In addition, 42% of respondents said they accidentally use the wrong information at least once a week, and 53% said that less than half of the information they receive is valuable.

In addition, 45% of respondents said gathering information about what other parts of their company are doing is a big challenge, whereas only 31% said that competitor information is hard to get.

To get information about competitors, customers, project responsibility or another department, respondents said they have to go to three different information sources, on average. In addition, 40% said that other parts of the company aren't willing to share information.

"The findings show that companies are failing to get the right information to their employees," said Royce Bell, CEO of Accenture Information Management Services (AIMS). "People and organizations cannot keep up with the volume of information produced by technological innovation. Managers in particular are having great difficulty navigating a rapidly expanding sea of information, and the situation is only getting worse."

Part of the difficulty lies in the way managers are gathering and storing information. For example, the majority of managers in the survey said they store their most valuable information on their computer or individual e-mail accounts, with only 16% using a collaborative workplace such as a company's intranet portal.

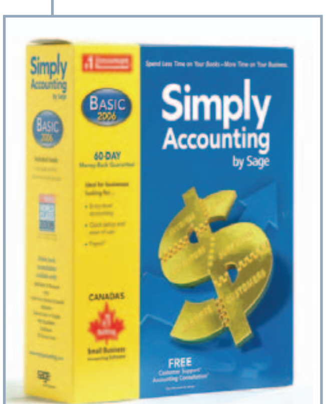
For more information visit www.accenture.com.

HIGH TECH

Simply Accounting updated

By Karine Benzacar, CMA

Simply Accounting, by Sage Software, is one of the most popular accounting packages for small businesses. Each year, the company updates its system, and this process is driven by customer feedback and focus groups of new and current users. Various improvements have been introduced this year.



An ability to make reversing journal entries by clicking on a toolbar button is one significant enhancement. In previous years, users couldn't reverse a journal entry as easily as they could on other accounting packages. Instead, they had to either reverse the entry manually or open the original entry and delete all the information on it.

A more user-friendly report interface now provides a preview of each report so that users don't need to generate the report just to see its format. This feature is particularly useful to non-accountants.

There are now automated backups as well. This is extremely important given that the most valuable data of a small business is often its accounting records.

In addition, there is a customized tab order for input screens to allow each user the ability to enter data in the order in which they prefer; and the ability to print two-stub pay cheques (one for the employer and one for the employee).

The company still has some work to do to perfect its software. For instance:

- The software can't easily look up an invoice associated to a particular cheque.
- Invoices can only be e-mailed to one recipient. It's often useful to copy more than one person, such as the customer and their administrative assistant, on an invoice. The workaround for this is to save the invoice as a file and attach it to a regular e-mail.
- It isn't easy to produce an income statement in a traditional format in which the user can see income before taxes. Taxes are included as an expense and the program calculates the net income after tax, without the usual subtotal.
- Users must manually reverse year-end reversing journal entries, such as accruals, in the following year. There is no way to tag a journal entry and have it reverse automatically in a subsequent period or when the associated transaction occurs. In addition, when a change of accounting period occurs, it isn't possible to use the toolbar button to reverse an entry.
- Invoices and purchase transactions can't be saved temporarily in a "draft" mode. Users must either complete the transaction, redo their transaction entirely, or process an incomplete transaction, then adjust it later.
- When viewing or printing an invoice, it isn't easy to see whether or not the invoice has been paid. Instead, users must go to a different area of the system, view the customer payments, and determine manually the invoice payment status. This is particularly cumbersome when a customer asks for a copy of a paid invoice.

These improvements are minor compared with the benefits the software brings to small business owners.

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