

# SMB Finance and Accounting Systems Buyer's Guide

Focus Research  
Finance Group  
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# Introduction

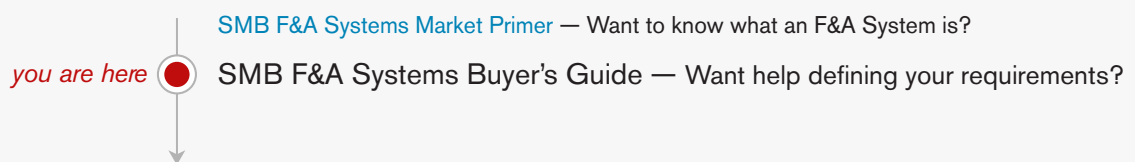
Are you hunting for the Finance and Accounting (F&A) System that best suits your business needs? If the answer is yes, you may have discovered by now that buying an F&A System is not an easy task. No two vendors in the market define the features/modules in their F&A Systems in the same way. Moreover, the plethora of options available for F&A Systems in the market makes it difficult to make an informed decision, especially for small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs).

The SMB Finance and Accounting Systems Buyer's Guide has been designed to help business decision makers quickly identify their specific and critical F&A System needs, effectively communicate these needs to the vendors, and successfully compare various product options. Our research into F&A System needs suggests that buyers must examine four crucial areas: (1) F&A System buyer types, (2) product requirements, (3) cost considerations, and (4) vendor relationship needs. Our buyer's guide is structured around these four areas.

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Our SMB F&A Systems Buyer's Guide is one of several research reports based on the Focus Research Methodology, which is designed to support your entire F&A System purchase process.



## 1

## Essentials

F&A Systems comprise a category of software that deals with a company's financial and accounting transactions. These systems not only help organizations comply with regulations and complex reporting guidelines, but also help the accounting staff save time and enhance efficiency by eliminating paper-based manual activities.

Various F&A Systems are available in the market, catering to the needs of all businesses – small, medium, and large. The right package can be chosen according to your business needs. Some of the key vendors in the F&A Systems market include Microsoft, SAP, Intuit, Sage, Workday, NetSuite, Infor, Oracle, Lawson, Exact Software, and Everest Software. For a complete explanation of the basics of an F&A System and an overview of the vendor landscape, see our F&A Systems Market Primer.

The four most salient points that a prospective F&A System buyer must consider when beginning the purchase of an F&A System are:

- Buyer:** What type of buyer are you and what are your particular needs?
- Product:** What product features and functionality should you focus on?
- Cost:** What expectations should you have for price, indirect costs and ROI (return on investment)?
- Vendor:** What will you need from the vendor during sales, installation and support?

## Buyer Focus

By determining which of the following buyer types your organization is most like, you will make the product selection process much more efficient. For more details on how to use this categorization for an efficient buying process, read our detailed section on buying in depth within this Buyer's Guide.

### What type of buyer am I?

**I'm a Basic Buyer:** "I need the core F&A System with basic features in the quickest, easiest and least expensive fashion."

**I'm a Fast Featurist:** "I want to take advantage of the basics as well as some advanced functionalities, but I do not need a full-blown enterprise solution."

**I'm a Small Enterprise:** "My primary focus is dealing with issues such as business complexity, integration, scalability and internationalization."

**I'm a Verticalist:** "I have industry-specific and specialized needs that cannot be met by solutions developed for generic businesses."

**1 out of 2** buyers considered **on premise** and **hosted** solutions.

Focus Buyer Survey – SMB Finance and Accounting Systems, January 2009

## Product

Once you determine your buyer type, you must next understand your F&A System product requirements. Make sure that the F&A System you are evaluating provides the following 3 must-have core features:

- General Ledger
- Accounts Receivable
- Accounts Payable

In addition, there are a plenty of additional or advanced functionalities/modules available in an F&A System. However, these will be more useful to some businesses than others, depending on industry-specific requirements, company type, company size and available budget. For example, fund accounting functionality is useful for non-profit organizations, charities and governmental units because they require each project to be tracked back to the its source of funding. On the other hand, a point of sale (POS) feature is more useful for retail companies.

