



ACCPAC ADVANTAGE
SPECIAL REPORT
By J. Carlton Collins, CPA
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ACCPAC ADVANTAGE

EXPERT ANALYSIS, INSIGHT & COMMENTARY

ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE ADVISOR

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MAY, 2003, ATLANTA, GEORGIA – *ACCPAC Advantage Series is one of the most complete and impressive mid-market accounting solution on the planet today – easily this is one of the five best accounting software packages available today, and in many regards it is the best solution to be found anywhere. Strong words? Yes, this is a powerful claim, and this coming from a guy who has championed many other products in year's past. Read on to find out why J. Carlton Collins, CPA now holds ACCPAC in such high regards.*

ACCPAC'S RISING STAR

While there are literally thousands of accounting software solutions in the marketplace, I am a firm believer that the vast majority of these products are not worth the CD's they are written on. Most accounting products suffer from missing modules, poor technology, inadequate financial reporting, mediocre performance, weak company backing, inferior distribution channel, flimsy support, and other assorted problems. In my book, only a few of these products (such as MAS 200, Navision, ACCPAC, and others) offer the complete package a company should look for when evaluating and selecting a system that will eventually become the lifeblood of their organization. However when I scrutinize the upper echelon of these stellar solutions, ACCPAC Advantage has emerged as one of the most complete solutions in accounting software. Presented below I make the case for ACCPAC Advantage Series so that you can decide for yourself.

ABSENCE OF HOLES

A close review of ACCPAC reveals virtually no holes or shortcomings. The product offers a full breadth of modules including advanced applications such as CRM, human resources, point of sale, e-commerce, advance warehouse management, supply chain, and manufacturing. The product runs on a variety of platforms and databases such as Windows, Linux, Pervasive, Microsoft SQL Server, and IBM's DB/2 database. ACCPAC Advantage is available as both a standalone solution, or as a web-based solution (www.accpaonline.com). ACCPAC provides the latest web portal technology through it's iConnect module to provide browser based access to remote users. ACCPAC's pricing starts very low with the Discovery Series version priced at just \$4,500. Additionally, the web-based version is available for just \$35 per module per month, and \$95 to \$195 per user per month. To top it off, ACCPAC International is a large world-wide organization that is expected to go public in 2003, providing even greater amounts of capital to be used in growing the product further. The ACCPAC reseller channel is very professional and consists of many resellers with decades of experience. The

company has a solid foothold around the world and is able to tap into its parent company – Computer Associates International Inc. to leverage their technology and resources.

All of this aside, I am most impressed with the wide-ranging solution which ACCPAC Advantage represents. The product is ideal for small mom and pop shops as well as extremely large organizations with billions in revenues. Over the years ACCPAC has nurtured a strong group of third party add-on products designed to meet the needs of specific industries. These add-on solutions make ACCPAC a great choice for difficult to solve industries such as property management, health care, time & billing, asset accounting, transportation, retailing, restaurants, etc.

ACCPAC'S TECHNOLOGY

Every accounting software company claims to have the best technology – and I am sure that each company believes that claim. However, as an outside observer, I find that ACCPAC's technology appears to have many advantages. For starters ACCPAC has separated its core business logic from the user interface and database services. With these three layers separated, the core business logic can be connected to many databases, including new and better databases that emerge in the future. The same can be said for ACCPAC's integration to its user interface components and various devices. The benefits of ACCPAC's architecture are that ACCPAC can easily migrate and adapt to new technologies as they emerge; and it helps the product scale to the changing size of your business.

ACCPAC Advantage supports multi-tier processing which means that the various accounting modules can be deployed on an individual server, or across multiple servers. This ability allows ACCPAC to scale up to meet the needs of the largest of companies, and indeed many multi-billion dollar companies have replaced their traditional tier 1 solutions with ACCPAC Advantage using the multi-tier capabilities to handle larger volumes of transactions. This multi-tier architecture accommodates application servers, print servers, and database servers which allows the company to add more servers wherever they are needed. For example companies with a large number of employees accessing the system might deploy more servers to accommodate the application interface. Companies with large printing needs would shore up the system by adding additional print servers.

Because ACCPAC serves a worldwide customer base, the product offers many proven global features such as support for multiple languages. With ACCPAC Advantage, each user may be assigned a separate language within the same company, even though they all access the same data.

ACCPAC's browser-based user interfaces allows you to run its applications from a browser, without going through a terminal services interface.

ACCPAC'S TOP DOG QUEST

By most accounts, ACCPAC was an undisputed powerhouse in the late 80's and early 90's, but by the mid-nineties, other windows-based solutions had emerged to steal the limelight away from ACCPAC. While these other solutions flourished, ACCPAC took a slow road to the Windows world, being careful to keep each new module backwardly compatible with the older DOS based modules. ACCPAC's theory was a good one – remain loyal to the existing customer base by not forcing them to upgrade to newer product versions. Fundamentally, however, this strategy was akin to dragging a concrete block behind them, and it allowed other competitors to sprint right by. In 1996, the company was determined to resurrect its previous glory and under David Hood's leadership, ACCPAC shifted gears in an attempt to catch up with the rest of the pack. ACCPAC's shift towards Windows came more slowly than expected and for several years restless ACCPAC resellers awaited the

promise of a fully functioning, Windows based ACCPAC solution. By 1999, ACCPAC had achieved its goal producing a highly respected accounting software solution comparable to other top products. Unfortunately for ACCPAC, this new product release arrived just in time for the accounting software recession, which occurred in the aftermath of Y2K. (Driven by Y2K hysteria, a significant number of companies implemented new accounting systems in the years leading to Y2K, after which, the bottom dropped out of the accounting software market.) Despite doing everything right, ACCPAC was the victim of poor timing.

