Adagio – the 'natural' upgrade for ACCPAC Plus

MICRO MONITOR

By Alan Salmon

Since ACCPAC (Sage) has officially discontinued ACCPAC Plus this year, thousands of Plus users have a difficult decision to make.

What accounting software will meet their needs, at a price they can afford, and move them gracefully into the 21st century with a minimum of staff re-training?

Adagio, from Softrak Systems Inc. in Vancouver, should certainly be considered a major contender for anyone looking to upgrade from ACCPAC Plus. Now a 19 module, fully multi-currency suite—with an extensive 3rd Party developer program providing tightly integrated Payroll, Purchase Order, Point-of-sale and manufacturing solutions—Adagio offers one benefit to ACCPAC Plus users that no other accounting vendor can claim—a virtually seamless transition to Windows.

Adagio allows an ACCPAC Plus user move from DOS to Windows with no data conversion—allowing the smoothest of accounting department transitions.

So what will the accounting department discover after the transition?

Well, some things will be familiar. Adagio is batch oriented—allowing easy period ends and separation of function within the accounting department. Work can be checked before it is posted and committed to the accounting files. The entire application can be driven from the keyboard—a boon for keyboard-centric DOS data entry staff. Menus, business processes and error messages remain constant, allowing an easy roll out of the system through the company.

However, some things will represent significant and welcome improvements over the old way of working in ACCPAC Plus.

General Ledger users can unpost and copy batches and departments. An award-winning spreadsheet-based financial reporter makes complicated presentation-quality financial statements possible with a minimum of expertise.

Side-by-side departmental, budget and prior year comparatives are easy to create. Complete statement sets can be printed or sent to an Excel workbook fully formatted. Unexpected figures on the financial statement can be resolved by drilling down from the number all the way to the posted transaction detail.

Accounts Payable users can print CPA compliant cheques on blank laser stock, complete with the bank account MICR number. Alternatively, you can send vendor payments electronically using EFT through TelPay Business Connect.

Inquiries automatically match payments to invoices, and display the complete general ledger distribution of every transaction. Unlimited additional comments and chronological note history track vendor interactions. Pop-up "alerts" can be set up to require acknowledgment when a vendor is referenced.

Accounts Receivable users can e-mail or fax statements directly from Adagio. Forms are sent as PDF attachments to e-mails with personalized cover sheets. All the software for fax and e-mailing is included within Adagio—there is no requirement to purchase or set up a separate fax or e-mail server. Pop-up alerts can be created for customers too, and they automatically display whenever the customer is referenced in Adagio OrderEntry or Invoices or Time&Billing. Transaction inquiries allow "drilling across" to the source documents in OrderEntry or Invoices. Different e-mail addresses are saved for the primary company contact, the statement and invoice recipients.

Adagio is one of the few midrange accounting products not to use Crystal Reports to design invoices, cheques, statements and other user forms. A simple to use, drag-and-drop forms designer makes it easy to customize these forms to your requirements. Multi-part forms are directly supported, with user control of which elements print on which copy of each form.

Different business invoicing models are accommodated by using one (or more) of Adagio's three invoicing solutions. All the invoicing modules allow e-mailing of their customizable invoices, credit notes and order confirmations.

Adagio Invoices offers specialized features for service industries and companies with a recurring invoice requirement, such as property managers, trade associations or alarm companies. Adagio Invoices allows the customizable invoice to change "shape" as different items are added. Part sales can be printed out in one format, while service items can have another format with a 750 character description and date of service.

Adagio OrderEntry has specialized features of interest to wholesale distribution companies. It runs with either a simple, integrated price list, or linked online with Adagio Inventory. Backorders, future orders, and partial shipments are all managed—with the option to produce multiple invoices from a single order. Product returns are easily credited, and optionally returned to inventory. Adagio Inventory supports five costing methods (average, FIFO, LIFO, standard and user defined), multiple locations and a 16 character item number in 4 user defined segments.

Adagio Time&Billing is a good solution for professionals such as engineers or advertising consultants with a centralized timesheet entry model. Desktop based timekeeping captures hours worked at source, yet provides an opportunity to review time allocation and expense charges prior to posting them to a client project.

Time&Billing's direct integration with Adagio Payables means that re-billable disbursements are entered once and can be automatically marked up on retrieval. For construction and similar companies, Adagio JobCost offers five revenue recognition methods and integration with Payables, Invoices and Payroll.

