

AccountMate

●●●●○ EDITOR RATING: **EXCELLENT** 0 COMMENTS JULY 20, 2016

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REVIEW

COMMENTS

SPECS

COMPARE

MSRP

\$3125.00

LOWEST PRICE

\$3,125.00



AccountMate

\$3,125.00
Per User

SEE IT

PROS

Excellent transaction drill down. Powerful audit trail report capability. Extensive online training and help functionality. Extensive report export options. Can cut and paste transactions from a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

CONS

No process flowchart navigation. No HR or POS modules for ERP implementations. Limited graphics and charting. Task shortcuts need to be configured from scratch; no template exists. No true dashboards.

BOTTOM LINE

AccountMate provides a comprehensive modular system that can be configured to almost any business; though users will need to select modules carefully to avoid inflating the price.

BY TED NEEDLEMAN

Founded in 1984, AccountMate was one of the first PC software vendors to adopt a client/server approach, partnering with IBM to use IBM's minicomputers as the server. Today, you can purchase AccountMate (which begins at \$3,125 per user for an on-site installation); however, like most of the other small to midsize enterprise (SME) general ledger applications reviewed here, it's sold only through its solutions provider channel. This means you'll be dealing with a partner, not the software company, and that will certainly affect the final price.

The AccountMate system is completely modular, consisting of a mandatory System Manager component followed by a selection of other modules aimed at specific business types or processes, each of which can be configured to a user's requirements. With the

necessary customization and tweaking, this results in a more or less custom solution. Overall, it's a solid system that will be attractive to many. But some shortfalls in reporting and a design that isn't as intuitive as others in this category keep it just slightly behind Acumatica and Intacct, our current Editors' Choice winners in this space.

Sparse Landing and Navigation

Unlike most of the small to midsize enterprise (SME)-oriented apps I reviewed for this roundup, AccountMate's launch screen is rather barren. Most of the other vendors' accounting systems launch with a screen full of widgets or at least a process flowchart for navigation. AccountMate's opening screen is rather sparse by comparison, providing mostly empty space, two ribbon bars on the top of the screen, and a vertical panel on the edge.

That doesn't mean AccountMate doesn't have the same functionality as other accounting products in its class, only that they aren't as intuitive at first glance. For example, while many other apps put key performance indicators (KPIs) on the launch page in the form of widgets, AccountMate provides an Executive Summary, with these accessible through the System Toolbar which is at the top of the screen underneath the main ribbon bar. This main ribbon provides access to Transactions, Reports, Maintenance, Housekeeping, and Utilities. Clicking one of these choices replaces the main toolbar with one appropriate to the choice. Not intuitive at the get-go, but go through it once or twice and you'll remember how to use it.

The vertical panel on the left-hand side of the screen contains a list of installed modules, shortcuts for both the individual using the system and those applicable to a group of users (such as Accounts Payable staff), and other documents, programs, and websites to which you want easy access. Shortcuts bring you to specific tasks, but they have to be constructed by your system administrator or whichever solutions provider deployed the software. There aren't any templates provided but, once you have a shortcut set up, you can copy it and modify it into another shortcut.

AccountMate doesn't use task or process flowcharts, but these are actually illustrated in some of the extensive instructional videos that make up the help system. Also included in the Help system is complete documentation for the apps, a Getting Started guide, and context-sensitive Help function.

I didn't see a lot of graphic options in my testing. Most graphics are in the Maintenance sections of different modules under the Analysis tab. But this is offset by the ability to easily transfer report data into a variety of output formats including Microsoft Excel, which has excellent graphing and charting capabilities or, optionally, to F9 Report Manager, which also provides significant graphing and charting offerings.

One feature that will prove useful to almost every user is AccountMate's drill-down capabilities. From a financial statement or many reports, it's possible to drill down from the report all the way to the original transaction. AccountMate allows multiple screens to be open at the same time and these screens can be from different modules. To make multiple screens more readable, you can tile them.

