Ambition Accounting versus Sage 50 Comparison

Sage 50 is an excellent product for a growing business. It is the UK's most popular accounting software. Sage 50 has certain limitations, and where these are an issue for the client alternatives should be considered. From the Sage product range the next product up is Sage 200. Ambition Accounting is a flexible and scalable product that compares very well against both Sage 50 and Sage 200, providing a single package that can support a wide range of client needs.

When Sage 50 is not enough

There are a number of reasons why Sage 50 may not be good enough for a particular client. These include:

Limited Analysis Sage 50 offers limited levels of analysis within the product itself. Examples of the limitations include: weak departmental support; Chart of Accounts based on a contiguous ranges of accounts; limited product analysis.

Limited Features Sage 50 is a general purpose small business accounting system. As such the package offers good generic support for the basic accounting functions, but it is not intended to offer more than this.

Limited Scalability Sage 50 supports a maximum of 10 simultaneous users (Financial Controller/Accounts Professional only). The proprietary file based database (currently) used may encounter problems with large numbers of transactions and is susceptible to corruption.

If clients are likely to be limited by the Sage 50 product, then Ambition Accounting is a sensible product to consider. We are able to offer Ambition Accounting on the Online50 platform under monthly terms. Prices range from £21 to £67 per user. This monthly cost (with no infrastructure costs) may be very attractive to clients who might otherwise be faced with a Sage 200 installation (software cost likely to be in the region of £10,000 up front, plus 10% annual license fee).

Feature Comparison

Feature	Sage 50	Ambition Accounting	Comment
Database	Proprietary File Based	Microsoft SQL Server	Continuously developed database engine offers support for huge transaction volumes, very high load and hundreds of users
Users	Up to 10 with Financial Controller	Limitless	

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	/ Accounts Professional		
Foreign Currency	Limited support for Foreign Currencies using the 'Foreign Trader' expansion (Accounts Professional only)	Full support for multiple currencies. Including revaluations and a FX Gain / Loss position. Exchange rates for every currency are specified by date range, and 'spot' rates can be entered when used.	Whether clients invoice one customer in a foreign currency or hundreds, you need to be confident that their software is tracking their position accurately.
Dual Currency	No support for dual currency	All transactions are recorded in two currencies.	This is useful if a client has a foreign parent and there is a requirement to produce financial statements in dual currencies, or is a group of separate companies trading in different currencies but wanting a single reporting currency.
Cash Book Accounts	Each cash book account is a separate nominal ledger account. Cash book accounts may be assigned a currency, but the nominal ledger account is still held in the base currency.	Cash book accounts consolidate to a nominal ledger account, and multiple cash book accounts may be assigned to a single nominal ledger account.	
Custom Changes	The Sage 50 product cannot be amended. Third party programs can be developed to read and write to the data files, but these are accessed separately from the Sage 50 menu system.	The product can be amended so that only the fields and functions that are being used by the client are shown. New features can be implemented by third parties and integrated into the Ambition Accounting menu structure.	
Accounting Periods	Fixed at 12 accounting periods per year, which must be calendar months.	Support for variable numbers of accounting periods (short / long years). Accounting periods can	With Ambition Accounting, a financial year can have up to 19 periods and there is no need to close down a period, or a year before trading in the next.

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		end on any date and do not need to be the same length.	
Closing Periods	Periods do not need to be closed. Transactions are added to periods based on the transaction date.	Periods are closed, but do not need to be closed before moving into the next period. Once closed only journals may be used to adjust the period balances.	
Departmental Analysis	Up to 999 codes may be specified. The user may specify a department number (0-999) when entering transactions. No validation of department numbers.	Department codes may be set up. All transactions may be coded against a department code. (A system option can enforce the use of a department code). Only valid department codes may be used.	
Cost Centres	No support for cost centres	Cost Centre codes may be set up. All transactions may be coded against a cost centre. (A system option can enforce the use of a cost centre code). Only valid cost centre codes may be used.	
Site Analysis	No support for multi-site analysis	Multiple sites may be specified and a site recorded against each transaction. (This is not the same as stock locations). This allows analysis by location.	If a client has premises at more than one location, reports can be produced by location.
Depot Analysis	No support for depot analysis	Multiple Depots may be defined and recorded against each transaction. In addition, each depot acts as a stock location.	

