

What every ACCPAC® Plus™ user should know about Adagio®

Who is Adagio designed for?

Softrak, with over 20 years of experience in servicing businesses with their accounting software needs, has a very clear idea of the type of company that uses Adagio. Just as it is a mistake to take a “high-end” solution and remove features to try and justify a specific market price, it is also difficult to “scale up” an entry level accounting product to meet the reporting and transaction volume needs of a larger company. We believe that accounting departments (and businesses generally) should be able to adopt technology at their own pace.

Most Adagio customers have revenues (or a budget if they're a non-profit) of more than \$2 million. While we have some customers smaller than this, Adagio's price will be hard to justify. Large Adagio sites do \$100's of millions in revenue – it all depends on the transaction volume and reporting flexibility that the company demands.

The one feature that differentiates Adagio customers is that they have at least one full-time person who manages the accounting transactions. Few of our customers have more than 5 or 6 people in the accounting department, although they may have up to 100 people accessing the accounting data.

The accounting person may be responsible for Accounts Receivable on Monday, Accounts Payable on Tuesday, Human Resources on Wednesday, Payroll on Thursday, Banking on Friday and Financial Statements on Saturday. However, they were hired specifically because they know the difference between a debit and a credit. Adagio's customers do not need their accounting software to draw a picture of a check in order to produce a check. They want to be able to quickly and easily produce a manual check, or a check run of 50, 100 or 500 checks. They need unlimited line items on an order, unlimited expense account allocations on an invoice, unlimited A/R and A/P control accounts and Financial Statements whose format is not controlled by the chart of accounts.

Features ACCPAC Plus users like most

Most companies that run ACCPAC Plus are happy with its feature set. For them, the following features work:

- 2 segment G/L account-department
- 6 character account code, 6 character department code
- 6 character vendor and customer codes
- Unlimited control accounts in A/R and A/P
- 16 character item numbers in 4 user defined segments
- 5 costing methods in inventory control
- User defined forms

If they needed a 45-digit g/l account number in 10 user-defined segments, which is what ACCPAC Advantage offers, they would **never** have bought ACCPAC Plus.

There is no denying that a 45-digit g/l account number in 10 user-defined segments provides tremendous flexibility in the creation of a complex chart of accounts. You can “slice and dice” your figures in many different ways. However, it is axiomatic in the software industry that you do not get flexibility without complexity. One of Softrak’s Business Partners has established that an accounting department generally has to add a new person to the accounting department for every segment they add to their g/l account structure. In order to take advantage of the reporting that multiple segments offers, each invoice and receipt must be properly coded. This adds significant data entry to the transactions handled every day.

This is not to say there are not “features” in ACCPAC Plus that they wouldn’t happily change. It is merely to point out that the “overall architecture” of the feature set works for them. The most annoying “feature” of ACCPAC Plus is probably something that they have gotten used to after using the product for so many years, and that’s the inability to “back up” when a data entry error is made in a field. Today, people expect to be able to move backward and forward through a form, to use the mouse to select an arbitrary field to correct, to cut, copy and paste information between fields. ACCPAC Plus offers none of these common user interface conventions. Its user interface has not changed substantively since 1985, almost 20 years ago.

The feature that ACCPAC Plus sites appreciate most about their current accounting system is the product’s stability. For them, the fact that ACCPAC “takes a licking and keeps on ticking” is a major benefit and cost saving, as most sites do not have an IT department. They rely on their computer software consultant to assist them in managing their networking and hardware needs. It is amazing that companies have so much faith in ACCPAC Plus that they just expect it to run on Windows XP, an operating system released more than 10 years after the last architectural change to ACCPAC.

Why Move to Windows?

However, ACCPAC Plus sites are coming to the realization that the move to Windows is inevitable. They may be being pushed there because:

- New employees in the accounting department expect to be able to use a mouse and other data entry conventions with the software they use
- The new technician hired to maintain the company's expanding network visits the accounting department regularly, to ask why they are still using "that DOS software" on his new NT server
- They have spent many hours trying to get ACCPAC to print on a recently purchased printer, whose manual doesn't mention DOS anywhere
- Their computer consultant has said that the consulting rate for assistance on ACCPAC Plus is increasing dramatically
- The owner's children are getting involved in the business and are not prepared to use DOS based software
- The business owner is tired of explaining to his golfing buddies that his company is still using a DOS based accounting product

Unfortunately, no consulting company will train new employees on ACCPAC Plus. Computer programmers will not program in DOS, and, in order to learn new things, old things must be forgotten. There is no leverage in knowing how things work in ACCPAC Plus. The population of users is shrinking, and spending three days trying to make a printer or network card work at a site cannot be written off to "education". No one is interested in tracking down problems in either the software or the hardware.

