



ACCOUNTING

Omni Accounts

PRICE £8.47 (£9.95 inc VAT) for Essential Bundle, or free download

INTERNET www.omniaccounts.com

AVAILABILITY Now

VERDICT A unique way of delivering just the accounting functionality required, with plenty of customisation for the power user.

You can count the mainstream low-end UK accounting packages on one hand these days, so any new kid on the block's going to need some unique selling points to succeed. However, thanks to a novel method of delivery, it looks like the latest newcomer – Omni – might stand a fighting chance.

It isn't often that something truly different comes along in the dusty realms of accounting software, but Omni Accounts has done just that. All-in-one solutions are the usual tradition in SMEs, and integrated packages like Sage Instant and Line 50 (see *Reviews*, issue 99, p163) can be found in thousands of businesses up and down the country. If you want more functionality, however, you often end up throwing away what you have and buying the next version up.

As an example, many typical Sage users find £100 worth of Instant Accounting ideal until they want to add sales order processing and support for three users. The next step is an upgrade to Financial Controller Network at ten times the price. This isn't a criticism of Sage – it's traditionally the way the market works and some features cost lots more money. But what if you could do things differently?

Omni reckons you should be able to buy a basic accounting system at a virtually 'giveaway' price (it's free to download) and then 'switch on' the elements and components you need as your

business grows. This doesn't mean you add a ledger or major feature set as you would with some multimodule mid-range suites either. With Omni, you can add small elements like customer discounting, representative analysis and supplier categories. Perhaps you could even add remittance advices, demand letters, recurring journals, serial number tracking, email facilities – in fact, there are more than 100 features you can choose or ignore as you wish.

Amazingly, most of these features cost as little as a one-off £2.50, with no upgrade or annual fees. Add to that the ability to customise screens to only show what you want, and an upgrade path that can take you to an all-singing,

all-dancing, multimodule, multicompany, multi-user accounting suite, and it's an impressive setup for less than £250.

Omni comes with all this functionality built in – you just buy the code to switch on the bits you need. You can even try out new features for 14 days free of charge, to see if they do what you require first. The basic free download bundle (or £8.47 for a CD

version) is no slouch either. You get a nominal ledger and customer and supplier ledgers with invoicing and banking included. If you want VAT handling, stock control and credit control features from the outset, then you can start off with the Trader bundle for £30 – hardly cost prohibitive.

Although you can opt for various entry points up the ladder, the ability to add just the bits you need for small change is revolutionary. It's been done before by Access Accounting higher up the tree, but not down to this level of features. With Omni, for example, you can just add stock volume discounts, forgetting about all the other clever stock features like warehousing, multilocation or batch number processing.

In everyday use, the package is simple to operate. Instead of dozens of different entry type screens for different areas, Omni features a basic transaction entry form that's pretty much the same for most ledgers. So the bank entry form, for example, handles direct payments, receipts, supplier payment and customer receipts from the same dialog box – you just choose the method of allocation from a drop-down list.

Things can get busy once you have a full set of features on the go, but Omni helps here as well. You can customise the screens to show just the information you want to see. If you're familiar with Microsoft Outlook, the concept of a side bar with user-definable shortcuts combined with custom screen views might sound familiar. As with Outlook, you're able to drag columns to the header of a screen to make a grouped display. Taking the customers list as an example, you could group customers by category and show columns for credit limit, balance, last invoice and last payment. Plus, it's possible to sort on any column by clicking the header button.

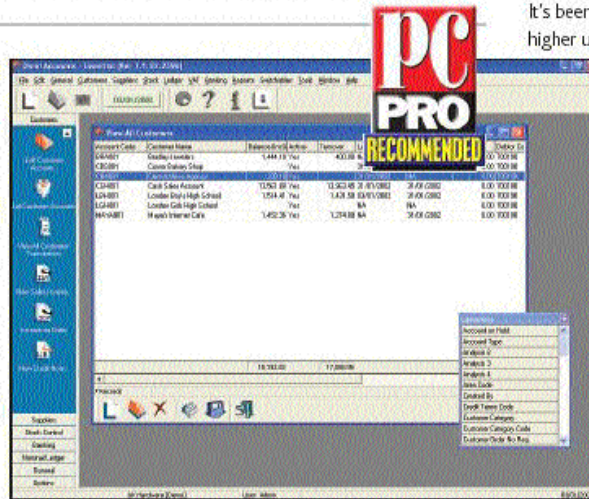
With its combination of a low price, switchable features and a customisable interface, Omni Accounts deserves to gain a foothold in this difficult market. The product has already proved itself overseas, although a little more work on EU VAT handling would better suit the UK version. All in all, Omni is a valiant effort and definitely one to look out for.

TIM WOODWARD

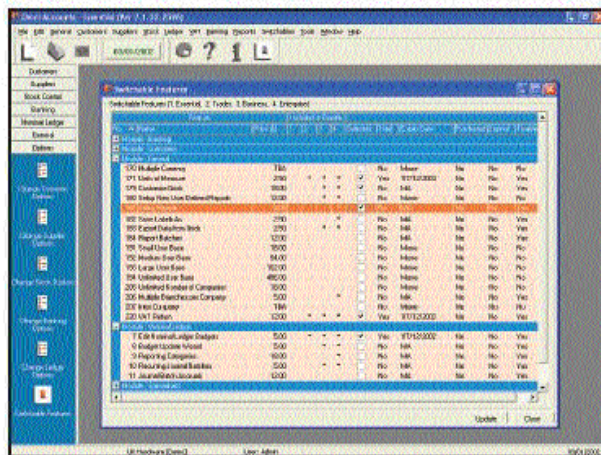
PC PRO RATINGS

EASE OF USE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II/266, 64MB of RAM, 100MB of hard disk space, Windows 98 SE, ME, NT 4, 2000 or XP.



Similar to Microsoft Outlook, Omni Accounts combines a taskbar of shortcuts with a choice of display fields.



Choose from over 100 switchable features, most of which have a free 14-day trial, to see how they benefit your business.