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TECHNOLOGY

2007 Review of High End Accounting Systems

High-End Solutions for Large Businesses

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By M. Darren Root, CPA.CITP

This review encompasses four of the top high-end accounting systems in the market place. Each system is aesthetically pleasing to work with, and each provides an intuitive user interface and a full set of modules to accomplish most any task or process.

Powerful infrastructures; the ability to grow with your business; integrated modules that include standard core accounting functions, distribution and manufacturing, workflow management, human resources, customer relationship management and much more make any of the packages reviewed worth taking a look at before making a software solution selection.

Third-party software vendors have developed many robust vertical solutions for businesses that require specialized services. Whether you have one location or multiple, software solutions today provide flexibility. You can customize the user interfaces, work with dashboards, work remotely, have your complete

system hosted in an ASP (Application Service Provider) environment and much more.

Each of the products reviewed here provides valuable tools such as access to source code for customization and extensibility. Reporting is extensive and flexible, providing for tight integration with Microsoft Office products such as Excel and Word. And each product reviewed provides substantial training and support options to make sure you protect your software investment well into the future.

To provide consistency among the reviews, the following areas were evaluated for each package:

- **Modules/Scalability** — This section highlights the available modules as well as any other significant features that merit recognition. This section also indicates new modules and enhancements that have recently been added.
- **Usability/User Experience & Security** — This section evaluates the overall user experience in using the product, from the menus to transaction entry. A requirement for any system in this class is the ability to tailor workflow to meet a user's needs and how that impacts the overall user experience. As expected, each of the systems uses some form of role-based security.
- **Extensibility** — This section examines the availability of third-party vertical solutions and integration to solutions that extend the product's base functionality to include niche areas such as payroll, human resource management, fixed assets, CRM, Point of Sale and more. Each of the products reviewed here has a moderate to extensive list of add-ons. While the quantity of available add-ons is certainly a plus, this review also recognizes the quality of the integration with these additional modules.
- **Integration/Customization** — The ability to tailor, customize and integrate high-end accounting solutions with other critical applications is imperative. Each of the systems reviewed here provides numerous tools to help. This section describes import and export capabilities, screen customization, integration, and custom programming tools.
- **Reporting** — Each product offers a fairly extensive variety of quality reports. Several provide built-in custom report writers that let users create reports based on specific needs. Other systems include Business Objects' Crystal Reports, which has become the standard for

many mid-market and high-end accounting systems. Financial statement report writing tools vary from product to product, and each offers a dashboard of some sort as well as a variety of business intelligence tools.

- **Support, Training & Help** — This section evaluates each program's online Help system, as well as the availability and methods of product support and training. Reasonably priced classroom or web-based training should be available at convenient times and locations.
- **Overall Assessment** — This section looks at the strengths and challenges of each of the products reviewed. Every system will excel in some industries and fall short in others. For that reason, this review attempts to identify the best industry fit for each of the systems and assesses the quality and value of the system based on its best fit.

While software reviews provide valuable insight into a system's features, strengths and weaknesses, it should never be the final authority for selecting a system. A thorough needs analysis and system evaluation is absolutely essential for selecting a high-end accounting system.

Microsoft Corporation – Microsoft Dynamics GP

Microsoft Dynamics GP continues to be one of the flagship products in Microsoft's mid-market accounting lineup. Version 10.0 of Microsoft Dynamics GP, released in June 2007, only helped strengthen its already strong position in the market. Microsoft has improved Dynamics GP by continuing to focus on molding the user interface to look and feel more like Microsoft Windows Vista and Microsoft Office 2007.

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Microsoft Corporation – Microsoft Dynamics NAV

Microsoft Dynamics NAV is a strong player in the mid-market accounting software lineup. NAV is a great choice for mid-size operations of larger organizations or mid-size companies. NAV's greatest client load consists of companies with five to 500 employees. The multi-language and multi-site capabilities allow NAV to compete internationally with competitors such as Accpac 500 ERP.

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Sage Software, Inc. – Sage Accpac 500 ERP 5.4

Sage Accpac 500 ERP 5.4 is, at core, a sophisticated, robust accounting, enterprise resource planning (ERP), and operations business management system designed for small and mid-sized businesses. With this system, users can create a strong, lasting fit for their business by implementing only the modules needed today and then building out the financial system over time by adding more modules and options.

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Sage Software, Inc. – Sage MAS 500 ERP

Sage Software MAS 500 ERP serves the upper mid-market space of today's businesses. Sage MAS 500 is the strongest player in the Sage Software line-up of accounting solutions. Built from the ground up using Microsoft SQL Server, Visual Studio, .NET and Microsoft Office technology, Sage MAS 500 is a complete enterprise management solution.

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