E-COMMERCE SOLUTION AHEAD OF ITS' TIME

ACCPAC's flirtations with poor timing was not just limited to the release of ACCPAC Advantage 8.0, it seems that ACCPAC suffered a few other time-related set backs as well. Most notably, these set backs relate to the release of ACCPAC E-Transact and ACCPAC Online. E-Transact is ACCPAC's e-commerce solution featuring both B2B and web store functionality. Most impressive is that E-Transact uses a wizard driven set up procedure and a preinstalled web server to create and publish web stores on the fly – in less than 30 minutes. Specifically ACCPAC E-Transact grabs the necessary customer, inventory, pricing and picture data, and automatically generates a web store on the awaiting ACCPAC web server for the affordable price of \$300 per month. Thereafter the ACCPAC web store is live, online, and automatically integrated to your ACCPAC Advantage data. Price changes that you enter into your ACCPAC system show up instantly on the web store. Virtually anyone using ACCPAC can instantly create and operate their own web store. You can see a live demonstration web site here: <http://etdemo.accpaonline.com/>. At the time of E-Transact's release, ACCPAC officials and many in the industry thought that e-commerce was ripe for an explosion as the next great thing in accounting software. To everyone's surprise, including mine and certainly including ACCPAC, the e-commerce explosion was nothing more than a fizzle. Despite being the most amazing single accounting software module I've ever seen, sales of E-Transact amounted to a total of none in the first year, and less than twenty in year two. The primary problem was that E-Transact was a product well ahead of its time. A secondary issue was that many ACCPAC resellers were too intimidated by the potential complexity of e-commerce to promote and implement E-Transact. In years to come I am convinced that e-commerce and web stores will be the most dominant force in the business community, and the single most important module affecting a company's profitability and success. Seldom do I make any purchases without first shopping the web, and in most instances, I make my purchases over the web as well because I find better prices, better information, and it saves me time. Why on earth would anyone want to spend more, have less information, and waste more time? As of 2003, sales of E-Transact have grown steadily and ACCPAC now reports more than 300 customers using this solution.

REVOLUTIONARY WEB BASED SOLUTION

ACCPAC also was very quick to jump aboard the web-based accounting model in which users access their accounting system through an ordinary browser. As you can see on this link: <http://www.accpaonline.com/>, this application has been up and running since 1999. At first resellers and customers were slow to embrace ACCPAC's web-based accounting model. Customers were reluctant to embrace this model over security fears related to transmitting their data over the internet. Resellers were reluctant to promote the web-based model because in effect, doing so postponed collection of profits on the sale until several years down the road. Today customers seem to be accepting the notion that their data is actually well protected in a web based environment and, ACCPAC has implemented a program that pays the reseller their profits up front when web based hosting solutions are sold. The results are that even though ACCPAC was well ahead of the curve with this technology, they now seem postured to dominate the industry in this promising area.

ACCPAC’S IMPRESSIVE TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY

ACCPAC’s technology is impressive on several different levels. First and foremost, the product itself has been designed to be portable from one platform to another. The program is designed to house all of its rules-based logic and core coding in a separate programming area. This core interfaces with various databases, platforms, and screen designs. This design approach allows ACCPAC to switch to new technologies as they emerge. For example, in 1999, ACCPAC Advantage became the first mid-market accounting system to fully embrace the Linux platform. What this means to the end user is more choices and the avoidance of outdated software. While other products on the market are rendered obsolete as new technologies emerge, ACCPAC embraces and adapts to these new technologies. As a result, ACCPAC users have a more secure future and their investment is better protected with ACCPAC.

The same approach described above also helps provide more choices to end-users. Today, ACCPAC is available on a variety of platforms (Windows, Novell, IBM AS/400, Linux, etc) and a variety of Databases (Pervasive SQL, Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, and IBM’s Universal Database). While many other top accounting solutions offer only the option of using the Microsoft SQL Server database running on Windows, ACCPAC allows end users to choose between many different technologies. For example, in recent months I have seen many companies looking for a Linux-based solution, instead of the traditional Windows-based solutions. These companies maintain that Linux is not only far less expensive than Windows solutions, but that they are more reliable as well. To underscore the emergence of Linux, consider that this year IBM is budgeted to spend more than \$4 billion on the development of Linux and Linux based solutions.

COMPLETE LISTING OF KEY ACCPAC MODULES & SOLUTIONS

To help you get the full picture, ACCPAC Advantage includes 13 standard modules which represent all of the modules you would expect to find except project costing; 6 advanced modules; 22 add-on modules, and 16 ACCPAC Options modules which are basically advanced features. These modules and solutions are listed below. For purposes of this listing, I have eliminated approximately two dozen third party add-on products and ACCPAC options that I feel are less proven or less important.