ACCPAC International has announced that there will be no new features added to ACCPAC Plus. Although accounting departments are generally skeptical of new versions, they want to see their software carefully enhanced to take advantage of new features in the operating system or hardware. They also want to see their accounting software evolve to take advantage of new technologies such as electronic document faxing and e-mail.

Moving to ACCPAC Advantage or Adagio

Historically, the most significant hurdle to be overcome for ACCPAC Plus sites in moving to Windows based accounting is the data conversion. In the case of ACCPAC Advantage, the conversion effort is significant, and few consultants will quote a fixed cost for this undertaking. This means that significant funds may be spent, simply getting back to where you started. And the benefits of converting to ACCPAC Advantage are not clear.

ACCPAC Advantage uses commercially available database managers from Pervasive, Microsoft, IBM and Oracle to store its data. This has advantages for companies that have chosen this software for their corporate computing environments, but there is little benefit for more typical ACCPAC Plus users. There are additional licensing fees to be paid to the database software vendor. There is the complexity of implementing and maintaining the database software.

The major benefit of a separate database layer is it enables the use of 3rd party reporting tools such as Excel and Crystal Reports. However, there are many 3rd party reporting tools available for ACCPAC Plus. Quik Reports, Quik Reports for Windows and Crystal Reports for Adagio all allow easy creation of user defined management reports. And these tools can be made available to people authorized to view and report on the accounting database. Open databases allow any Excel user to view or **modify** the accounting data with common tools, whether they are authorized or not!

Softrak believes that the move to Microsoft Windows, with its different user interface, is disruptive enough to the accounting department. By allowing a company to use its data unchanged, Adagio allows companies to concentrate their resources on keeping the flow of information uninterrupted. There is no loss of history. There is no change in business logic. There is no disruption. Adagio is unlike most software upgrades in that it can be implemented any day of the week that ends in a "y". You do not have to wait for a day end, period end or month end. People can be in the middle of entering invoice and check batches. Posting journals can be waiting to print. As there is no data conversion, workstations can be moved to Windows whenever the operator wishes.

Since moving to ACCPAC Advantage requires converting the ACCPAC Plus database, this means:

- The data in EVERY module must be in the correct state to convert.
- ALL users must be trained on EVERY module they will be using.
- ALL the data in ALL the modules must be totally converted before any work can be done in ACCPAC Advantage.
- ALL equipment must be capable of running ACCPAC Advantage.
- There is no going back to ACCPAC Plus once the data is converted and processing is begun with ACCPAC Advantage.

Another advantage of not converting the data is that most of the popular 3rd party add-ons that were written for ACCPAC Plus continue to work with Adagio. Products such as Cashbook, Contact Master, DataCare, F9, and Sales Analysis all continue to operate on files that they are designed to manipulate. And for companies with a significant investment in customized reports using Quik Reports or Report Master, Adagio protects the investment in these reports, and allows you to continue using familiar reporting tools.

One of Adagio's overriding design considerations is that the accounting department should be able to adopt technology at their own pace. It is for this reason that Adagio does not use Excel[®] as its Financial Reporter. By having its own spreadsheet, with all the computational power of Excel, Adagio allows you to create almost any financial statement you can imagine. If Excel were used to create these documents, then every new release of Excel **might** result in an accounting department not being able to create their carefully designed statements. Of course, Adagio allows you to export your statements to Excel, if its graphing and other features are important for your formatting.

Features in Adagio that are not in Plus

There are significant benefits in moving your accounting software to Microsoft Windows. Firstly, the user interface is similar to every other piece of software you are likely to be running. You use Windows software for your spreadsheet, your word processor, your e-mail and your web browsing. You expect to be able to import and export directly to Excel.

Also, Adagio allows you to copy almost everything. You can copy customers and vendors. You can copy batches, and the copy process will prompt you for changes to the date, fiscal period and/or sign of the transaction if you are copying a g/l batch. Use Adagio to copy a customer's repeat order. When making the copy, Adagio allows you to change the customer code or ship to address, and update the pricing from your price list to reflect any changes that might have occurred since the creation of the original order. This can save an enormous amount of data entry. Also, Adagio allows you to add customers and vendors "on the fly" while entering invoices, as well as entering transactions for one time vendors and customers.