And for companies that are subject to audits, there's an Audit Trail Report that traces transactions back into the database. You set up which fields you want to track and AccountMate records access and change data. This is a feature your auditor will really appreciate, and is a strong factor for internal control and regulatory compliance requirements such as Sarbanes-Oxley.

Many of the SME accounting systems I reviewed offer multi-currency options. AccountMate does as well and, additionally, the Chart of Accounts makes it easy to set up multiple companies. There's a radio button when you set up an account that asks if the account is for the parent company of a subsidiary (or if you aren't consolidating companies, a third choice). Multi-company consolidation requires the optional Consolidated Ledger module.

Dispersed But Flexible Reporting

AccountMate claims to have several hundred reports. That may be true if you are running every single module that's available, but there are significantly fewer in just the System Manager and General Ledger modules. That being said, the reports that are present are ones you'll find useful. I also found report setup to be easier than many of the other vendors' offerings, with simple radio buttons to select features such as comparative reports.

Two things should be noted when discussing AccountMate's reporting capabilities. The first is, you can choose between Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). Several of the SME accounting packages I tested offer this as well, and it's a critical feature if you run a multi-national business since the financial report formats are different in countries other than the US.

One report I missed was a Working Trial Balance, which is very useful during period closings. But AccountMate has extensive export capabilities (and import capabilities as well), so it's little trouble to export the available Trial Balance data into Microsoft Excel and add a couple of columns to allow working with adjusting and closing entries. And with the administrator tools, I found it wasn't hard to create a simple ad hoc report.

The second notable feature is that AccountMate provides the source code to generate all of its reports. Other source code modules may be purchased, but included in the initial purchase are the RPT and PRG files for those modules. AccountMate includes utilities that provide a fair bit of tweaking on the reports without having to dive into the code. But, if you or your solutions provider have the programming expertise, you can build any report you might need or do extensive customization of the bundled reports.

Expanding Into ERP

Aside from a strong general ledger (G/L) feature set, AccountMate is also a full-fledged enterprise resource planning (ERP) platform. As with some of the other completely modular systems reviewed here, such as Acumatica, AccountMate tends to be skewed somewhat towards a specific type of corporate entity. In this case, the selection of modules makes AccountMate a strong choice for manufacturing companies due to the availability of several modules, which extend inventory as well as strong financial modules for the procurement and distribution process (i.e., Sales and Purchase Order processing).

Another area in which AccountMate is strong is in analysis and reporting. On a macro scale, the AccountMate Business Alerts, powered by its Info-Alert modules, let you set parameters for data conditions where you want staff to be notified if a designated level is exceeded. These conditions might be something like a customer has exceeded their credit limit or perhaps certain purchase orders have not been filled by a promised due date. Some of these functions will be found in this and other vendors' separate Sales Order modules, but Business Alerts lets you set these conditions on a macro level for the entire company. You can also specify actions that will be automatically taken when a condition is detected, such as sending out a payment reminder when a credit limit situation occurs.

As mentioned, AccountMate provides Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in its Executive Summary section. If you need more detailed analysis and graphic capability, you can purchase the AccountMate Business Analysis Powered by F9 or the Business Intelligence Module. F9 makes it easy to create complex analytical spreadsheets from the data contained in AccountMate's database, with a Report Wizard that walks you through the process. And the Business Intelligence (BI) module expands the number and types of reports for sales, customers, vendors, and other areas as well, allowing you to create custom dashboards that might be missing from the base modules.

Not Strong in All Areas

Few of the ERP systems we looked at are equally strong across the board, and that's certainly true of AccountMate. There's little in the way of true project management (PM), heavy-duty Materials Requirements Processing (MRP), or Supply Chain Management (SCM) features such as Just-In-Time (JIT) inventory. Inventory, however, is strong in some areas such as Kitting (though this requires a separate module) and Bin Tracking.