Standard Accounting Modules

General Ledger
 General Ledger Consolidations
 Inter-company Transactions
 Multicurrency
 Accounts Payable
 Purchase Order
 Accounts Receivable
 Order Entry
 Inventory Control
 US Payroll
 Canadian Payroll
 System Manager
 Process Server

Advanced Modules

ACCPAC Exchange - EDI
 eCRM
 eHR Series – Human Resources
 ePOS (Point of Sale)
 eTransact – ecommerce
 Warehouse Management Systems

HIGHLY RESPECTED THIRD PARTY ADD-ON MODULES (SELECTED ADD-ONS ONLY):

[MiSYS](#) – Manufacturing & Inventory Systems

[COSS Systems Inc.](#) - Manufacturing software for small to mid-sized manufacturing companies, primarily designed for make-to-order, make-to-stock, job shop and custom manufacturers.

[DataHabitat Corporation](#) - DataHabitat is a browser-based, Business Intelligence solution that creates SQL Server data warehouses without programming; generates DTS Packages and Stored Procedures; offers multi-dimensional Windows-based query and reporting; drill down; slice-and-dice; filtering, and charting.

[All Business Consulting, Inc](#) - A PocketPC-based solution that interfaces with ACCPAC Advantage and supports preferred items; synchronized customer and inventory tables; replenishment of truck inventory; end of day reconciliation; delivery tracking; wireless and batch synchronization.

[Bellwether Software Corporation](#) - Procurement & supply chain management software that helps automate electronic requisitions; on-line authorizations; request for quotations; bid analysis; vendor catalogs; budget control; receiving & expediting; inventory control; warehouse management; asset management; invoice processing, and more.

[Groupe AGI \(Abak Software\)](#) - Time and billing solution that supports timesheets, expense accounts, projects, WIP, PIM and to invoice by project.

[Icube Information International](#) - Customer service software that provides resolution of customer requests & self services, product returns (RMA and RTV), technical support, service sales, knowledge base, advanced repair to multiple service centers.

[InfoSys, Inc.](#) - Healthcare software that includes practice management applications for physicians, rehab/therapy facilities and small hospitals (MedSys) and post-acute solutions comprised of long-term care, home healthcare and hospice configurations (HomeSys).

[Mareechi](#) - Application service provider for the management of your company's technology and application software at a much lower cost than if you implemented your own.

[MJD Software, Ltd.](#) - Inventory tracking solutions, including bar code printing/scanning and portable computing.

[Musick International, Inc.](#) – Windows-based property management for commercial, residential, retail, and condominium properties based on a three-tiered structure and is web enabled for use over the internet.

[Norming Consultants, Ltd.](#) – Integrated asset management solution that tracks assets, processes asset acquisition, computes depreciation, disposal and adjustment. Assets can be split or merged and the product supports multicurrency, US MACRS, and Canadian Tax Pooling.

[Sierra Computer Solutions](#) - TimeMaster Professional is a time & labor management system that claims to automate your time & attendance operations and includes Profile Lockout, Bell Ringing, Access Control, and Benefit Accruals.

[SoftKey MicroSystems](#) – Apparel solution for the apparel, footwear and similar industries.

[Synchronics](#) – Retail solution that includes point-of-sale checkout, inventory management, customer tracking, purchasing, ecommerce, labeling, apparel, sales history, employee clock-in/clock-out, credit card processing, serial/lot tracking, kit processing, order processing, receivables, open-to-buy, email, graphing, and more.

[Synex Systems Corporation](#) - F9 is a Financial Reporting application which dynamically links General Ledger (GL) data to Microsoft Excel to allow any GL data to be linked and formatted in your spreadsheet, including, drill down, multiple date ranges, multi-currency, lists of account segments, and report auditing.

[Technisoft Pty. Ltd](#) - Service Manager software that includes Quotations, Jobs, Invoices, Credits

Document Templates, Job Planner, Labor Scheduling and Dispatch, Standard and Recurring Maintenance Jobs, Agreement Contracts, Warranty, Manufacturer Returns (RMA's), Serialized Tracking of Equipment and Inventory, Metering, Model & Equipment History, Rentals, Purchase Requisitions, Sub Contracting, Work In Progress, Profit Analysis, Budgeting, Financial Distribution Statistics by Market, Notations, and Instructions.

[Tenrox](#) - Professional Services that includes time tracking, expense reporting, project accounting, project costing, time and billing, charge backs, invoicing, and travel and entertainment expense reporting.

[Tick-Tock Software, Inc.](#) – Payroll time and attendance software.

[Wellspring Software](#) – Print checks on blank stock.

[WorthIT Software](#) - Fixed Assets solution which includes Fixed Assets Management, Depreciation Accounting and Capital Budgeting.

ACCPAC OPTIONS (SELECTED OPTIONS ONLY):

[ACCPAC Alerts & Alerts Server](#) – Create pre-defined alerts that send you e-mails when the alerts is triggered based on criteria that you define.

[ACCPAC CFO](#) - A financial diagnostic and strategic analysis tool.

[ACCPAC Query](#) - Report generator.

[EFT Direct Payables](#) - Release payments to suppliers using direct deposit at specified intervals. This module eliminates the need to print, mail, and process individual payments.