Adagio allows you to create spectacular Financial Statements without having to battle with complicated spec codes. Using simple "drag and drop" technology, you can easily generate multi column statements. If you use departments, departmental comparatives are easy and straightforward.

Adagio also runs more efficiently if you choose to print your management reports and forms to a laser printer. Unfortunately, Windows does not run happily with old dot matrix printer technology. Firstly, it will be difficult to find a Windows printer driver for your old printers. Secondly, Windows prints very slowly using that technology.

Since Adagio is designed to use the graphical power of Windows, you can print dynamite-looking invoices and customer statements on inexpensive plain paper.

To address the need for multi-part forms, Adagio's unique forms designer directly supports multi-copy printing. This means that, with a single request, a user can print up to five copies of any form. For added flexibility, Adagio's forms designer can specify which copy each individual element of the form prints on. Adagio also includes the MICR font required to print the special characters along the bottom of a check. This allows you to purchase completely blank check stock from your office supply store. This stock is easier to control, because, until it passes through your laser printer, it contains none of the special characters that turn it into a check.

Listings, Forms & Financial Statements

Accounting departments produce three distinct types of output. Each of these require different tools for their creation and management.

Firstly, accounting departments produce **listings** – batch listings, posting journals, g/l detail listings and aged trial balances. For these reports, Adagio uses Crystal Reports, a tool selected by virtually every major accounting software vendor, from Peachtree to Peoplesoft, including ACCPAC International. Softrak is very experienced with Crystal reports, as we have been selling it under license since 1995 as Quik Reports for Windows. Softrak's recent release of Crystal Reports for Adagio is based on Crystal version 8.5, the latest in reporting technology from Crystal Decisions. Crystal Reports for Adagio allows you to customize every management report in Adagio. Crystal Reports for Adagio also includes all the features that Windows accounting users have been able to take advantage of, including the e-mailing of reports, or the export of any report to Excel or Word.

Secondly, accounting departments produce **forms** – invoices, credit notes, order confirmations, statements and checks. Most accounting software vendors take one of two approaches to these documents; either they force you to use pre-printed forms (which they supply) or they use Crystal Reports for their forms designer to allow you to customize the layout. However, forms have an attribute not shared by management reports. Often, multiple copies are required – and companies are particular about the layout of their invoices and statements. Creating multi-copy forms using Crystal Reports is not an enjoyable task, as it is not a document type that Crystal was designed to handle easily.

Adagio's special forms designer has specific features that make it simple to create multi-copy forms. Each printable element you'll need is on a simple "drag and drop" pick list. Once an element has been placed on a form, you can choose whether it should print on all copies, or only specific copies. This makes it easy to create a three-part invoice with separate information for a customer copy, accounting department copy and shipping department copy.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, accounting departments are responsible for producing the **financial statements** on a regular basis. Financial Statements are unique documents, requiring a specialized tool for easy formatting. Adagio Ledger's Financial Reporter is just such a tool. Containing its own built-in spreadsheet, with all the computational power of Excel, Adagio allows you to describe your chart of accounts in a simple "tree view" or as comprehensive as necessary. Once the chart of accounts has been described to the financial reporter, you can create complex statements simply by dragging the accounts onto the spreadsheet, choosing the columns you'd like displayed and their order. Adagio will instantly create a presentable financial statement that you can edit to create just the financial document required by management.

Adagio's unique use of three specific designers for each type of output, allows you or your consultant to customize your printed output with a simplicity and power not offered in other accounting products. In considering a new accounting system, ask your recommender to demonstrate:

- Changing the order of checks and advices on a laser printed check
- Creating a single financial statement

You'll be pleasantly surprised at how simple these activities are with Adagio.

It's Just Data!

Many people are under the mistaken impression that, because their accounting data was created using the DOS-based ACCPAC Plus, that their data is "DOS data". There is no such thing as "DOS data". It is just data – 1's and 0's on a hard disk. There is no "DOS data", just as there is no "Windows data", "Novell data", "NT data" or "Linux data". Data is just data – and it's **your** data. It's not even "ACCPAC data" – it's **your data**, and you should value your investment in its creation.

Do not convert your data unless your recommender can exhibit a compelling reason to do so. There is no need. And most conversions are usually incomplete; not everything is converted.

Only Adagio offers a move to Windows without loss of **any** of your data, historical or current. There is no disruption. There is no displacement, and operator re-training is limited to reviewing the "keyboard behavior" of Windows. Before moving to any other Windows based accounting product, you owe it to yourself to look at Adagio – and look at it using **your data**. You'll see what a great "upgrade" Adagio really is.