You also need to determine what type of implementation model suits your business. To date, the on-premise model has been dominant because of companies' concern about control of their F&A Systems and the security of their critical financial data. However, of late there has been a trend, especially in the SMB space, of businesses evaluating and implementing on-demand software for their F&A Systems. The on-demand model, however, is still not as widely accepted in F&A System implementations as it is for Customer Relationship Management (CRM) applications.

## Cost

he total cost of owning and using an F&A System is much higher than the initial price tag for the system. There are often hidden costs associated with its implementation and support. Therefore, make sure that you budget from the perspective of the total cost of ownership (TCO) of the F&A System.

The 3 most common indirect or unexpected costs that you are likely to experience when you implement an F&A System are:

- Internal hardware/software costs
- Implementation/installation costs
- Additional license fees for additional users

“The Accounting System **product requirements are determined by a combination of two factors – company size and company type.**”

**Doug Sleeter**  
Founder, Sleeter Group  
Industry Expert



## Vendor Requirements

Selecting a vendor that can best meet your requirements can be a challenging task. Often, there are no apparent differences in the set of basic features provided in the F&A Systems from different vendors. Therefore, it becomes important to focus on important vendor attributes and understand all the requisite information required to evaluate the vendors.

Almost **half** of all F&A System buyers experience unexpected costs.

Focus Buyer Survey – SMB Finance and Accounting Systems, January 2009

The 5 most important attributes that you must consider while evaluating F&A System vendors are:

- Vendor's market credibility in terms of stability, financial viability and track record
- Relevant experience in the industry which your company belongs to. Remember to check customer references
- Ability to provide adequate support and training
- Product offerings with an open and flexible architecture
- Vendor's product roadmap

## Primary Reason for Purchase

Businesses buy F&A Systems in order to upgrade to a more scalable system, to increase efficiency, to improve access to information, to manage growing business complexity and to gain better control over costs.

In our F&A System Buyer Monitor 2009 survey, we asked buyers about the primary reasons leading to their purchases of F&A Systems. Approximately 65 percent of buyers cited “the need to upgrade to a more scalable and powerful system” as the most important reason, especially as their businesses had outgrown their existing F&A Systems.

Is it time for your business to upgrade from a simple and basic F&A System such as QuickBooks to something more substantial? If any of the following four factors is present in your organization, you should re-asses your current F&A System and consider an upgrade:

“The Accounting System **product requirements are determined by** a combination of two factors – **company size** and **company type.**”

**Doug Sleeter**  
 Founder, Sleeter Group  
 Industry Expert



**Increasing Customer Base:** An increase in the customer base results in difficulties in tracking and managing all customers and their transactions through your existing F&A System.

**Business Expansion:** With an increase in the number of operational centers in various locations, the level of complexity involved in managing an F&A function increases.

**Increasing Workforce:** As the number of employees in an organization increase, their need to access and share important data across the organization is also likely to increase.

**Specialized needs:** A growing business may require more specific data or information, which its existing F&A System is unable to provide.

**Basic Features – Top Requirements**

The features and functionalities of a product is the prime consideration for buyers while selecting an F&A System. Many buyers ascribe more importance to the product features than to the vendor reputation.

Buyers gave more weight to product-specific attributes such as features, reliability and performance than they did to vendor-specific attributes like a vendor’s reputation or the vendor roadmap.

Product features were the most important criterion influencing the buyer’s decision. Most buyers tend to choose a product that meets their specific feature requirements. Other important criteria are the product’s reliability/performance and customer service from the vendor.



**Buyer Monitor Comments**

**“Watch Out!”**

“

Our old one was grown in-house and wasn’t capable of handling volume.”