[EFT Direct Payroll](#) - Direct Payroll works with all major banks and trust companies in Canada and the United States.

[EFT Direct Receivables](#) – Allows you to preauthorize amounts for withdrawal from specific clients.

[Financial Link Professional](#) - Report designer to produce “pixel perfect” presentation quality statements and reports.

[GL Security by Segment](#) - Enables organizations to control which users can see or use certain general ledger accounts, based on segment validation.

[IC Item Transfer](#) - Manage stock transfers between warehouses.

[Lot Tracking](#) - Manage lot numbers from receipt in PO through OE shipment.

[Multiple IC Item Numbers](#) - Allows multiple-item numbers and barcodes to be defined and used throughout ACCPAC.

[ODBC Link](#) - Connect Microsoft Office to your ACCPAC Advantage Series database.

Sales Analysis – Produces an online database of your complete customer and item sales history.

Serialized Inventory - Manage serial numbers from receipt in Purchase Orders through to Order Entry shipment.

[Smart Finder](#) - Search any field in any table.

[Zippy Notes](#) - Allows you to annotate records in your database, providing additional information about customers, inventory and procedures.

ACCPAC'S ADVANCED MODULES

One of the key factors that helped ACCPAC become a world-leading solution scalable enough to meet the needs of larger enterprise organizations with revenues well into the millions of dollars are the product's advanced modules which shore up the core accounting solution. These advanced modules and the power they transfer to ACCPAC's core product lines are illustrated in the graphic image below, and discussed in more detail thereafter.



ACCPAC EXCHANGE – This EDI / supply chain solution was developed via a strategic partnership with E-Bridge, and this solution offers instant connectivity between your accounting system and virtually any other accounting system in the universe. (That’s a big claim I just made, you might want to go back and read that sentence again). Using Microsoft’s .NET technology, ACCPAC Exchange offers a low cost supply chain solution that will allow virtually any company, no matter how small, to take advantage of the Internet and deploy their own supply chain technology. This solution sets ACCPAC as a leader in this area. ACCPAC Exchange supports global EDI and Internet standards, which allows users to conduct business with other trusted business partners, regardless of the EDI system or accounting system they use. According to ACCPAC’s management, ACCPAC Exchange is designed to help your company:

- Eliminate duplicate data entry
- Reduce error rates inherent with manual data entry
- Reduce business transaction costs
- Comply with customer and vendor EDI mandates
- Provide timely order processing and reconciliation
- Speed collection times
- Improve shipping and receiving accuracy
- Improve customer satisfaction with faster response times

[Click here to read the press release announcing this product](#)

[Click here to learn more about ACCPAC Exchange’s benefits](#)

[Click here to learn more about how ACCPAC Exchange works](#)

Pricing for ACCPAC Exchange is based upon a monthly fee as well as a transaction fee per volume of transaction. A small company could implement ACCPAC Exchange for as little as \$480 per year.

ACCPAC eCRM – Customer Relationship Management solutions are in demand these days, and for good reason. When CRM solutions are properly implemented, employees throughout the organization are far better organized, they follow a more consistent selling methodology, and management can better track employee activities, tasks, progress and successes for each employee and in total on a real time basis – well almost. ACCPAC eCRM provides the following key features:

- ACCPAC CRM provides bi-directional data transfer to ACCPAC Advantage - updating both systems and avoiding redundant data entry.
- Customer histories of all faxes, personal visits, phone calls and emails are maintained by the system.
- Integrated with your telephone, eCRM provides full on-screen auto-dial and phone functionality. This works with all standard third party telephony software.
- Transactional and statistical data in ACCPAC Advantage is viewed in real-time through the ACCPAC CRM solution.
- Provides multicurrency, multi-lingual support from a single code base, including English, U.K. English, French, German, Spanish, Dutch and Japanese.
- Allows customers to access or request services and support over the web.
- Web-based customer dialogues.
- Recognition of customer preferences and buying patterns (which leads to better cross-sell and up-sell and more precise targeting.)
- Provide web-based real-time customer information to your call center, sales force, and your entire organization.
- Browser based solution.
- Wireless application protocol (WAP) access.

- Web pages and graphics are considerably smaller in size than standard Web pages, allowing faster downloads even over slow connections.
- Supports user-specific modifications.
- Customization tools allow businesses to modify all aspects of the system. For example, you can create and modify fields, screens, tabs, tables, views, scripts, and security settings on the fly.
- Design your own design workflow via automated business rules, for example, escalation can be automatically routed to the correct supervisors.
- E-mail integration.
- Point and click promotion of prospects to customers, which also creates the account in the Accounts Receivable module.

