

STAR-INFO

Newsletter for Sage ERP MAS 90 and 200

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Headline News

Sage North America recently announced Sage Payment Boss, a mobile tool that allows small businesses to get paid anytime, anywhere, by accepting credit cards using a 3G-enabled phone. With Sage Payment Boss, small businesses can select Sage Payment Solutions or another merchant account provider, and all payments are verified on the spot, ensuring immediate payment.

Simplifying The Upgrade Process

New Tools Help You Keep Your Software Current

Studies show many customers choose not to upgrade due to concerns over the cost, downtime, and effort involved. Are you still running on an older version of Sage ERP MAS 90 or Sage ERP MAS 200? If so, remember that Sage is retiring Version 3.71 on September 30, 2010. The good news is that Sage has made most upgrades smoother, faster, and less costly. And because every release has been designed to help you operate your business more securely, save money, and improve customer service, you will experience a quick return on investment. Here we recap features that were added in Versions 4.0 and later, including the new easier upgrade process.



Simplifying The Upgrade Process

For many customers, an upgrade involves more than simply installing a new version. There are customizations to consider, internal training, and the conversion of data and reports. Sage is attacking this issue in two ways. First, Sage is offering product updates in between major releases that contain additional features and functionality that can easily be downloaded and installed. Second, major upgrades are made easier through enhancements released in Version 4.4—a new Parallel Migration tool, and additional enhancements to the customization capabilities of the software that, when applied properly, ensure that customizations survive future upgrades.

Parallel Migration Tool

The key to improving your upgrade process is the ability to convert your system in two phases. This removes the urgent nature of

upgrades—where you need to get everything done over a single weekend in order to avoid downtime, for example. The new Parallel Migration process is available for converting Versions 3.71 and greater to Version 4.4 of Sage ERP MAS 90 and 200. During the first phase, the Parallel Migration Wizard is used to convert your current data to a new installation, either on the same or a different server. Normal operations continue on your old system. Then, at a pace that suits your business needs, the new system can be setup, customized, and tested for proper function. Report printing and integration with other products can be tested. In phase two, your current data is migrated to the new system. In this way, you will very quickly be running on the new software, with less downtime and no surprises. Because upgrading is more efficient and requires minimal downtime, your return on investment is faster too.

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Simplifying The Upgrade Process

(continued from cover)

Customizations That Survive Future Upgrades

Even prior to Version 4.4, the Customizer module was a powerful tool. For example, a consultant could put a button on a screen that would perform a calculation using the invoice date, calculate three years into the future, and put the result into a user-defined field labeled *Warranty Expiration Date*—all without needing to write program code. However, the user had to remember to click the button, or the calculation would not be made and the field would be left blank.

With the 4.4 Customizer, scripts can be added that will run automatically when a certain event happens, such as tabbing out of a particular field. Using the above example, the script could automatically perform the calculation and fill in the warranty field when the data entry person finishes entering the line on the order. Scripts can run based on many software events, including before and after data is entered in a field, before and after a record is written, and even after a record is read by the software. The net result is that relatively complex capabilities can be added without changing the programs that come out of the box. This means that you will be able to upgrade to new versions and your customizations will continue to work just fine.

Benefits Of Upgrading

Now that upgrading is easier, why not take advantage of the many enhancements offered when you upgrade to the current version? The following are just some major benefits you gain when you upgrade your software to the current version.

Business Insights

If you are like many managers, you may find yourself mostly working in your business—putting out fires and making decisions about orders, products, and schedules. This

leaves you with little time to analyze business data. Yet if you did, the results of that analysis could have a profound impact on the success of your business. You could find out which of your products are unprofitable and eliminate them, or identify top customers so that you can offer additional purchase incentives. If you feel you should be performing this type of analysis and cannot find the time, Business Insights can help. Business Insights Explorer, added in Version 4.2, is easy to use for on-the-fly inquiry and analysis. In each new release it has been enhanced with new features, such as quick-click charts. A familiar grid interface gives you access to information from all areas of the system. Turn data into fact-based knowledge using the powerful sort, group, and filter capabilities, and save the views that you have created for future use. Business Insights Reporter was added in Version 4.0, and helps you to generate the reports you need quickly and easily. The wizard-based tool displays data in a logical tree view, making it easier to locate the fields you need. You can specify options, such as date range, each time the report is run, and you can add it to a menu, refine it using Crystal Reports®, or export it to Microsoft® Excel. The Business Insights Dashboard is a series of 12 charts that give you an instant picture of overall business performance. In Version 4.3, the Dashboard received a new look and gained the ability to print graphs to a PDF file.

