

PREROGATIVE



GREENTREE - PURCHASE INVOICE ENTRY & GL ANALYSIS Lab Test by David Carter

Company: Greentree
Product: Greentree Business Software
Version: 3.1
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The company

Greentree Business Software is written by the company of the same name. Founded in 1983, Greentree is a small, privately-owned software developer based in Australia and New Zealand, where it employs some 100 staff.

Greentree has been a major vendor for over 30 years in its home territory. The original package provided 28 modules covering Order Processing, Accounting, Stock, Bill of Materials, Payroll, and multicurrency. It was multi-platform and could run under Novell, NT, Unix, SCO or AIX, the largest systems handling up to 5 million transactions per annum.

In 1997 Greentree decided to develop a completely new version that would be Windows-based and Year 2000 compliant. The first release took place in 1998, with basic ledgers. Now there are some 58 modules. The software is, Greentree says, naturally multi-currency since in the Asian Pacific area it is standard practice to operate in US dollars

To summarise, then, although this review is concerned with Financials, Greentree provides not just specialist financial software, but a full range of business software for both back and front office. And it has plenty of experience writing larger systems that are minicomputer-based, as well as departmental systems that are PC-based.

Target market

Greentree targets its software at English-speaking users across the world. Its website (www.Greentree.com) lists representatives in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, North America, UK and Ireland. Greentree does not sell its software direct but through a network of resellers. The website lists around 30 resellers in Australasia, with one apiece in North America, UK, Ireland and Fiji.

In the UK Greentree's reseller is Prerogative, based in Leicester. Prerogative offers full support for a Greentree implementation, including project management,

implementation consultancy, software development (they hold the source code) and ongoing support. This Lab Test was done in conjunction with Prerogative.

Since taking on Greentree in 2002, Prerogative has installed some 100 systems across the country. It aims at users who are purchasing their second or third accounting system, and want to get something a bit special from a quality package rather than simply to play safe with a well-known brand.

Installations vary from those with the standard financial modules to a number of rapid-entry sales ordering systems. Among current users are Castle Howard stately home, Super Aguri Racing team, Bidwells Property Consultants, Strutt and Parker.

Product and pricing

Greentree runs under Windows and uses the Jade development database.

At the smallest level, a **single user** version of Greentree with the basic set of ledgers will cost around £3,000. At the other end of the scale the **largest** installation currently supports 200 workstations.

A **typical** Greentree installation would be a network of 4 to 20 concurrent users, with costs ranging from £10,000 to £30,000 for a fully installed, ledger based solution.

LAB TEST - DETAILED FINDINGS

1.1.1. System design: Open period accounting - VERY GOOD

- Can define any number of periods - type in your own end dates.
- Can open past periods and enter auditor adjustments. Recalculates balances.
- Runs in multiple periods (eg SL in new month, PL and GL stay in previous).
- Can attach a label to describe a period; eg period 12 = March_07. Good.
- Can operate multiple calendars: eg agricultural rent dates for quarterly rent invoices. Very good.

1.1.2. System design: Transaction types - VERY GOOD

- **Unique reference number** for each transaction. Date stamped with time and operator.
- Sequential series of numbers for each **transaction type**.
- Separate series for **invoices and credit notes**.
- Can attach an **identifying prefix** or suffix to each number, e.g PIN2000111 or 2000111PIN.
- Can define transaction types for individual staff members, and attach their own business rules. For example, Jane handles invoices from third party suppliers, Peter handles invoices for internal expenses.

1.1.3. General ledger codes - EXCELLENT

- Both options available - single multi-segment GL code or separate floating codes
- Maximum 32 possible dimensions within one multi-segment code.
- Can use validation matrices to create new codes; don't have to set up each individually.

A GL code can be attached to a "tree" - ie associated in a fixed relationship with other analysis codes. Entering a value at the lowest "posting" level **automatically**

updates the value of codes at the upper levels (roll-up). For example, in the Financial Reporting tree the Software Income GL account may be attached underneath to the Income group code in the P&L. Greentree displays the tree in a Windows Explorer-like format.

In Greentree ANY analysis code may be attached to a tree and the values automatically rolled up to group level. You can create multiple tree "dependencies" to analyse the same data in multiple ways. This is the foundation of sophisticated management reporting, and is normally only found in specialist and expensive financials packages. Excellent.

1.2.1. Purchase invoice entry: Header - VERY GOOD

- Invoices can be entered manually, or auto-generated from purchase orders.
- Invoices can be held in a register awaiting authorisation.
- Good search facilities in code lookups, eg apply "Contains" to Name, Postcode, any field.
- Three dates. Document Date entered by operator; Posting and Due Dates auto-generated.
- Period number calculated automatically from Posting Date. Good.
- Supplier Ref can be made mandatory; warning if a duplicate reference is entered.
- Invoice header has narrative field. Defaults to company name, but can overwrite. Good.
- Can attach a scanned image of the invoice - prints a bar code label which you can stick on the invoice before scanning.
- Can put invoices on Hold in the register and assign a reason code. Invoices on Hold are visible on the supplier ledger. Good.

