Has Your Business Outgrown Peachtree?

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Just as athletes need new and better equipment as they progress to new levels of competition, businesses need solutions that can keep pace with changing needs. As your company grows, you face new challenges for managing inventory, customers, employees, and cash flow.

As an accounting package designed for smaller businesses, Peachtree offers a limited set of features and basic database functionality that ensure ease of use and a modest price. The drawback is that as your company grows, it will eventually outgrow the database limits and feature set offered by Peachtree.

This article offers information for helping you determine if you are outgrowing Peachtree, practical advice for getting the most out of the product before you upgrade, and a solutions option that can meet the needs of your business and your budget.

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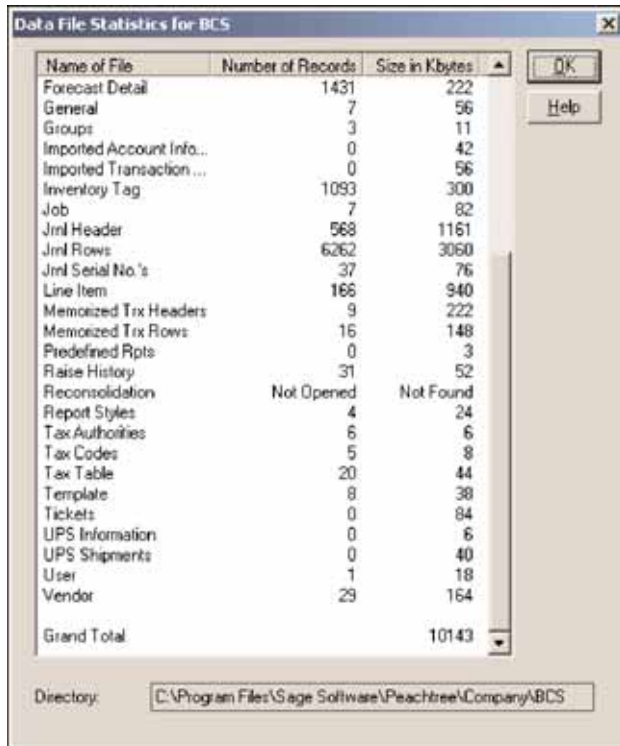
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Three signs that your business needs a more robust accounting solution

1. Are you experiencing performance problems?

One of the signs that you're outgrowing Peachtree is performance delay; for example, you may notice that it's taking too long to navigate across different menus and screens or print reports.

The underlying problem is usually that your transaction volumes have increased and are straining the capacity of the Peachtree database. To check your database size and number of records, select **Help>Customer Support and Service>File Statistics** from the Peachtree main menu. The Data file screen that displays is shown below:

The screen here shows that the sample company database file is 10.1 MB in size. While there are no formal guidelines, a general rule of thumb is that Peachtree data files of 10 MB to 150 MB are normal and should not pose any performance problems. When Peachtree data files reach sizes of 150 MB to 300 MB, users can expect increasing problems with performance.

While the size of a transaction in Peachtree depends widely on the type of transaction and number of lines used, a simple three-line recurring invoice in Peachtree increases the Peachtree database size by approximately .6k. This means that a company that processes 50, 100, 500, or 1,000 transactions per day might grow their databases by 7 MB, 15 MB, 75 MB, and 150 MB in a given year. After a few years, the Peachtree data files can swell up to unacceptable levels for growing organizations. When data files reach greater than 300 MB in size, it's usually an indication that your company should consider replacing Peachtree.

2. Do you need access for more concurrent users?

Another indication that you've outgrown Peachtree is that you need more than five users to access the accounting system at the same time.

The President, CFO, and bookkeepers obviously need to access the accounting system each day. However, accounting systems have evolved from basic trial balance and financial reporting solutions into sophisticated information systems. As your company grows, you may want to grant accounting system access to employees who need that information to perform their jobs effectively: the purchasing clerk, sales manager, payroll clerk, order entry clerks, warehouse workers who are receiving inventory and packing shipments, and so forth. Because Peachtree offers access for only five concurrent users, growing companies are not able to extend that information to key workers across the organization.

3. Do the features offered by Peachtree meet the needs of your company?

You might be outgrowing Peachtree when you find that it can't support increasing complexity in your company's operations. As an entry-level solution for small businesses, Peachtree does not offer the range of financial, supply chain, and even HR functionality typically offered by mid-range accounting systems. Rather than bolt together a system of disparate applications, you can move to an integrated solution that meets more complex needs without forcing you to spend undue time managing IT requirements.

Optimizing Peachtree performance for the short term

If you have determined that your business does need a new accounting system, you can take some steps to improve the performance of Peachtree until you select and implement a new solution. The following suggestions range from routine tasks for enhancing performance, to significant changes in hardware and system configuration.

1. Defragment the computer hard drive.

2. Purge the Peachtree Data files using the built-in Peachtree Purge Wizard (Before you purge files, save a copy of your Peachtree data to a hard drive so you can access it later if necessary).

*3. Turn off selected Peachtree options in the Maintain Global Options dialog box, such as **Check Spelling as You Type**, or change the setting from "Slow but accurate" to "Fast but less accurate." You can also change the settings under the **Improve Performance** tab to turn off automatic field completion, drop down lists, page lengths, and so forth, to improve performance speed.*

4. Purchase a faster computer with a faster hard drive.

5. Add more RAM to your computer, or replace the RAM with faster RAM.

6. Install faster cards, hubs, and cables on your local area network.

7. Instead of running Peachtree on a peer-to-peer network and employee workstation computers, install Peachtree on a top-class file server.

Replacing Peachtree

Once you've determined that your business needs a new accounting system, a full evaluation and selection process is warranted. You can view a 25-step selection process by visiting http://www.asaresearch.com/articles/blueprint25.htm.

While there are many viable upgrade solutions available to Peachtree users, Microsoft Dynamics™ (formerly know as Microsoft® Business Solutions) offers solutions that provide a logical migration path with regard to features, power, pricing, migration, and longevity.

• Microsoft Dynamics solutions offer robust database and data management capabilities that can help ensure user navigation will not slow down as your company's volume of transactions increase.

• Microsoft Dynamics solutions support increasing numbers of concurrent users with access to relevant information and tasks. You can assign role-based access to the number of users you need now and easily add users or tailor access rights as your business requirements change.

• Microsoft Dynamics solutions provide rich functionality for financials, supply chain management, and customer relationship management, along with one-time data entry and real-time access to integrated information from across all areas of your business. Solutions are designed to grow with your business – you can start with basic functionality and upgrade without having to implement and learn a new solution. An industry leader, Microsoft Dynamics solutions are used by companies of all sizes and types.

You can learn more about Microsoft Dynamics solutions by visiting these Web sites:

• Microsoft and Sage Software: How Business Solutions Stack Up www.microsoft.com/dynamics/product/compare/sage.mspx

• J. Carlton Collins, analysis of Microsoft Great Plains (now part of Microsoft Dynamics) versus MAS90/200 www.asaresearch.com/gp-mas90.pdf

• Microsoft Web site for Microsoft Dynamics www.microsoft.com/dynamics/

J. Carlton Collins, CPA is a nationally recognized author, lecturer, and analyst in the accounting systems industry. He has installed more than 200 accounting systems, and delivered 1,800 lectures around the world on the subject of accounting systems and technology. Mr. Collins has published extensive accounting system reviews which can be seen at http://www.asaresearch.com.

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