ACCPAC HR SERIES – HUMAN RESOURCES

One of the key differences between high end accounting solutions and ERP solutions is the presence of a strong human resources module. ACCPAC HR Series does a very good job in this area, especially considering the product's lower price point (which starts at \$1,000) compared to other competing HR products such as Abra, ADP, Spectrum and Ultimate Software. *(As a pricing reference, HR Series for ACCPAC Corporate Series for 100 employees is priced a \$3,000 for the core HR modules and up to \$5,800 including all five HR modules.)*

In essence, human resource (HR) solutions are designed to collect, manage, calculate and report all employee data. Not only is this data useful in managing employees and their careers within your company, but this information helps a company comply with the massive amounts of government rules and regulations, such as COBRA and HIPPA. There are five different modules that comprise HR Series as follows:

- HR Series Core Module (required module)
- HR Series Payroll Link
- HR Series Company Directory
- HR Series Applicant Manager
- HR Series Alerts Library

ACCPAC HR Series runs on both the Access and SQL Server database. As you would expect, the product includes organizational charts (via Microsoft Visio) and a company directory. The base product supports 25 users and can scale up to an unlimited number of users. A few of the key features included in ACCPAC HR Series which are not frequently found in other HR solutions are as follows:

- HR Series supports the 401(k) "catch up" options which were introduced by the government in 2002. For example, this option allows employees aged 50 or older to contribute a higher amount to their 401(k) plans.
- The product's "wizards" lead non-technical users through the data entry process step-by-step.
- The product enables you to create Alerts – which could be used for numerous functions such as notifying an employee when they become eligible to participate in the company's 401K plan.
- Support for Optional Insurance such as AFLAC.
- Support for Custom Benefits such as fitness club plans, charitable deductions, or pre-paid legal fees.

- HIPAA Certificates of Coverage.
- The “Employee Termination Wizard” walks you through the various critical steps including the ending of benefits, starting the COBRA process, and stopping Attendance accruals.
- HR Series allows you to set up open enrollment periods that work across plans; this is a shortcoming in many other HR products.
- You can specify the contribution percentage for an employee, spouse, or child.
- Age-caused rate changes.
- Maximum volume for life insurance plans.
- Dependent Life plans with per child rates.
- Billing Adjustments show both employee and employer contributions.
- Role-based security – including security setup wizards.
- You can grant users different access for each company.
- Imports .XLS files directly from Microsoft Excel.

EPOS (POINT OF SALE)

A successful POS strategy isn't just about "the cash register." A well implemented point of sale system can increase check-out speed and accuracy, and for this reason POS systems are typically well worth the money. When lines move faster and cashiers make fewer mistakes, customers are happier and more loyal to your establishment. While there are many simple POS systems available, ACCPAC ePOS is stronger than most because it integrates directly with ACCPAC Advantage to provide a access to all inventory, customer activities, and store management data and functions. The ACCPAC Point of Sale (ePOS) solution is a proven solution, especially for multi-site retail operations. As you would expect ePOS works with barcode scanners, real-time credit card processing, weigh scales, and pole displays. However, because it can be deployed via the Internet as a browser-based application, ACCPAC ePOS represents a more cost-effective and fairly easy-to-administer POS solution. This also makes it easier to respond to seasonal demands and peak check-out times by adjusting the number of POS workstations deployed at the store level. Some of the features offered by ACCPAC ePOS include:

- Manage inventory prices across multiple locations.
- Real-time or offline processing.
- Store-and-forward methodology can be used to accumulate transactions at the remote end, which can be uploaded to the central location using an Internet connection.
- Allows selling to on-account AR customers utilizing their price lists and pricing levels.
- Checks customers' credit limits and active/inactive status.
- Prohibits sales to on-hold customers.
- New customers defined in ePOS are automatically created in the ACCPAC Advantage.
- Supports special item pricing and layaways.
- Creates and prints quotations and order confirmations.
- The browser-based interface supports either point-and-click or full keystroke navigation.
- Set up keystroke macros to represent common operations such as sale completion, payment, item return, suspend sale, quotation and cash drawer opening.
- Add items to a transaction by name, item code or by scanning bar code.
- Data entry fields are pre-filled with default information from the customer and item records to speed the check out process.
- Supports PC-based POS workstations, receipt printers, bar code scanners, customer displays, programmable keyboards, touch screen monitors, weigh scales and credit card readers.
- Supports multiple tills connected over a local area network, which in turn are connected to the head office over the Internet. Similar other multi-till locations can be connected to the same central location over the Internet.

- Allows defining user access security at a detailed POS function level. ACCPAC iConnect encrypts the data going to/coming from ACCPAC ePOS, for secured transmission over the Internet.
- ePOS utilizes XAPI interface to connect to ACCPAC Advantage Series for creating transactions. Thus, each transaction gets validated by Advantage Series business logic before data is written to the central database.
- Provides centralized administration of customers, items, prices, discounts, price lists and so on. Any changes done at the central location are available to all connected remote locations in real time.
- The Item Search function allows products or categories to be searched by all or part of their codes or descriptions. The Item Search function also returns the unit of measure, base price and selling price information for an item.
- Item Corrections - an authorized user can correct, remove and edit items in the transaction.
- The system supports item and customer level discounts by value, percentage, or volume.
- An authorized user can exchange or refund items. (An exchange is handled as a return and a new sale)
- An authorized user can reprint sales transactions, if required.
- Payments made by credit card can be authorized in real time.

The ACCPAC ePOS system is based on the highly respected AGS solution which ACCPAC purchased in 2003. The system supports multiple currencies and languages. Pricing for ACCPAC ePOS starts at \$1,000 for the first POS workstation and additional workstations can be added for \$500 each. The following link provides more information about ACCPAC ePOS solution.