Minor queries

- No facility to enter a down payment at time of invoice entry.
- Transaction number not displayed to write on invoice as cross-reference [*Later note*: This option is available and can be switched on in the workflow module control. Check this for yourself.]

For invoice approval and authorisation, Greentree offers a process flow setup screen where you can define what invoices go to whom, how many levels of authorisation are required and so on. It's WYSIWYG, and it looks straightforward enough for a reasonably bright management accountant to set up.

1.2.2. Purchase invoice entry: Detail - EXCELLENT

- Offers individual data entry screen for different type of transaction line, eg one for a GL line, one for Stock, Non-stock, Job Costing, Fixed Asset and Text only. Very Good.
- Each data entry form contains only the fields relating to this transaction type. Very good.
- Can have a mix of different transaction line types within the one invoice.
- Each line is entered via a form which displays field labels; or you can enter directly into the grid.
- Can analyse costs to multiple companies within the one invoice. Very good.
- Can analyse stock costs to the product record.
- Can analyse VAT at line by line level.

- Detail lines once entered are displayed on a grid at the base of the screen.
- User can add/remove columns to be displayed in the grid.
- User can change name of column heading (eg "Line number" to "Ln").
- User can rearrange columns.

Within User Preferences, can **map the Function keys to perform particular tasks**, eg F2 key = Add new line, F4 = Search etc. (like WordPerfect). Makes for very fast mouseless data entry with minimum keystrokes. Speeds up high volume transaction entry. Good. Online help (via F1 key) is **field sensitive**. And you can **add your own notes** to guide the operator through more complex entries. Good.

To summarise, data entry is slick and sophisticated. Different transaction types minimise the number of fields you have to fill in. The F keys allow fast data entry, with a very flexible grid display to confirm the analysis before you commit. Overall excellent.

2.1. Review & GL update - VERY GOOD

- Can update via either method - batch or on-line.
- No need for detailed pre-posting review facilities as errors can be corrected after posting (see next section)

2.2. Error correction - VERY GOOD

- System allows the user to correct faulty transactions. [Needs to have the necessary permissions and exercise caution, eg changing the amount of an allocated invoice, changing an invoice already submitted to customer etc.]
- If a faulty cost centre is detected in GL enquiry, can correct it there and then. Good.

Credit notes and auto-reverse

- Can create a credit note by auto-reversing an incorrect invoice.
- Credit note is given today's period and document date, but no due date. Good
- Credit note is automatically allocated against original invoice. Good.
- Can also create a new invoice from the original invoice, then correct it.

3.2. Nominal journals - VERY GOOD

- When entering a journal, system can auto-create a balancing transaction line.
- When entering a journal, system can auto-create a balancing journal total.
- Good lookup facilities to find GL codes etc.
- Can copy contents of the narrative field from one journal line to another.
- Journals can capture VAT and the VAT goes into the VAT return.
- No facility to auto-reverse journal if debits and credits are the wrong way round.
- Standing transaction journals for recurring items such as direct debits, wages etc; frequency and amounts can be varied; and accruals can be auto-reversed out after month-end.
- Can use re-allocation journal to automatically apportion amounts over multiple cost centres.

Intercompany

- Can post to more than one company within the same journal. Very good. [*Note:* You can also do this directly in Purchase invoice entry.]
- Companies can have different year ends.
- If the additional Quad Accounting module is installed, it is possible to get a global view of one supplier over several companies. Good.

4.1. GL account enquiry - VERY GOOD

- Displays period totals.
- Can also list transactions, either one line per transaction (invoice reference), or by showing each item line within the transaction. Good.
- The GL enquiry screen is not limited to one GL account at a time. This means it is effectively a window into the entire GL transaction database. Excellent.
- Good facilities to add/remove/rearrange columns displayed in the grid (same as in section 1.2.2).

You can apply sophisticated searches and filters, for example to display transactions in descending date order to see **latest first**; to apply filters to find all the records with costs which apply to salesman Steve Simpson; or to quickly export the records into Excel for further analysis.

LAB TEST VERDICT - Greentree, Financial ledgers

Clearly, Greentree is a product of the first rank.

The overall standard of the software is very high, but certain features call for particular praise. Examples are: the use of coding hierarchies ("trees") for reporting; different screen layouts for entering different types of transaction line; the ability to post to several companies within the one transaction; and the GL Enquiry screen being effectively a window onto the entire GL database.

Greentree offers a full range of modules in addition to the accounting ledgers covered in this review. The developer's representative showed me the CRM module which looked extremely good, suggesting that a similar standard prevails across the rest of the range.

Greentree is little known in this country. However, it should be stressed that it has an established track record as a premier supplier in Australia/NZ.

And as I have argued elsewhere, with the private equity industry now targeting software companies, buying from a long-established and well-known UK vendor is no longer quite the safe option it used to be.

UK reseller Prerogative says it is promoting Greentree to more experienced and therefore more discriminating customers. This makes sense. If you are the sort of user who is looking to work with a small supplier of top quality business software, then Greentree can be strongly recommended.

David Carter, June 2007

*For more details about Greentree, see www.greentree.com
in the UK from Prerogative Tel: 0870-752-2971 www.prerogative.co.uk*