**Jennifer**

IT manager at an e-commerce company with 50-100 employees who decided on Epicor

“

The system we have is old. It is very basic and met requirements in the past. But we have grown double in size, and our manufacturing requirements are custom high-end work. Therefore, we need something to fit these requirements.”

**Greg**

Finance director at a manufacturing company with 26-50 employees who is still comparing vendors

“

Ours is off-the-shelf software. Given the growth of our company, we are not able to utilize it.”

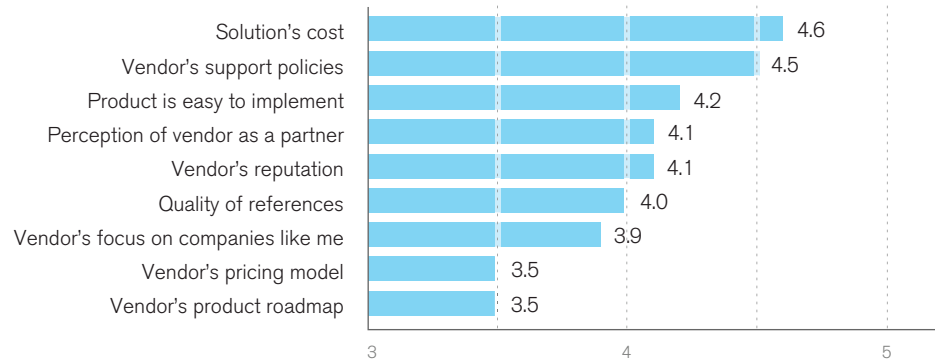
**Keith**

Controller at a technology services company with 26-50 employees who is still comparing vendors

Focus Buyer Survey – SMB  
Finance and Accounting  
Systems, January 2009



## Top Buyer Criteria in Choosing a Solution



Based on a poll of SFA buyers ranking purchasing influences on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the least influential and 5 being the most influential.  
 Source: Focus Buyer Survey – SMB Finance and Accounting Systems, January 2009

Buyers told us that **both product features** and **system performance** and reliability were the **most important factor** influencing their choice of finance and accounting system.

# 2 Top Advice from Other Buyers

We asked F&A System buyers how they would advise a friend who was buying an F&A System. Their responses, born of real-world experience, illustrate both the pitfalls of buying an F&A System and solid ideas to embrace during the buying process. In their own words, here is some of the best advice we heard from real-world F&A System buyers.

“

Know your existing system and do your homework. Conduct focused research and make sure you know your requirements. Know the problem you are trying to solve and make sure the vendor can solve it.”

**George**

Finance director of a manufacturing company  
26 – 50 seats



“

Get the money, the people and the company involved from the top to down - all the users. Have them go through demo as much in detail as possible. Make sure all the users are there.”

**Mark**

Manufacturing company  
51 – 100 seats

“

Buyer beware! With this software you are looking at eating the 2000lb elephant one bite at a time. Can't see the whole elephant at one time... just know what you're getting into.”

**Tom**

Hardware and software services company  
26 – 50 seats

“

Explore the system. Make the vendor present demos. Put your own data to work and make sure that you are getting the reports you want and the product manages your business the way you want.”

**Kyle**

Project manager at a manufacturing company  
51 – 100 seats

“

Implement your system right. Re-implementation is awful. It is worth hiring a consultant to make sure he can support you down the line as opposed to just right now.”

**Vikram**

President of a manufacturing company  
1 – 10 seats

# 3 Buying In-Depth

There are four key areas you must focus on while deciding your needs during the purchase process. You need to factor in what type of buyer you are. You need to focus on product features — both basic and advanced. You need to anticipate costs and budget for them. Lastly, you need to factor in vendor attributes, such as maintenance and support. Without these considerations, you'll be merely guessing at a product option rather than making an informed purchase decision.

## Buyers

Every buyer is different and so is every F&A System available in the market. What you should look for in an F&A System should be dictated by the specifics of your business, and the reporting and analysis requirements of your F&A ecosystem.

