

# The CPA Technology Advisor



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## In The December 2007 Issue

From the [Dec. 2007 Review](#) of High-End Accounting Systems

### 2007 Overall Rating: 5 Stars

Microsoft Dynamics GP continues to be one of the flagship products in Microsoft's mid-market accounting lineup. Version 10.0 of Microsoft Dynamics GP, released in June 2007, only helped strengthen its already strong position in the market. Microsoft has improved Dynamics GP by continuing to focus on molding the user interface to look and feel more like Microsoft Windows Vista and Microsoft Office 2007. Until recently, Microsoft had discussed rolling Microsoft Dynamics GP as well as the other Microsoft products in the mid-market accounting lineup into a single product named "Dynamics." However, Microsoft has since decided to keep all four distinct products in the game and devote the necessary time and money to get the products to feel more aligned and integrated. The decision to keep Microsoft Dynamics GP appears to have given developers the motivation needed to take the product to the next level.

#### Modules/Scalability - 5 Stars

Microsoft Dynamics GP offers business solutions through components such as Financial Management, Business Intelligence and Reporting, Supply Chain Management, Project Management, Customer Relationship Management, Human Resource Management, Manufacturing and Workspace Collaboration. Microsoft's mid-market ERP products all use a flat pricing model known as "Business Ready Licensing," where the products are sold in one of two pricing bundles or tiers consisting of an entire suite of modules.

Tier one is the Business Essentials Edition for customers who need core financial management and trade functionality including Basic Financial Management, Basic Supply Chain Management, Basic Business Intelligence and Reporting, and Configuration and Design tools. Tier two is the Advanced Management Edition for growing, mid-market customers who are looking for an adaptive solution with a broad set of functionality that includes all functionality found in the Business Essentials Edition in addition to Business Intelligence and Reporting, Manufacturing, Advanced Supply Chain Management, Advanced Financial Management, Project Management, and CRM-Field Service and Collaborative Workspace. Additional components are also available a la carte for all editions to serve unique business needs.

With proven code and a wealth of modules running on a solid MS-SQL platform, Dynamics GP continues to be a highly stable and scalable solution capable of easily supporting hundreds of end users. Users will not be disappointed with the current available modules and the scalability of the program.

#### Usability/User Experience/Security - 5 Stars

With an Outlook-like appearance and the use of custom home pages for users, I found GP to have a very comfortable look and feel. Version 10.0 extended the Office look and feel beyond the home page to nearly all areas within the program. Home pages can be modified to include quick links to commonly performed tasks. It also lists outstanding "To Do" items, offers access to Outlook e-mail and calendar items, provides displays of

quick business metrics and launches preferred reports. The ability to tailor custom home pages by user significantly improves accessibility. Other nice features include the use of toolbars across the top and a navigation pane down the left side that enables users to quickly jump to screens, reports and functions they use most often.

Data-entry screens were improved from prior versions allowing users to adjust the screen size, which was a common complaint in previous versions. One of the important enhancements that was made in Version 10.0 was the ability for users to have multiple data input screens open at once. This will allow users to minimize all other screens except the data-entry screen in order to operate more efficiently. Users can set individual preferences to highlight required fields on data-entry screens and underline fields supported by lookup lists. In addition, navigation, print and Help functions are clear and easy to access. Version 10.0 also introduced users to action panes and lists much like the look and feel of Microsoft Office 2007. Action pane functionality seems to be a key reason for upgrading to version 10.0.

Microsoft Dynamics GP's tight integration with Microsoft Office SharePoint Server is another key improvement with Version 10.0. Integration with SharePoint is important for the workflow process that GP offers. SharePoint allows users to view reports in Microsoft Outlook without accessing the GP software. SharePoint gives users a powerful search tool that can be used with built-in filters to locate information in an efficient manner. Company data can be accessed without a GP license and without SharePoint. However, with SharePoint, it is much easier, and data can be rendered on a SharePoint page. Product security is comprehensive and well thought out, enabling administrators to control the use of the product by company, user, user class, function and field. There are over 400 different tasks in version 10.0, and many new roles were added. The new role-based security approach gives administrators the rights to limit users to only those areas in the system that is necessary.

