic Stimulus Act that we cover on page 3 of this newsletter. If you don't already use Sage FAS, now is a great time to implement it.

Enhanced Integration

Until Version 5.5, Sage FAS integrated with the Sage Accpac ERP only by importing depreciation entries into General Ledger. In Version 5.5, you also have the ability to create an asset when it makes most sense, while you are receiving the property through the Purchase Order Receipts task. This new feature creates a complete integrated workflow between Sage FAS and Sage Accpac.

Easy To Use

Sage FAS is designed to be user-friendly and make the job of tracking and reporting on your company's assets easier and more accurate. The Company Setup wizard makes getting started fast and easy. The Asset wizard simplifies the creation, acquisition, and depreciation of fixed assets, and includes templates that automatically fill out the asset information. Data that can be recorded for each asset includes a notes field, a time and

date stamp on transactions, and the ability to attach photos and documents. Attaching the unique identification information of each asset helps eliminate duplication and facilitates clean audits. You can choose from dozens of built-in depreciation rules to ensure the correct depreciation method and tax schedule are used, and the easy asset disposal feature guides users through the process of eliminating assets from inventory.

New In Sage FAS 2008.2

The Sage FAS 2008.2 update contains several major reporting enhancements along with important legislative updates.

- » New Assets Snapshot: An at-a-glance graphical summary of your important fixed asset information gives you instant command over your fixed assets.
- » Expanded FAS Report Writer Capabilities: FAS Report Writer now is powered by Crystal Reports® XI and offers many new and updated features, such as run-time input parameters, a formula workshop, and support for multiple data sources in a single report.
- » New Form 4562-FY: To reflect the new 50-percent special depreciation allowance in the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008, the IRS released a new version of the depreciation and amortization form for fiscal year filers. Form 4562-FY replaces Form 4562 for tax years beginning in 2007 and ending in 2008.

Streamline And Save Money

The cost of losing track of a valuable piece of equipment or overpaying on insurance or taxes for an item can quickly exceed the cost of the implementation of Sage FAS. In addition, simply having a fixed asset tracking system in place tends to deter theft.

Call us for more details and pricing on Sage FAS. ✪

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