While every buyer is unique, they share some fundamental qualities which allow us to divide them into the four distinct groups. Identifying with a buyer group will help you prioritize which feature, cost model and support considerations to focus on while interacting with vendors during the purchase process. Later, in our product, cost and vendor sections, we reference what special considerations certain buyer types should undertake. We will further provide a Buyer Category Worksheet in the “Tips, Tricks, and Tool” section to help you identify your buyer type.

### Which Buyer Type Are You?

The type of F&A System buyer you are is driven by a combination of the level of business complexity, the level of integration requirements and the need for specific functionalities your organization may have. However, keep in mind that your organization may share characteristics of more than one of the buyer type categories listed below. Therefore, formulate a plan that incorporates the aspects that reflect your unique needs as you move through the process of selecting a product and vendor.

**Basics Buyers:** Want the core F&A System with basic features in the quickest, easiest and the least expensive fashion

- Tend to be small office home office (SOHO) businesses, small corporations, or personal finance software buyers
- Tend to be highly cost-conscious
- Need the most basic functionalities of an F&A System
- Require no integration
- Have no internal support

**Fast Featurists:** Would like to take advantage of additional advanced functionalities, since their businesses are likely to be more complex than the businesses of basic buyers, yet they do not need a full-blown enterprise solution

- Tend to be small or mid-sized businesses with more complex requirements than basic buyers
- Require more advanced functionality than basic buyers
- Require some basic integration with other business software systems
- Have limited internal support

**Small Enterprises:** Primary focus is dealing with issues such as business complexity, integration, scalability and internationalization

- Tend to be small and mid-sized companies with highly complex business processes
- Require advanced functionality
- Require advanced data and systems integration
- Have full internal support resources

**Verticalists:** Have very industry-specific and specialized needs that cannot be met by generic solutions

- Tend to be companies with industry-specific or niche business requirements
- Often governed by stringent regulations or compliance (for example, health care organizations)
- Some of the industries include health care, construction, nonprofit organizations and hospitality

It is worthwhile to note that business complexity does not have a direct correlation with company size. A small business with complex processes may have a requirement for additional features in an F&A System, as compared to a larger firm with a simpler set-up. However, by and large, the demand from smaller businesses tends to be basic while larger companies require more complex systems.

## Product

Some prospective buyers opt for an F&A System with only the basic functionalities, while others need very specific features to meet their business needs and go for an F&A System that offers advanced and specialized functionalities. Some buyers choose an on-premise solution, while others prefer a SaaS solution. However, as a prospective buyer, you always want to know about the features to look and the implementation options that are available before you decide what best suits your needs and budget.

### Core Functionalities

When you begin looking at products, there are certain features that will be required no matter what your business needs are.

You want to be convinced that the vendor can deliver and excel at these critical core features. These include:

- General Ledger (GL) - Captures all accounting transactions and summarizes/presents the information in the form of financial statements.
- Accounts Receivable (AR) - Tracks and manages received payments, outstanding payments, payment due dates, etc.
- Accounts Payable (AP) – Tracks and manages the bills, payments, and money owed by the company (payables).
- Job Cost –Tracks revenue, expenses and profitability for individual jobs, projects and/or phases within a job.

### Additional Functionalities

Most F&A Systems offer various additional functionalities. These functionalities will be more useful to some organizations than others. The choice of implementing these additional features depends on several factors including a company's industry-specific needs and its available budget. However, some of these functionalities may be offered as modules and some may be offered as add-ons developed by the vendor or by third-party companies. The following is a list of additional functionalities offered by an F&A System; this list is not exhaustive and additional F&A features exist for industry-specific verticals/solutions.