Easy Report Customization

Have you ever wanted to customize a standard Sage ERP MAS 90 report? With Version 4.0 and above, all reports are built in Crystal Reports, so you can easily customize any report. You also can output reports to several formats, including Excel, Word, PDF, and e-mail. Personalized Report Settings allow you to save report defaults. Do you print the A/R Aging report weekly with past due items

only and the full report only at the end of the month? You can save them with an appropriate title and then run as needed.

Speed Data Entry

Perhaps the biggest time saver in Versions 4.0 and greater is the dual-grid data entry screen. With the dual-grid data entry screen, you can place the most common data entry fields in your main grid, and the less used fields into a secondary grid. If you come upon an entry that requires a change to one of the less-used fields, a click of a button takes you into the secondary grid.

A dual-pane view on inquiry screens allows you to see a list of transactions in one pane, and the detail related to a specific transaction in another, allowing you to respond more quickly to customer and vendor inquiries.

Batch Control And Auditing

With the Batch Manager, in Versions 4.0 and greater, you can make batches public or private. Each batch stores the user who created or updated the batch and the date and time it was created or updated. The potential for fraud is greatly reduced and audit trails are more transparent.

We have covered several of the major enhancements; however, there are literally hundreds of smaller enhancements in the releases that we do not have space to cover here. To view highlights of the enhancements included in each version on the Sage website: http://www.sagemas.com/assets/SageMAS/pdf/Sage_MAS90_200TopReasonsToUpgrade.pdf.

Please give us a call with your questions or for assistance planning your upgrade. ✨

Product Update 2 For Sage ERP MAS 90 Version 4.4

The second Product Update for Version 4.4 is available now. Product Update 2 improves workflow in some of the modules you use most: Bank Reconciliation, Accounts Payable, and Paperless Office. The release also includes a new Pre-Installation Data Scan utility that will help identify data issues prior to installation. Details on the proper use of the Pre-Installation Data Scan utility are available at Sage Online in the Sage ERP MAS 90 and 200 download section.

Bank Reconciliation

- **Reconcile Checks Automatically**—You can efficiently and automatically reconcile the check information you download from your financial institution. A Wizard helps you create the proper check format for your financial institution specifications. Or, we can configure the setting in our office, export the file, and then import it into your system.
- **Enforce Tighter Controls over Bank Reconciliation Adjusting Entries**—A new option in Role Maintenance allows you to specify which users are allowed to access and make adjusting entries for each account defined in Bank Code Maintenance.
- **Enter Checks, Deposits, and Adjustments On the Fly**—Now you have instant access to enter checks, deposits, and adjustments through a quick link button on the Reconcile Bank screen. The button will bring you directly into the Check Deposit and Adjustment Entry screen for that bank, without the need to exit the Reconcile Bank screen or navigate back to the main menu to open a data entry screen.
- **Recalculate Outstanding Entries Totals Utility**—A new Recalculate Outstanding Entries Totals utility allows

you to recalculate the totals of all checks, deposits, and adjustment entries that have not been marked as cleared.

- **Positive Pay Export**—The new Positive Pay feature helps reduce the chances of check fraud. Positive Pay allows you to send a file to your financial institution to use for comparison and verification against checks that are presented for payment. Key data, such as check number and dollar amounts, must match exactly, or the check will not be paid by the financial institution. Checks sent using Positive Pay are identified with an Exported check box in Check Deposit and Adjustment Entry. A Wizard helps you create the export file in the format specified by your financial institution. To help you understand formatting requirements, a reference document is included that outlines the most commonly used field formatting and export details required by financial institutions.
- **Expanded Comment Field**—In Check Deposit and Adjustment Entry, the Comment field has been expanded to 2048 characters, enabling you to add information to track why the adjustment was made.

Accounts Payable

By paying vendors electronically you can increase efficiency, improve cash management, and reduce the risk of lost or stolen checks. With this Product Update you will be able to create an ACH (automated clearinghouse) file from the Accounts Payable module. You can enable ACH electronic payments, define how they will be handled, and define the information that will be transmitted to your financial institution.