#### **Extensibility - 5 Stars**

The core product is mature, and there is a large independent developer community. As well, a great number of highly specialized applications currently exist to help make Dynamics GP a strong fit for many industries including Education, Non-Profit, Professional Services and Distribution. These specialized solutions can be easily located on the Microsoft Solution Finder website.

Microsoft Dynamics GP 10.0 is a modern business management system that provides a consistent look and feel of Microsoft Office and extends access to business information through Microsoft Office Excel, Word and SharePoint Server and adapts to business needs through Microsoft.NET tools and service-oriented Web services architecture. For customers seeking deep vertical functionality, Microsoft Dynamics GP 10.0 offers more than 500 industry solutions through a vast network of implementation partners and ISVs (independent software vendors).

#### **Integration/Customization - 5 Stars**

Dynamics GP seems to be very customizable and provides tight integration with the tools your staff already works with — Microsoft Office. Screens can be easily modified, enabling users to add or hide fields, modify screens prompts, change tab sequence and globally modify field terminology all by using the built-in Modifier tool. Version 10.0 greatly simplified the Extender tool set, a feature that allows the user to easily link additional windows into existing forms, expand note fields, add additional fields, and create data-entry templates and customize lookups.

The Integration Manager can be used to design re-usable import templates that integrate data from outside programs, and it has been improved in version 10.0 to take advantage of the eConnect code. eConnect code allows the Integration Manager to share information both ways with web-based applications. There is a preconfigured import available in the software that allows for importing of information from ADP directly into the General Ledger. The eConnect Enterprise Application allows for real-time access to Dynamics GP data. It offers a way to add up-to-date back office information to existing front office applications like web storefronts or service applications. eConnect also allows multiple applications to share financial management data. The eConnect interfaces can support a number of independent applications, allowing changes to financial data in Dynamics GP to be simultaneously available to all applications with an eConnect connection to that company in Dynamics GP.

### **Reporting - 5 Stars**

Report Writer is a tool that is included with Dynamics GP. Users can also install the SQL Reporting Services reports, which use the reporting tool for the SQL Server database or use Microsoft Office Excel Reports. Users can create as many report options for a report layout as needed, but Dynamics GP comes with many report layouts and report options already defined for SQL Reporting Services and Microsoft Office Excel. However, if your business needs a report that is not among the predefined reports, numerous options are available that can help. The predefined reports can be modified and stored in the Reports Library for easy access. These reports have been modified based on the requests of customers. In addition to Report Writer or SQL Reporting Services reports, users can use Crystal Reports for Microsoft Dynamics GP to design new reports for Dynamics GP data using the industry standard Seagate Crystal Reports.

### **Support, Training & Help - 5 Stars**

Microsoft Dynamics GP users have multiple means of getting the support and training needed. One of the really helpful features, especially with release 10.0, is the "what's new" document provided with each new release. All product manuals are available in \*.PDF format and are easily accessed and/or printed from the Help menu. Unlimited web-based training is available, which can be a valuable resource for you and your staff for module-specific training. An online knowledgebase quickly and easily addresses common issues. Microsoft also provides contracts for telephone support, and additional support and training is available through VARs. I think the Help, documentation and training tools within Microsoft Dynamics GP are some of the best of all the products reviewed.

### **Overall Assessment**

Microsoft Dynamics GP's latest release made more substantial improvements than any other software I have seen in this year's review. Many of the usability issues that were identified in previous versions were solved with Version 10.0. Microsoft Dynamics GP remains a truly diverse and solid product capable of supporting large numbers of users across a variety of industries with strong reporting, customization and extensibility capabilities.

**2007 Overall Rating: 5 Stars**