



## What is Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)?

EDI, or Electronic Data Interchange is a system for inter-company communication of data in a standard format for effecting various business transactions. EDI replaces the faxing and mailing of paper documents. EDI consists of a set of standards for structuring the data that is to be electronically exchanged between and within businesses, organizations, government entities, and other groups. The standards describe structures that emulate documents, purchase orders and invoices, for example.

EDI documents use specific computer record formats that are based on widely accepted standards. However, each company may use the flexibility allowed by the standards in a unique way that fits their business needs. The term EDI is commonly used to refer to the software, operations, and processes involved in creating, transmitting, and receiving EDI documents. EDI is used in a variety of industries. In fact over 80,000 companies have made the switch to EDI to improve their efficiencies. Many of these companies require all of their partners to also use EDI.

The EDI technology developments of the past two decades have made it possible to conduct business in ways that couldn't have been imagined prior to the 1980's. The internet had the greatest impact and made it possible for any sized company to do business anywhere in the world. With all the technology options available, there is no reason why any company, large or small, can't use EDI technology in their business. In fact, it's mandatory if a business is going to survive.

## Sage MAS Roadmap

In October, Sage made several significant announcements regarding their roadmap for Sage MAS, that we want to share with you regarding retiring older versions of Sage MAS and Sage's plans for FRx.

### Retirement of older Sage MAS versions

Over the next two years, Sage will scale back the number of supported Sage MAS versions. Sage MAS 90 and 200 will move to a 3 version support policy by the end of 2011, with version 3.71 support ending on September 30, 2010. Sage MAS 500 will move to a 2 version support policy, with versions 6.3 and 7.0 support ending on September 30, 2010. The key benefit of this approach will allow Sage to focus on upgrading customers to the most current releases while aligning their development and support resources to solving pain points for the majority. At the point of product retirement, tax updates, product fixes, and telephone support by Sage will end.

### Product Updates

Sage will be moving to product updates instead of service updates for Sage MAS 90 and 200, or monthly updates for Sage MAS 500. Product updates will be scheduled every four to six months and are primarily intended to provide ongoing value to maintenance customers between major releases. In addition to bug fixes, product updates will also include enhancements such as new features and usability improvements.

### Financial Reporting and FRx Replacement

Although Sage is committed to ensuring compatibility with FRx Desktop, Microsoft has announced an end of support date of December 31, 2012. As a result, Sage will provide an alternative solution for Financial Reporting within the Sage MAS products. Sage is building an Excel-based financial reporting tool based on the existing Sage Financial Reporter module within Sage Accpac. Sage Financial Reporter will be made compatible with Sage MAS and will provide basic financial reporting capabilities free of charge to all Sage MAS customers. Additionally, Sage is also establishing an OEM relationship with a business intelligence (BI) vendor that offers advanced financial reporting, operational reporting, and advanced OLAP analysis capabilities. Sage MAS customers will be provided with one free user license for this product with the option of purchasing additional licenses.

These two solutions will provide robust financial reporting out of the box and will complement the already very strong tools in Sage MAS, including Business Insights Explorer and Dashboard. The release timing of these two financial reporting solutions will be aligned to a future release of Sage MAS, which has not yet been determined.

As a reminder, FRx Forecaster has been discontinued by Microsoft and is no longer available for sale. It will continue to be supported directly by Microsoft through September 30, 2010. **Contact us to discuss your replacement options.**

## Gold-Standard Service

### for Hawkins & Associates

Hawkins & Associates distributes equipment used by industrial and municipal water treatment facilities. The company currently sells ten equipment lines that all integrate with one another, serving resellers in Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee. Customer service has always been Hawkins' hallmark. However, Hawkins & Associates had major software headaches. The water treatment equipment business was

thriving, but their Navision accounting package couldn't give them the reports they needed, and licensing to stay current on the system was getting much too expensive. So when H. A. (Buddy) Hawkins, president of Hawkins & Associates, wasn't getting the service he wanted on his business software—and therefore couldn't pass along premium service to his own customers—he took action.

"I spent at least a year looking at every financial system on the market," he explains. "Emerald TC stood out head and shoulders above everyone else, both by having a superior product in Sage MAS 200, and for knowing how to implement it to meet our exact needs. Several Emerald TC IT experts came out on the initial sales call. They took careful notes as they listened to our needs," Buddy continues. "With one of them being a CPA, they were able to match Sage MAS 200 benefits directly with our pain points. Specifically, Emerald TC showed us how the software would improve our inventory management, pinpoint reorder points, track order quantities, and provide a complete sales history. When it came time for designing our new system, Emerald TC was able to go back to the notes and save us a lot of time."

Getting the new Sage MAS 200 system up and running proved to be much faster and easier than Hawkins had ever dreamed. "Emerald brought us live a good three to four months earlier than we'd anticipated," he says. "This was in spite of custom reports that had to be written. Whatever we needed, Emerald TC was able to find an answer, whether that meant asking Sage for a work-around or creating a report. Plus, they trained us on a very short cycle. Another great thing was the fact that Emerald TC seemed to read my people's minds. They understood who was computer literate, and who was less proficient. Then they designed training accordingly, and had us practice before the system even went live. By the time we were operational, we were already trained. Emerald TC also wrote custom reports for us during training. This was something like changing lanes on a track while you're in the middle of a race. Plus we received a lot of attention from Emerald's Director of Sales, Cherry. All of these special touches made us feel like kings. For a small company to get personalized service like this is really remarkable."

## Emerald TC Achieves Presidents Circle Again

Late last month Sage announced that Emerald TC has been named to the Sage America President's Circle for fiscal year 2009 (October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009). President's Circle award winners are the top performing business partners for Sage Business Solutions (SBS) division products.

The Sage North America President's Circle is awarded to the leading sales producers among SBS business partners representing a host of segment-leading brands, including Sage Accpac ERP, Sage Timberline, Sage MAS 90 ERP, Sage SalesLogix, Sage Abra HRMS (human resource management system), Sage FAS Fixed Assets and others.

"It is a great testament to the hard work and focus on our mutual customers that Emerald TC has succeeded in becoming a Sage North America President's Circle Award winner," said Jodi Uecker-Rust, president Sage Business Solutions division. "We applaud the efforts of the entire team at Emerald TC and wish them continued success in the years to come."

"On behalf of the three Emerald TC Partners, it's an honor to be recognized for our sales accomplishments once again," stated Cherry Williamson, Partner with Emerald TC. "But it's our relentless focus on helping our clients transform their processes to increase productivity, growth and profitability that truly motivates us."

## Ready-Set-Go: 2010 IT Projects Take Off

With good economic news starting to find its way around the Internet, it's no surprise that a recent article posted on ComputerWorld.com suggested that, "The ideal time for recovery planning is during the August-December period, when the 2010 budget is being planned and new IT projects could be incorporated into it. Now is the time for companies to determine how existing, stalled or new IT projects will be prioritized, sequenced, funded and staffed when business growth returns." Additionally, many companies who upgraded or installed new systems in 1999 as a result of Y2K and have held off on upgrades or new IT projects due to the recent economy are now at a breaking point.

As a result, it is estimated that 2010 will see a huge increase in new IT projects. If you are one of the companies planning for an upgrade or a totally new system, now is the time to involve Emerald TC. We can help you prioritize, provide budget numbers, and help determine what type of staffing will be needed for your upgrade or new installation. Also, because of the anticipated demand for our assistance over the next 12-18 months, we strongly encourage you to contact us now so we can add your project to our schedule.