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Sage Accpac 500 ERP (enterprise resource planning) is one of the most powerful members of Sage Software's mid-market business management systems portfolio. The system includes a full suite of modules including core accounting, distribution, project accounting, and a number of enhancements called "Accpac Options." It also provides tight integration with a number of other business management systems — including CRM (customer relationship management), HR (human resources), e-commerce, WMS (warehouse management system), EDI (electronic data interchange) and POS (point-of-sale) — to form a complete "end-to-end" solution for a medium-sized business or small enterprise.

Version 5.4 was released earlier this year and introduced a cornucopia of new features (267 by Sage's count) across the various modules. Some of the more notable enhancements include multilevel bills of material, customer refunds, credit checking, more extensive drilldown across the various modules, and the addition of an RMA (return merchandise authorization) module. Version 5.4 will also run on 64-bit Intel Pentium and AMD processors.

Modules/Scalability — 5 Stars
Similar to other mid-market packages, Sage Accpac 500 ERP has an extensive list of core accounting and distribution modules. Accounting modules include: GL, GL Security, GL Consolidations, Multicurrency, Optional Fields, AP, AR, National Accounts Management, Project and Job Costing and U.S. and Canadian Payroll. Bank and Tax services are built in to the System Manager module. The distribution

suite includes Purchase Order, Order Entry, Inventory Control and Return

add-on developer MISys, Inc. offers an advanced suite of modules written using the Accpac Solution Developer Kit (SDK). The capabilities of these modules rival any mid-market manufacturing package and include purchasing and multi-level bill of materials, MRP (manufacturing resource planning), planning and scheduling, work orders, shop floor control and product configuration.

With an extensive module list and broad feature set, Sage Accpac 500 ERP represents a great solution for a broad range of industries and companies in the mid-market. Yet, there are specific modules and features of the program that make it a particularly good fit in certain environments. International companies with multicurrency and/or multi-language requirements are one example. Service-based organizations have always been a strong suit. Another example is businesses needing operating system or database platform independence and flexibility. Sage Accpac ERP supports and can be run on both Linux and Microsoft Windows operating systems, including the ability to run Linux and Windows clients in parallel against the same database. Sage Accpac ERP provides users the freedom to choose from a variety of databases, including IBM DB2 (a three-user DB2 license is included free of charge with a license of Sage Accpac ERP), Pervasive.SQL, Oracle, and Microsoft SQL Server, in addition to deploying on either the Microsoft, Linux or IBM OS400 operating systems. It can also be deployed either on premises, or hosted online (www.accpaconline.com).
And if that's not enough, the entire Sage Accpac ERP product line can run natively from a web browser (all data-entry screens are actually ActiveX controls), making it a great solution for the occasional mobile user and branch office locations without having to deploy additional infrastructure to support this functionality.

Sage Accpac ERP is quite scalable, as it comes in three different editions: Accpac 100, which is limited to five concurrent users; Accpac 200, which scales

to 10 concurrent users; and Accpac 500, supporting unlimited users. Advantageous

Usability/User Experience/Security — 5 Stars

Similar to some other mid-market solutions, Sage Accpac 500 ERP has a Windows Explorer look and feel. The modules are listed down the left-hand side, with specific tasks and icons located on the right-hand side of the screen. Tasks are associated with various icons. Users who wish to simplify their experience with the program can set up custom folders with user-defined tasks and reports. The vendor has gone to great lengths to design screens that enable users that are tasked with more traditional heads-down data entry to enter all required data from a single screen (i.e., without the need to click on a lot of other supporting tabs, buttons or drilldown windows).

Information drilldown and drill-around capabilities are extensive, quickly enabling a user to access transaction details starting from a trial balance, account inquiry or company financial statement, all the way back to source transactions.

Sage Accpac 500 ERP can also be deployed in a web-browser, which eliminates the need to install the program on each local workstation. The web interface is clean and intuitive, especially to users comfortable with web-based applications. While this appears to be a unique strength of the program, many users report performance issues running it via a web browser over the Internet, so we recommend that potential users keep this in mind as they evaluate the potential of this product in their environment. (Sage Accpac product management notes that it is aware of these concerns and is working to address them.)