The typical company for Adagio is large enough to have a full time accounting department (or staff person), but generally not large enough to have their own IT department.

Adagio users need powerful reporting tools, in an accounting solution that doesn't require constant attention to keep up and running. Like many accounting systems, Adagio uses Crystal Reports for all its management reporting. Standard reports can be customized using Crystal Reports for Adagio, and custom reports can be added to any module's Reports menu.

For simpler reporting needs, Adagio GridView has a very simple user interface for retrieving data from the accounting database in summary or detail form. It allows accounting data to be displayed for a user without requiring that they have access to the accounting software itself.

For an organization with $1-$100 million in revenue, with a full time accounting department and no IT department, Adagio offers a robust, stable accounting platform with unique reporting strengths for financial statement preparation and user access to the data. While it is an excellent solution for businesses currently running ACCPAC Plus it should not be ignored by other businesses who have outgrown their current accounting software.

Quick Info
Adagio Accounting V8.0 – 2006

Adagio is sold through Softrak Business Partners and has an MSRP of $1150/module. Multi-module bundles are available at reduced prices. Upgrade Plans are 20 per cent of MSRP/year and multi-user lanpaks are priced from $350 to $175 per unit depending on quantity.

Softrak Systems Inc.
Suite 900 - 1200 Burrard Street
Vancouver, BC V6Z 2C7
Tel: 1-800-663-9798
Email: *info@softrak.com*
http://www.softrak.com

Alan Salmon is managing director of Alan Salmon & Associates Inc. He can be reached at: *asalmon@salmon.ca,* or visit his website at: *www.salmon.ca.*
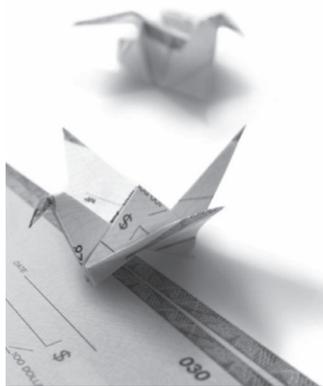
New GAAR book offers broad insight

By DONALEE MOULTON

There is now one more tool for the accounting trade. *The Essential GAAR Manual: Policies, Principles and Procedures* offers readers both comprehensive analysis and practical guidance.

The book, said co-author Patrick Boyle, a partner in the Toronto office of Fraser Milner Casgrain, "allows accountants to make the best informed strategic decisions at the best time—up front, when deciding whether to do a deal, or how best to structure their client's transaction."

"Not all taxpayers want to become court cases," he added. "Often, with the right initial thinking, and sound measured representation when questioned on audit, a GAAR issue can be resolved more quickly and with less expense."

The 300-page tome, the only book on the subject written by a former member of the Canada Revenue Agency's GAAR Committee, addresses a wide range of questions. Among them: What is the future of GAAR after the Canada Trustco and Mathew decisions? What constitutes a "textual, contextual and purposive" analysis? What does the Supreme Court of Canada mean by requiring that tax measures be "predictable"? What is the future of corporate tax planning? How do you document a transaction that may be probed by GAAR?

"Accountants are on the front lines when it comes to tax planning and structuring deals for their clients. The GAAR can potentially apply to any type of transaction that results in a reduction, avoidance or deferral of tax. As a result, GAAR can affect all types of taxpayers and, thus, many aspects of an accountant's practice," noted Ian Rhind president and CEO of CCH Canadian Limited, the book's publisher.

The Essential GAAR Manual explores the difference between tax planning and abusive tax avoidance, and discusses how accountants can assist clients in making informed tax planning decisions. There are no easy answers, Boyle stressed. "It is a bit like the definition of obscenity, but it is possible to identify the grey area in which the line between abusive tax avoidance and successful tax planning hides."

It is quite clear from the Supreme Court that abusive tax avoidance only exists if it cannot reasonably be concluded that the client's desired tax result is consistent with the object, spirit and purpose of the provisions relied on, he added.

"This is very important for at least two reasons. Firstly, that language takes us right back to the Supreme Court's decision in *Stubart* 20 years ago. Even more importantly, the onus to show that is on the CRA—that's the hot button to push that should drive the client's, and his or her accountant's, GAAR strategy."

In addition to defining the grey areas, distinguishing between planning and avoidance is also an evolving issue. "The Supreme Court in *Canada Trustco* indicated it plans to give great deference to the Tax Court in making this distinction and the Tax Court decisions are starting to come down," noted Boyle.