You can set up multiple financial institutions for your electronic payments. Pre-notes

are supported, as well as the ability to allocate amounts between several accounts. ACH information is included on Accounts Payable Reports.

New Paperless Options Added

With this Product Update you will now be able process, send, and retain electronic copies of Accounts Payable checks, extended stubs, and remittance advice documents for ACH Electronic Payments in electronic PDF format. The PDFs you create can be sent by e-mail or fax, archived, and retrieved as needed. Easily access PDFs using the Vendor Viewer from Paperless Office or the Checks panel in Vendor Maintenance Inquiry.

Please give us a call with any questions about Product Update 2. ✨

((Tips & Tricks))

Posting Comments from Accounts Payable to General Ledger

Use the steps below if you would like the comments related to Accounts Payable Invoices to post through to General Ledger.

1. Expand Modules, Accounts Payable, and Setup.
2. Click Accounts Payable Options.
3. Click the Additional tab.
4. Select a comment posting option from the Invoice Comments list. (One of the options on the list includes a Detail Comment. During invoice data entry, use the Lines tab to enter a Detail Comment.)
5. Select an option from the Manual Check Comments list.
6. Select an option from the Check Comments list.

Note: This procedure posts comments for invoices entered in Accounts Payable only.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Direct Deposit for Payroll

Direct deposit is the safe, easy, and cost-effective way for your employees to have their paychecks deposited directly into their checking or savings accounts. Add Direct Deposit to your Sage ERP MAS 90 or 200 system and you can improve employee satisfaction while you save time, money, and trees by going paperless. You also save the cost of printing, storing, and securing your pre-printed check forms. In this article, we will give you a feel for what is involved in setting up direct deposit and describe some of the features of the Direct Deposit module.

Getting Started With Direct Deposit

As with any other Sage ERP MAS 90 module, you start by activating a series of setup options. You will need to collect employee's bank routing and transit information. The ACH (Automated Clearing House) file format also will need to be configured. You will work with your financial institution to ensure you meet their specific requirements for the layout of the electronic file.

Next you will send a sample file to your bank with zero dollars filled in for each employee. This is called a pre-note. The pre-note file allows your bank to test the information in the file to ensure that it is in the correct format and that the employees' bank information is correct before the first actual direct deposit payroll. Your bank will notify you of the status of your pre-note. Once you receive pre-note approval from the bank, you will be ready to run your first direct deposit payroll.

Flexible Setup Options

Payroll Setup Options includes a check box *Require Direct Deposit* to activate the module. In Payroll Setup Options you also will choose how direct deposit information will be transmitted to the bank. Sage has an interface, or you can use a third-party interface application.

Other setup options include allowing partial allocations of check amounts, printing of direct deposit stubs, starting stub number, and setting the path where you want to save your direct deposit (ACH) files.

In Employee Maintenance there is a check box to indicate a direct deposit employee. A direct deposit button provides access to a new screen where you enter the bank account and distribution information for the employee. The module supports distribution of an employee's pay, in a fixed amount or percentage, to various accounts. For example, the employee could choose to allocate a fixed amount of \$50 to savings and 100 percent of the remainder of the paycheck to checking.

Track Pre-Note Process

The Direct Deposit module allows you to track the pre-note process of sending the direct deposit file to and receiving the approval from your financial institution. This is accomplished through the ability to send and update a Pre-Note Selection register and a Pre-Note Approval register. The pre-note process will take about 10 days, and needs to be run as new employees are added.

Direct Deposit In Operation

To run the direct deposit payroll, you process your payroll and update the check register, then generate the direct deposit (ACH) file as scheduled in advance of payday. A Direct Deposit Register records the batches sent to the bank and posts them to the Bank Reconciliation module as a lump sum Adjustment.

Give us a call with your questions, or to purchase the Direct Deposit module. ✨

Contact Information

Telesis Consulting, LLC
9025 E. Kenyon Ave., #212
Denver, CO 80237
(303) 470-1772
(800) 282-1226 toll free
(303) 648-5080 fax
Leonard.Smith@telesis-usa.com
Angie.Marquez@telesis-usa.com
www.telesis-usa.com



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