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IT Chapter Newsletter



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PRODUCT REVIEW: Greentree Software

Narrowing the gap between Enterprise Resource Planning Systems (ERPS) and mid range software relying on third party add on modules.

To progress successfully Chief Financial Officers (CFOS) must continually look for value adding services. Value adding, however, like beauty can be in the eye of the beholder. Accounting software provides a tangible form of value adding and many mid range software packages cater for most financial processes. Points of difference and value adding opportunities are part of the richness of the features of the software.

Greentree software will hold your interest in this regard. The range of financial processes and integrated CRM and Workflow modules place the software firmly in the state-of-the-art category. It narrows the gap for small to medium enterprises (SMEs) between large Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems and mid range software systems relying on third party add on modules.

Product highlights include

- ✦ The range of modules and features in Greentree make it attractive to a wide range of enterprises in the more demanding SME category.
- ✦ Greentree covers core financials of General Ledger, Payables, Receivables, Cash Management as well as Fixed Assets. It also has distribution modules covering Sales Orders, Purchase Orders, Inventory, as well as Job Costing. This is complimented with extensive Customer Relationship Management (CRM) modules, a WorkFlow module and a Web Store (not on demo CD).
- ✦ Greentree incorporates some of the best features to come out of the 90ties such as using tree structures to build reports, integration with Excel spreadsheet that enables the spreadsheet to be used as a report writer and the use of analysis codes independent of chart of account codes.
- ✦ A variety of integrated accounting applications of particular interest to distribution organisations and those wanting to integrate CRM processes into their financial processes.
- ✦ A 10 segments chart of accounts to enable cost and management reporting from the general ledger. The General Ledger includes budgeting features with no limit on the number of budgets.
- ✦ Greentree comes from the makers of the popular CBA product, which I was told had 12,000 installed sites over the years.

Setup

I did this review from an easy loading demo CD. This is available to fast track a requirements document which I would always recommend as it enhances the outcomes of any installation project. One of the first options to understand is the system updates in real-time mode and a selection must be made between controlling data either in batch or non batch mode - the real-time managers dream. Real-time update setup requires control procedures and the system caters for extensive audit trails, menu security and menu tailoring to user profiles and passwords. The system caters for a variety of user defined fields. There are also analysis codes which cater for requirements to categorise transactions independently of general ledger accounts. For example analysing motor vehicle expenses by motor vehicle rather than by a general ledger account.

Reviewers Note: You need the latest hardware offerings of fast processors and lots of hard disk space with the demo taking up nearly 1gb of space.

User Help

The Online Help is intuitive - it recognises where you are and presents the appropriate help menu at that place. There are no hardcopy manuals. One expects a level of training and support from the supply of software at this level and Star Accounting tell me it is very much part of their business to provide this.

User Interface

The Greentree User Interface takes the new approach to arranging menus for navigating the system. The main pull down menus are arranged with the familiar File, Edit and then Data Entry, Enquiry, Processes, Reports, System, CRM, Workflow and Help. This moves away from the practice of presenting software applications as a series of modules. The User Interface encourages people to view the organisation of their work in a process perspective.

Data Entry

Screens comprising editable forms are used for data entry in the various modules. Journals can be posted directly from a spreadsheet rather than the more complex way of importing files in specific formats. I was able to easily move columns on the journal entry lines form to suit the particular sequence in which I wanted to enter data.

Processes

A description of the various processes is outside the scope of this review. Accept, if you will, that good financial software must be capable of a range of functions for processing and managing transaction according to accounting conventions and management practices. And this is how I found Greentree, in fact it is packed with features and functions. I selected the sales order entry module for a more detailed look for specific features and they were all there. Packing slips, backorders, partial releases, non stock GL account orders, a setup devoted to 14 user definable status definitions for orders and a setup for Standing Orders.

The weak points I found tended to be in areas where Greentree is not looking for markets For example there is no Materials Resource Planning (MRP) for process manufacturing. There is no payroll module although I was told one is planned for release later this year. If you select to post transactions in batch mode the batch numbers are not automatically generated which means you have to manually control them.

The CRM module is worthy of a review in its own right and the workflow module has a task management flavour.

Reports and Report Writer

An area that accountants can perform an extremely useful value adding role is in the set up of the chart of accounts beyond the standard fare of financial accounting. This is in the use the general ledger as a management accounting cost ledger. The chart of accounts code structure must cater for this and Greentree has 10 segments as well as analysis codes in the chart of accounts setup. Greentree has its own report writer as well as the use of Excel as a report writer using a native link to the underlying data. The popular Crystal can also be used. The usefulness of these cannot be over-stated. A wide range of standard reports is available for managing the various processes. Report destination options include the obvious printer as well as email and fax.

Technical

The product is written in Jade and the promotional material says " The Jade model is designed around a single technology (ie the programming language and database are one), making it truly object oriented. The designers of Jade have also achieved incredibly flexibility. Examples of this are its Windows NT and UNIX compatibility (AIX out now and Linux release due in 2003), and its capability to support complex interfaces between dissimilar products. Considering that Jade Smart Client Technology also allows for 'thin' client deployment, the database gives users a tremendously reliable and secure platform for Greentree and other applications."

Contact Details

Greentree International, Web site www.greentree.biz Indicative pricing for Greentree starts at \$10,000 for core financials with four concurrent users.

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