<http://www.accpac.com/products/epos/screens.asp>

ETRANSACT

As briefly discussed earlier in this special report, ACCPAC eTransact is a complete Web store solution that integrates with ACCPAC Advantage which includes both business-to-business (B2B), and business-to-consumer (B2C) solutions. eTransact allows you to maintain all your business data centrally and automatically update your Web store as changes are made to your ACCPAC Advantage data. eTransact may be hosted at ACCPAC Online or deployed internally on your own web servers. Comparable solutions offering true back-office integration typically cost tens of thousands of dollars more than eTransact. Starting at \$300 per month, eTransact is priced within the reach of virtually any small and medium-sized business. Some of the key features of eTransact are as follows:

- You can select which items get transferred to the Web store from within the ACCPAC Inventory module.
- You can assign items to multiple web categories, for example a lamp might be displayed as both a lighting fixture and a desk accessory.
- Add additional fields as necessary.
- Create extended descriptions to deliver more information to the web shopper.
- Attach graphics, audio, video, and multimedia objects, which enhances the web shopper's experience.
- You can restrict customer access to only those items on their ACCPAC price list. This feature is sometimes known as "cabinet shopping".
- Discounts and sales prices are automatically reflected in your web store.
- Display online order statistics.
- Display unlimited text and graphics in the notes section of the item drilldown.
- Attach a unique banner, logo, index, or body file to specific web categories.

- eTransact automatically identifies existing ACCPAC customers via their login ID and password.
- Identify and track web customers, even if they do not exist in your ACCPAC AR.
- Allows partial shipments.
- Provides multiple predefined freight calculation methods including the ability to define custom calculations.
- Web order notifications help prevent missed shipments or fraud.
- Automatic sales tax calculation.
- E-mail notifications for order confirmation and order shipment
- Process credit card purchases online.
- You can customize order confirmation, shipment notification and order rejection notification forms with a text or HTML editor.
- More than 60 predefined Web store templates, including themes and styles.

WAREHOUSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

A key difference between mid-range and ERP solutions is that ERP solutions typically provide strong “warehouse management” capabilities, or to be more precise: “multiple warehouse management”. The ACCPAC Warehouse Management System (WMS) provides ample features and functionality to position ACCPAC Advantage Series as an ERP-class solution. While the paragraphs below describe the ACCPAC WMS solution in more detail, it is important to understand that a Warehouse Management solution is virtually worthless unless it is also integrated with proven inventory, order entry, purchase order, and radio frequency hand-held solutions.

This is an important area because failure to control all aspects of one’s inventory can cost a company dearly. Some of the important warehouse issues that can cost a company thousands, if not millions of dollars, include managing space or square footage efficiently; finding products in the warehouse; the need for key personnel to get involved; shrinkage; lack of control over labor; and mistakes made on customer orders. Each of these topics are worthy of an entire book of discussion. All together, they represent enormous losses, and potentially business failure, if not managed properly. For this reason, implementing the right warehouse solution is critical.

In year’s past, many warehouse specific solutions existed but they generally fell well short of providing a complete solution that was fully integrated with the accounting system. In ACCPAC’s case, it passes this test with flying colors and when you include ACCPAC’s General Ledger, eTransact, ePOS, and other modules in the mix, ACCPAC Advantage easily beats out any distribution/warehouse specific product on the market today such as Prophet 21, Eclipse, and NxTrends. Additionally, ACCPAC’s Warehouse Management system is strong enough to beat out traditional Tier 1 solutions costing millions of dollars such as JD Edwards, Oracle e-Business Suite, and even SAP. Don’t take my word for it – make the comparison yourself. Here are a few of the key features included in ACCPAC’s Warehouse Management System:

- Radio Frequency-based support for receipt and put away processes. For years RF systems have proven to be more than 99.9% accurate, far surpassing the accuracy of human based systems to the point where most experts believe that when properly implement and used, RF systems always pay for themselves.
- Matches the receipt of goods through bar-coding with the original purchase order.
- Provides “put away” workers with information via hand held devices, and supports bar coded verification to make sure that goods are moved correctly from the inbound dock to the right warehouse location.
- Generates optimized order-picking instructions for warehouse workers.