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Project Accounting	Support for Projects with subprojects. Projects may be assigned to a customer. Bank, Sales Ledger and Purchase Ledger transactions may be assigned to a project. Stock may be issued to a project. Time sheets may be recorded against a project (but these do not transfer to the Nominal Ledger)	Support for Projects with Activities. All transactions, including journals, may be assigned to an activity. (See also the Job Management system below)	
Job Management	No Support for Job Management	Job management is fully supported within Ambition Accounting. Jobs may be raised for customers and billing from the job is supported. The job system is integrated with stock, purchasing and the nominal ledger which means that purchase orders can be generated directly from the job and WIP accruals are automated. Timesheets may be posted against Jobs and the nominal ledger is fully updated.	Because the WIP position is maintained by the Job Management system, accurate management information can be obtained using the Ambition Accounting Job Management system.
Ledger Journals	Journals may only be applied to Nominal Ledger accounts	Journals may be applied to Nominal, Sales and Purchase Ledgers.	
Auto Reversing Journals	No support for auto reversing journals	Any Journal may be set to 'Auto Reverse' on a specified date.	

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Spread Journals	No support for spread journals - although separate lists of prepayments and accruals may be entered.	Spread Journals may be defined to allow spread posting of amounts over any number of intervals, where the interval may be day, week, month or year.	
Nominal Cost Splits	No support for cost splits	Cost splits my be specified to apportion a transaction between multiple cost centres, departments etc.	This is useful for apportioning overheads.
Customer Statements	All Sales Ledger accounts have a single invoice address that is also used for the statements.	Sales Ledger accounts can have different invoice and statement addresses. Invoices can also be sent to the delivery address	
Sales Documents	A range of sales document layouts can be specified. The user is responsible for selecting the appropriate sales document to use at the point where a document is printed.	Each customer record can be set to use a specific stationery layout. This extends to the use of the customer's own product codes on their documentation. This allows a single company to use different identities for different sales channels with the confidence that the correct paperwork is going to go to the relevant customer.	Where a customer needs to see a consistent view of the client - for example different logos - then this feature ensures that a consistent view is given. This also allows the company to show consistent details on the customer's documents. For example, if a customer is not being granted settlement discounts then the client should not send them stationery showing a settlement discount of 0% - as they may ask for settlement discount.
Price Lists	A number of price lists can be specified. Each customer may be assigned to a single price list.	Ambition Accounting allows up to 99 price bands to be set and each price band can include multiple currencies, quantity breaks and case sizes. Each customer may be assigned to a single price band plus	Where clients specify a sale price in different currencies (for example they publish a price in Sterling, Euros and US Dollars) the Ambition Accounting system will allow these prices to be recorded in the standard price lists.

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		a percentage discount. This discount can in itself be positive or negative (a price uplift). In addition, sets or groups of products can be given price bands and/or discounts different to the default price settings.	
Quantity Pricing	No support for quantity pricing	Each stock item may specify quantity price breaks by price band.	
Exception Pricing	No support for exception pricing	Exception pricing may be setup as required	
Contract Pricing	No support for contract pricing	Contracts with pricing may be setup within the system. This allows call off orders.	
Telesales support	No specific telesales support	Telesales system built into the product allowing for: Order entry, product alternatives, recent customer products and history, card payments, quotations and hire agreements.	
EPOS support	No EPOS support	EPOS system built into the product allowing for support of EPOS devices (lollipop displays, bar code readers, card readers, cash drawers etc.)	
Bill of Materials	Each product may be specified as being made from a number of	This is supported using Composites (see below) or through the Bills of	