Security in the system is very strong with the ability to restrict activity by function. A nice security feature is the ability to remove modules, tasks, reports, etc., from the screen if a user is not authorized. This removes clutter from the screen and potential user confusion.

- No manufacturing module (only available as an add-on from third parties)
- Brand recognition is weak despite the strength and popularity of the product in many markets
- No workflow; no dashboard

Areas for Improvement:
- Improve project job costing to appeal to the masses
- Introduce better not-for-profit vertical solutions

Extensibility — 5 Stars

The Sage Accpac SDK and APIs enable developers to write applications to extend the functionality of Sage Accpac 500 ERP. Since the program is such an international product, developers from all corners of the globe have created a number of very impressive enhancements for manufacturing, service management, credit card processing,
PO workflow, fixed asset management, warehouse management and more. As mentioned
earlier, a number of products and services are available directly from Sage Software that integrate with Sage Accpac 500 ERP and provide solutions for almost any aspect of a business. These include the following: Sage CRM (Customer Relationship
Management), Sage Accpac HR Series (Human Resource Management), Sage Accpac ePOS (Point of Sale), Sage Accpac WMS (Warehouse Management and Automation), Sage Accpac Exchange (EDI), Sage Payroll Services, Sage Accpac Insight (business intelligence tool), Sage Accpac FAS (fixed asset management), and eCommerce for Sage Accpac ERP.

Integration/Customization — 5 Stars

untangle and reverse engineer through complex table schema and program logic in order to create high-quality integrations. Native Accpac screens can be modified to include buttons that launch third-party applications or execute additional VBA code. Using the Transaction Analysis and Optional Fields module, Sage Accpac 500 ERP provides for an unlimited number of user-defined fields across the product, both at the master (customer, vendor, item, etc.) level, as well as the transaction header and/or detail distribution level.

Reporting — 5 Stars

Sage Accpac 500 ERP offers a number of exceptional reporting options. Included in every module is a bevy of standard reports. Custom reports can be created using Crystal Reports (not included in the system) and then exported to various formats including *.PDF, *.CSV, Word Excel, XML, etc. Financial reporting is accomplished via a Microsoft Excel DLL (Dynamic Link Library) that's included with the GL module, enabling users to link an Excel spreadsheet directly to underlying Accpac data. Cells can be linked to the GL accounts and then formatted using traditional Excel commands, providing users with the ability to quickly produce professional looking financial statements. Drilldown from the financial statements into source transaction data was previously added in Version 5.3B.

Other reporting options available for an additional fee include the following: Accpac Query (a free form inquiry and reporting tool), Sage Accpac Insight (a business intelligence tool that provides sophisticated reporting, budgeting and consolidations capabilities for Sage Accpac ERP and other databases), and Financial Link Professional (an advanced GL reporting tool that allows for more flexible reporting and consolidation across multiple company data sets). And of course, Sage Accpac 500 ERP can use any of the traditional Microsoft Office modules (Word, Excel, Access, etc.) or any other ODBC capable product for reporting and analysis since all Accpac data is accessible via ODBC.

Support, Training & Help — 5 Stars

(www.sagesoftwareuniversity.com)), which offers classroom or online training for Sage Accpac users of all skill levels.

Finally, an extensive network of resellers and consultants provide technical support, troubleshooting and training to Accpac users.

Overall Assessment

Sage Accpac 500 ERP is a full-featured, technologically advanced product for mid-market companies in a wide variety of industries. For professional service companies, international companies, and those who desire flexibility with operating systems and/or databases, it should be considered as one of the primary products of choice. While previously lacking selected features found in other systems in the core distribution modules, Sage Accpac 500 ERP has done a terrific job of closing the gaps in recent versions. With an advanced technology platform, a strong internal development team and a host of fine development partners worldwide,
Sage Accpac 500 ERP should remain one of the premier ERP solutions available to mid-market companies.

2006 Overall Rating: 5 Stars

Technology