- Supports multiple employees assigned to the receipt and put away of large inbound shipments.
- Supports multiple receipts assigned to a single employee.
- During the put away process, WMS notifies warehouse staff if a received good is needed to fulfill a customer backorder. In this event, instead of moving the item to inventory, it is prepared for shipping directly to the awaiting customer.
- During put-away, ACCPAC WMS allows you to capture item information such as weight, size, and expiration date.
- Supports either default locations or multiple locations throughout the warehouse for a single item.
- Automatically updates purchase orders and inventory thereby eliminating manual intervention and errors, and providing more accurate and up-to-date inventory.
- Matches available stock to the order, enabling the warehouse manager to see at a glance which orders can be filled immediately.
- Staff equipped with RF based handheld devices are given specific directions for picking every order, including verifying 'picks' by reading barcodes to confirm the product selected, the shipping carton in which it is placed in and the quantity required - staff may even pick multiple orders during a single 'walk' through the warehouse.
- Automatic generation of shipping labels.
- Indicates the right size box for the order.
- Guides warehouse workers to the right location to fill orders in the most efficient sequence.
- Serial number and lot number tracking.
- Supports multiple picking styles including wave, batch, simultaneous, or sequential zone.
 - *With wave picking, all zones are picked simultaneously for faster completion of each order. As orders are entered into the system, the software automatically determines the location of each item and directs the employee via messages sent to RF terminals. The system also directs forklift drivers to take completed picks to particular staging areas. As picks are completed in one zone and delivered to the dock, the system informs pickers in other zones where items for the order at hand are being staged for shipping.*
 - *With batch picking, the warehouse worker picks multiple orders in one trip.*
 - *With simultaneous picking, an electronic order picking map is created for each picking location. Incoming orders are evaluated against this order picking map and an optimal picking list is created.*
 - *With sequential zone picking, the order moves by conveyer belt or cart from one zone to another and is assembled at a final packing.*
- WMS manages the process efficiently. Picking inventory in a warehouse that is managed by WMS means never having to look for 'missing stock', or 'walking around the warehouse' to fulfill customer orders.
- Produces packing slips, carton content labels and shipping labels before the carton is packed.
- Automatically estimates shipping weight and assigns the appropriate final shipping carton based on the items in the order.
- Shops for the best shipping rates.
- Generates required labels for hazardous materials and customs requirements in addition to packing slips, and Advanced Shipping Notifications.
- Up-to-the-minute notification of when replenishment is needed.
- Full audit report of every product moved through the warehouse.
- Supports FIFO and LIFO.
- Supports stock rotation.
- Supports serialized inventory.

- Supports lot and expiration-date tracking.
- Supports by-date, product, or bin cycle counting.

Inventory errors are costly in many ways. Not only do inventory errors impact the bottom line immediately, but also over time they tend to drive customers away to your competitors. For this reason a good warehouse management system is crucial, and ACCPAC Warehouse Management delivers a top rate solution for a relatively low cost. For example, while the Vertex and Manhattan warehouse solutions are priced at \$75,000 and \$250,000 respectively, a similarly configured implementation of ACCPAC Warehouse Management costs \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000 or \$65,000 for 5, 10, 25, or 50 users respectively. Unless I am missing something, and I don't think I am, it makes sense to me for any distribution company to include ACCPAC on their shortlist of prospective solutions.

ACCPAC CFO – A BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE TOOL

For decades the accounting software and business software industry has produced a bevy of executive-caliber products targeted towards the CEO and business professional. While most of these products have focused primarily on the budgeting and forecasting process, in more recent years "data mining" tools, "OLAP cubes", and "digital dashboards" have emerged to provide executives with deeper insights into their data. From this plethora of solutions we have seen an entire new segment emerge called "Business Intelligence"(BI). BI is a general category that encompasses both business strategies and business reporting tools alike in an attempt to focus management. The primary idea is that data must be collected, organized, analyzed, and acted upon. ACCPAC CFO is an ideal tool that fits in well with a wide assortment of related BI tools.

Even though there are hundreds of BI solutions in the marketplace today, most companies still use Microsoft Excel to create budgets, analyze data, prepare forecasts, and even to collect data. This is a good strategy after all, Excel's ability to open Access files and save workbooks as Access files makes it a fair data collection environment. Excel's Subtotaling, Filtering, and Outlining features make it a terrific budgeting environment. Most impressively, Excel's Pivot Table, consolidation, and one and two-way table capabilities make it a great product for analyzing data. Excel is a superior tool in many ways, yet even Excel falls short in the business logic area – which is precisely where ACCPAC CFO excels (pardon the pun). ACCPAC CFO not only extracts the transactional data it needs on a real time basis, but it also contains built-in formulas, logic, and rules that automatically analyze a company's financial data – management need only read the data, interpret the data, and act upon it. There is no need to spend hours creating fancy spreadsheets and manipulating data with export, import, and parsing tools.

The screen below displays one of the analysis screens in ACCPAC CFO. As you can see, this product has extracted the data it needed from ACCPAC and displayed the results in the executive windows shown below. From here, management can change any of the variables it desires to see the resulting impact the change will have on the bottom line, on cash, or a variety of other measurements.

Income Statement Drivers		Results	
Rev. Growth %	11.11	Gross Margin %	30.00
COGS %	70.00	Profitability %	11.80
Price Change %		Net Profit/Sales	5.52
Overheads %	19.29	Interest Cover	3.54
Current Percentages		Working Cap %	37.20
Effect Interest %	9.41	Current Ratio	1.80
Effect Tax %	31.40	Total Liab/Equity	2.72
		Equity/T Assets	26.90
		Activity	1.62
Balance Sheet Drivers		Cash Flow	-325,856
Days Receivable	70.00	Borrowed Funds	1,401,974
Days Inventory	154.00	Cash After Ops	71,256
Days Payable	60.02	Debt to Equity	1.85
P/E Multiple	5.00	ROCE %	19.13
WACC %	10.00	Valuation	2,064,375
		Value Added	67,433

Revenue	3,500,000
COGS	2,450,000
Gross Profit	1,050,000
Overheads	674,999
Other	-37,874
EBIT	412,875
Interest Expense	116,590
Profit Before Tax	296,285
Taxes	93,028
Extra Items	10,045
Net Profit	193,212
Dividends	11,945
Adjustments	15,999
Chng Ret Earning	165,268

Some obvious questions that a company might ask of ACCPAC CFO include:

- What will my profit be if I increase prices by 1.5 %?
- What will my cash balance be if I reduce the amount of inventory I carry by 5 days?
- What will be the effect if we pay all of our bills 9 days later?
- What will happen to profits and cash if we grow our total sales by 4%?