Payroll is fairly generic but should be adequate for many users in the SME space. Though one notable omission is, it has limited ability to assign different pay rates to the same employee based on the job being performed, something that's necessary in many companies with union contracts. And in these companies, reporting to different unions is often necessary as well, which is another capability not built into AccountMate (though you can work around that limitation with some careful planning and workarounds).

More importantly, AccountMate does not currently offer human resources (HR) or Point-of-Sale (POS) modules. It's far from alone in this, as few of the SME ERP systems I reviewed offer extended HR or benefit administration capabilities. However, as HR management software and related tech continues to gain popularity, it would be nice to be able to access such features from within a single, company-wide ERP platform. If you need strong capabilities in these areas, you may be better off looking at another vendor with more vertical versions of their ERP system or investigating some of the third-party [partners and developers](#) specializing in add-ons and vertical implementations that extend AccountMate's capabilities.

Generic or Vertical?

With those limitations in mind, AccountMate offers a selection of modules that let you build your own ERP system by using just the basic components that apply to your operation. It provides multi-company (with the Consolidated Ledger Module) and multicurrency accounting capabilities, and for companies that are centered on manufacturing and distribution, the Kitting, Lot Control, and Manufacturing modules are well-designed and should meet most of the requirements of small manufacturers and wholesalers.

Customer relationship management (CRM) is another cornerstone of most ERP implementations that's often integrated into some kind of sales module. With AccountMate, it's implemented over several discrete modules. There's a Customer Relationship Manager module, which provides comprehensive reports on every recorded transaction with a prospect, customer, supplier, contact, or branch office. There's also a separate Contact Manager module that is tightly integrated with Microsoft Office; it lets you create sales campaigns and pull data from financial records to include in customer contact materials. A third customer-related module, Upsell Management, allows you to maintain a list of accessory or upsell items that

you can select to pitch in a current order or specifically target a customer where you think there's a chance you can interest them in the upsell. I didn't review this particular module, but it's a good idea and should be valuable for any company that does direct sales.

Price Can Quickly Add Up

AccountMate is completely modular which means that, in many cases, you'll have to pay extra for the features you need because they'll be part of an optional module. Then again, the opposite is also true: if you don't need to perform multi-company consolidations, you don't need to purchase the Consolidated Ledger Module. Budgeting is another optional module as are modules for entities that do distribution and manufacturing.

As mentioned earlier, you can select which version of AccountMate you need: either the version that runs on Microsoft SQL or the one that runs on the Express Version of SQL. The AccountMate for SQL Express is the least expensive option but it's limited to five users. "List price" for the full Microsoft SQL Server version starts at a one-time fee of \$3,125 per user, with mandatory maintenance fees in the first year and optional in following years. That buy-in gets you the System Manager, General Ledger, Accounts Payable and Receivable, Sales Orders, Purchase Orders, Bank Reconciliation, Inventory Control, Kitting, Lot Control, and several modules of source code. Of course, like other SME software, these are before the inevitable solution provider's fees you'll accrue since you can't simply purchase this software from the manufacturer and install it yourself. This requirement can considerably add to your final cost depending on how much the partner has to do during initial deployment and long-term maintenance.

With the SQL Express version, a one-user Small Business Pack will cost \$4,000, and includes the System Manager, General Ledger, Accounts Payable and Receivable, and Bank Reconciliation.

Plain but Powerful

Compared to some of the other accounting systems in this roundup, such as Acumatica or even QuickBooks Enterprise Solutions, AccountMate isn't very flashy. And I'm not overly impressed with the navigation, especially right out of the box before a partner has a change to set up shortcuts.

But simply using the app, I didn't have much trouble getting around. And I do like the ease of filtering reports and the fact that you can drill down from many spots in the system all of the way to the original transaction. A full-blown system with most of the available modules will run quite a bit of money, but that's true of just about all of the products in the SME market. Overall, AccountMate performs well, offers usable features, excellent documentation and e-learning, and is a good value if you can handle the modularity and design.

The online version of this review can be found [here](#).

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