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(Kitting)	component products. The system will identify whether or not sufficient stock exists to create assembled components.	Materials.	
Bill of Materials (assembly)	No support for assembly	Assembly costs can be built into the Bill of Materials for a particular product. Setup costs for a manufacturing process may also be specified.	
Product Building	Stock can be 'transferred' from components into a finished item according to the components specified in the BOM.	Works Orders can be created based on finished item requirements or the availability of components stock.	
Product Breakdown	No support for product breakdown.	A finished item may be broken down into components	
Composite Orders	No support for Composite orders	Support for specifying a 'composite order' where a single stock code is used to order a set of products at a special price. The individual stock items are picked, but only the composite item is billed for.	
Product Manufacture	No support for manufacture	Progress of manufacture can be tracked, with support for posting to WIP. Policies may be chosen to write off the stock, labour and direct expense costs as incurred.	
Works	No support for Works Orders	Works order may be used to	

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Orders		monitor the progress of assembly or manufacture. This allows a number of tasks to be defined, each with specific instructions and supporting documentation.	
Stock Analysis	Product codes may be assigned a product category code and a nominal department code. Three user specified product analysis codes may also be specified. No other analysis codes are supported.	Different stock types may be specified - for example standard stock, refurbished stock and consignment stock. Products may be analysed by product type, product group, manufacturer and by catalogue entry and options.	
Stock Locations	A single location may be entered for a product code.	Stock may be stored by bins and depots. The quantity of stock in a location is known by the system.	
Product Catalogue	Support for recording a product description and image for use in a catalogue.	Support for building a multi-section hierarchical catalogue with a number of specified products available in each entry of the catalogue. Each product is distinguished by 'options' and that combination of options must be unique.	The catalogue entries may be used, for example, where there are multiple colours or sizes for a particular product. Each combination is defined as a separate product with a unique combination of options, but share a single entry in the product catalogue.
Product Traceability	No support for product traceability	Products may be tracked using serial and batch numbers. Perishable items may have expiry dates. Input components may be traced through to finished products irrespective of the number of levels	

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		of manufacture.	
Customer Product Codes	No support for customer product codes	Each product may have codes assigned by customers.	If customers order products based on their own stock codes, this feature allows the system to track which products these codes relate to for each customer.
Product Supply	The system holds a single supplier for a product item, together with a part number for that supplier.	Multiple suppliers can be specified for each product item, each with their own lead time and product code. Purchase prices can be based on different case sizes.	
Stock Take	The user can report how many items were in stock on a particular day (but not at what time).	Stock taking support with the ability to snapshot the stock at a particular point in time, record a stock count and adjust it back using known stock movements to derive quantity in stock at the time of the snapshot.	
Loan Stock	No support	Support for loan stock	
Hire Stock	No support	Support for hire stock	
Case Sizes	Each product code has specified a unit of sale. This is also the unit by which the product is bought and stocked.	Support for multiple case sizes. Different products may be available in a different set of case sizes. Products may be bought, stocked and sold in different case sizes. The system allows fractions of a case to be treated either as a standard fraction, or as a number of units. Case sizes may be specified	Support for fractions of cases as whole units is important when items are not divisible, but when they are not packed in powers of 10 (10, 100 etc.). In this case, taking 2 bottles of wine out of a case of 12 would leave you with 10 bottles of wine. It is more convenient to present this as 0.10 of a case, rather than 0.83333 of a case.

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		in the price list.	
Landed Costs	No support for landed costs	Support for landed costs	
Back To Back orders	Purchase orders may be generated against sales orders with a stock shortfall.	Purchase orders can be generated from a sales order with the order specifying direct delivery to the customer or deliver to stores.	
Supplier Payments	Individual supplier payments may be entered.	Individual supplier payments may be entered. The system can generate a proposed supplier payment run.	
Goods Received Not Invoiced	No support for GRNI	When items are received on a purchase order, the system automatically posts the value of the items as a 'Goods Received Not Invoiced' posting.	
Order Charges	Carriage may be recorded for Sales and Purchase Orders.	An unlimited number of charges may be applied to both Sales and Purchase Orders.	
Budgets	Budgets may be entered against individual nominal accounts, or by chart of accounts section. Once set budgets can be changed but changes are not recorded.	Budgets can be recorded for individual nominal account, department and cost centre combinations. Budget baselines may be set to track budget revisions.	