These are typical questions which management should be asking on a continual basis. Unfortunately these types of questions are seldom, if ever asked, simply because the process of ascertaining the answers is beyond management's reasonable ability. ACCPAC CFO is priced at less than \$1,000, which makes it an affordable tool for just about any business.

ACCPAC SCALABILITY

More than any other product, ACCPAC Advantage scales well to meet the needs of the very smallest companies up to the largest of companies with four versions as follows:

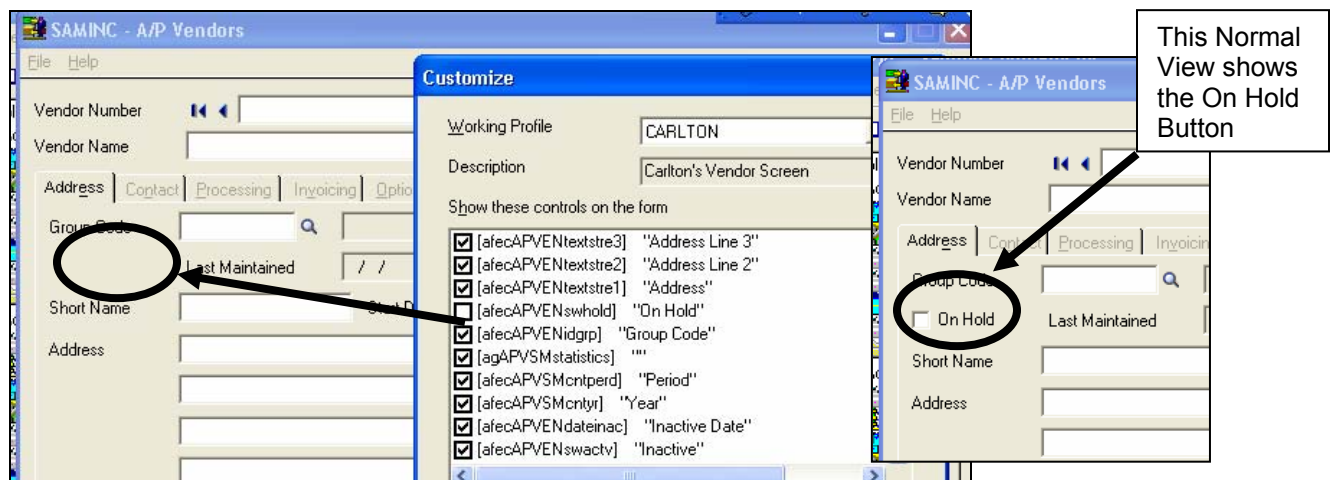


Pricing for these products begins at \$4,500 for the Discovery Series, \$8,500 for the Small Business Series, \$1,000 per core module for the Corporate Series, and \$2,000 to \$4,000 per core module for ACCPAC’s Enterprise Series.

This scalable approach results in two significant advantages. First, this pricing approach makes ACCPAC Advantage affordable to even the smallest of companies. For as little as \$4,500 a small operation could get started with this product line. Secondly, this approach provides upward scalability that virtually no company could ever outgrow, which means that once you’ve invested in ACCPAC Advantage, you will never again have to change your accounting system. Solutions from other companies such as Best Software provide an upgrade path that includes Peachtree Complete Accounting and migrates upwards to MAS 90 and then MAS 500. While Best Software is an outstanding company and these three products are excellent products in their own right, all other things being equal the ACCPAC approach would obviously be the most desirable approach for most companies.

CUSTOMIZATION

The tools included with ACCPAC allow the end user to easily change screens, add fields, move objects, etc. on a per user basis. Further, you can implement sophisticated customization additions such as “data entry validation” at the table level. As an example of ACCPAC’s user screen customization capabilities, in the vendor screen below I have selected customization and hidden the “ON HOLD” button by simply un-checking the appropriate check box.



CONCLUSION

There are several thousand accounting systems in the world today. In my opinion, while most of these solutions have merit in one or more areas, almost all of them are plagued by numerous problems, bugs, missing features, missing modules, weak technology, small customer base, poor support, weak financial backing etc. In my book only a few products stand tall as those stellar products that I am most confident about recommending to my clients and fellow CPAs. While no product is perfect, ACCPAC Advantage makes a powerful case as one of the world's most complete products, from top to bottom. As the company goes public in 2003, the company will only be in a stronger position in the years to come. No matter your industry and no matter your size, ACCPAC Advantage is certainly worth a look – and few other products can make that claim.

- END -

J. Carlton Collins, CPA is a nationally recognized author, lecturer, and analyst in the accounting systems industry. He has installed more than 200 accounting systems, and delivered 1,800 lectures around the world on the subject of accounting systems and technology. Mr. Collins has published extensive accounting system reviews which can be seen at www.accountingsoftwareadvisor.com.

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