

Software Lab Test: Mamut Enterprise - Sales Order Processing

Product: Mamut Enterprise E.5
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Package and vendor background

Mamut Software is a Norwegian company based in Oslo. Founded in 1994, it went public in 2004. Backed by a string of international investors, the company has widened its sales beyond Norway and now sells in six countries: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, United Kingdom and Ireland. Mamut claims to have over 100,000 users in Europe and to have achieved 45 consecutive quarters of organic, double digit growth.

The Mamut package came to the UK in 2004 and immediately won an Accountancy Age award for best entry level package. Mamut compares with Sage Line 50, in that it comes in various versions. Basic CRM and Sales costs only £79, whereas Mamut Enterprise gives you full-scale distribution, financial and project costing functionality. Mamut Enterprise is priced at between £399 and £799 per user. Mamut says that many of its sales are to people who have outgrown Sage Line 50 and want something more than accounts. The company has had success both with stock-based companies who ship products, but also with service companies working with customers on a project basis who want to log their hours spent through timesheets.

Mamut design philosophy

Mamut and Sage represent two completely different philosophies. The roots of Sage lie in accounting, while Mamut has emerged from the world of customer relationship Management (CRM).

Mamut will be quickly understood by anyone who has used a CRM package such as ACT! or Goldmine. At its heart is the Activity transaction. An activity records any event, conversation or message you have had with your customers. Mamut doesn't just handle the traditional transaction types such as invoices, payments, orders and so on. It records activities too, so you are able to record every transaction of whatever type you have ever had with a customer.

One of Mamut's slogans is "everything from the Contact Card". The Contact Card screen shows all the details of a customer (or prospect, or supplier). The top half of the screen shows the fixed details such as telephone number, address etc. The bottom half shows all the customer's transactions. A Mamut user can sit in this one screen all day initiating every type of transaction with the customer - payment, order, quotation, telephone conversation, email, whatever. So Mamut is very much "customer-centric"

I'll be discussing these features in more detail when we do a test on the CRM features of Mamut. But the key point to understand is that while most products can link to CRM modules such as ACT! and Goldmine, Mamut is one of the few vendors to have implemented these CRM-type features throughout the whole package.

DETAILED LAB TEST RESULTS

Each front office Lab Test covers one of four key areas - sales order processing, stock management, CRM and quotations, and sales reporting. In this sales order pProcessing LabTest, we examined how well Mamut handled the various stages of a sales order - from order entry, through order release, pick, despatch, and finally the sales invoice. Test results are summarised below.

1.1. Sales Order Entry: Header Details - VERY GOOD

- Good string search facility to find customer account by part of name or details
- Click onto Contact status screen to see summary of customer's current debt, etc., then on to Invoice lines button to see individual items previously purchased, selling price etc. Easy to sort invoice lines by clicking onto column heading . Very good.
- Can select different delivery address
- Can select which contact you want from a list of contacts. Good.
- Customer order reference field can be up to 60 characters for MOD order numbers and other complex requirements.
- Can choose a currency, based on Mamut's experience operating in six countries.

1.2. Sales Order entry: Line Details - VERY GOOD

- Excellent string search to find product by part of description.
- Can call up Product List on screen and sort list by clicking on any column heading. Can add stock situation window at bottom of list to show OnOrd / Alloc status of highlighted item. Excellent.
- As you enter an item, bottom left shows Sales value and gross profit earned. Nice.
- Easy to amend columns in the order screen. For example, to remove Total VAT field, selected User Settings, which brings up a list of available fields. Untick the Total VAT column to remove it. Very good.
- However, you cannot move columns - only show or not show.
- Could not directly drill down onto the OnOrd Qty to see expected delivery date of OnOrd quantity. Instead go into Warehouse-Logistics to listed purchase orders, which was pretty quick and OK.
- No pop-up message facility for cross-selling.
- Order acknowledgement can be printed or emailed to multiple contacts. Good.
- The Format editor for designing acknowledgements, delivery forms etc is complicated.
- Order enquiry list shows order headers only. This needs to show a list of order lines as well since these contain the product ordered.
- You can enter an order by copying a previous order and amending it.
- Prices can be automatically recalculated via the Regenerate order line option. Good.
- Overall, sales order entry was quick and intuitive. It would be easy to find past prices, likely delivery dates etc while talking to the customer over the phone. Good

2.1. Order release to despatch - VERY GOOD

- Set-up options let you choose your the procedure - for example downdate stock at picking time or delivery.
- Warehouse-Outstanding Orders screen has two windows: the top one lists orders due for despatch, the bottom shows lines of the order highlighted above. Very good.
- Warehouse-Stock screen lists all items and quantities in stock, allocated and on order. Products can be sorted into any order by clicking column headings or filtered by product group. Great!
- Once the Print Picklist command is ticked, the stock is downdated. You can decide to downdate at Pick time or Deliver time via the module Settings.

3.1. Invoicing - VERY GOOD

- To invoice, you go into the Invoicing tab at the top of the Contact Card, then filter on "Ready for Invoicing". Mamut displays two boxes: the left Ready for Invoicing box contains all the delivered orders. You select the ones you want to appear which appear in the right Included box. Neat.
- Now print preview all the invoices as TEST, without any invoice numbers. Print off the whole lot, check them for prices etc. If you find any errors, go into the draft invoices and change them. When you are satisfied, rerun the batch for real. This time Mamut assigns invoice numbers and updates to the Sales and Nominal Ledgers. Very nice!
- One note of caution: after the invoice has been created, the status of the order is changed from "Order" to "Invoice". This is fine when one order results in one invoice. But if the order has only been part-delivered Mamut will now generate a new order number holding the balance of undelivered items. It cross-relates this in a hierarchy to the original order. In other words, partly delivered orders get split over multiple order records. If you have lots of part orders, this may become messy.

LAB TEST VERDICT

Generally speaking, the sales order processes in Mamut Enterprise were clean, quick and intuitive from original order entry right through to final invoicing. This is top quality software at a very modest price. It would be interesting to compare Mamut with some much more expensive packages. My guess is it that Mamut might be missing the more specialised features, but otherwise it would compare remarkably well.

Mamut's concept of integrating CRM, stock and accounting together in one package is clearly right and puts it ahead of most packages on the market. In particular, it should be considered by any small business which is currently using an accounts package together with ACT! or Goldmine. Running separate systems means the left hand often doesn't know what the right is doing. With Mamut they can now integrate the two systems and get one comprehensive view of the customer.

David Carter, June 2006