#### Buyers Say

**Buyers still rate basic general ledger, account receivables and accounts payables management as the most important features in buying a new F&A system.**

Focus Buyer Survey – SMB Finance and Accounting Systems, January 2009

### Business Process Automation Features:

- Purchase Order (PO) – Helps procurement staff increase the efficiency of ordering inventory and generating POs. It helps ensure timely and correct ordering of raw material and other supplies.
- Sales Order (SO) – Manages orders from the company's customers and helps the company automate the process of tracking and managing these orders.
- Stock/Inventory Management – Helps balance inventory requirements to reduce costs associated with procuring and storing inventory.
- Fixed Assets Management –Tracks information related to fixed assets. The information may include cost, purchase date, model and serial number, useful life, vendor and accumulated depreciation.
- Payroll – Tracks employee information, such as name, address, salary, wages, taxes, benefits, loans and leave/ vacations, and also process and print employee paychecks.
- Cash Management – Automates processing, execution and tracking of all transactions impacting the available cash levels.
- Expense Management – Automates the entire expense reporting process, from the expense entry to the expense reimbursement.
- Fund Accounting – This functionality is used by non-profit organizations, charities, and governmental units to provide them a “job cost” feature as each project needs to be tracked back to the its source of funding.
- Time and Billing – This functionality is useful for companies where time and expenses are tracked in detail and billed to specific customers, such as legal, engineering or an accounting firm.
- Point of sale (POS) – Used primarily in retail, this provides cash management at the cash register level.

Buyers cited “**integration with other systems**” as the **most distinguishing feature** when comparing F&A systems.

Focus Buyer Survey – SMB Finance and Accounting Systems, January 2009

### Reporting, Compliance, and Business Analytics Features:

- Analytics and Advanced Reporting –Helps convert financial data into useful information for distribution across the organization. It provides companies with a highly customizable, scalable, flexible and integrated reporting and analysis capability.
- Data Integration –Enables integration with other systems from other vendors or with the ERP system from the same vendor.
- Consolidation (multi company, country, and currency) – In organizations with multiple business units, subsidiaries, or franchises, provides real-time consolidation of financial data across the organization by geography, currency, or operation.

- Maintenance of Full Accounting Records  
–Traces any transaction item and provides a full audit trail.
- Compliance Management –Provides rules-based controls to help ensure compliance with Sarbanes-Oxley, BASEL II, and other regulatory guidelines.
- Advanced Financial Planning –Provides advanced planning tools, such as simulation of potential business scenarios including mergers and acquisitions. This functionality helps companies effectively predict the financial impact of their key decisions.
- Financial Forecasting – Provides insights to enhance future planning as well as analyze past trends. It facilitates more accurate forecasting and estimates profits/losses, revenues and other key financial data of the company.

“The **SaaS model** is a better idea and **should do well in the future**. However, until now (SaaS solutions) have done poorly and have been rejected because of perceived security concerns and reservations about sharing data over networks.”

**J. Carlton Collins**  
President, ASA Research  
Industry Expert



## Other Product Considerations

Beyond features and functionalities, you also need to determine what type of implementation model you are looking for. Depending on your internal resources, your company size and your budget, you may decide to purchase an on-premise or an on-demand (SaaS) F&A solution. While these two delivery models are often viewed in the context of cost, there are issues around their use and deployment that should be factored into your decision-making process.

## On-premise vs. On-demand (SaaS) Solutions

The on-premise model is the traditional license model. Your organization purchases and owns the software license and installs the system on-premise. Even the hardware required to run the software is purchased and managed by your company. Your internal IT staff is responsible for the maintenance of the entire system. If you are concerned about security and prefer to own the system rather than having it hosted by someone else, this model will suit you better.

On the other hand, under the SaaS or on-demand model, the vendor that develops the application also hosts and operates it, and you use it over the Internet. This model is easier to deploy; the IT and infrastructure demands are less than with an on-premise solution, and issues such as backups, software upgrades and security are handled by the vendor, removing that burden from your organization. Our research suggests SaaS does not pose a real threat in terms of information security. Such fears are largely perception-based. However, the downside of SaaS solution is that these tend to be far less flexible when it comes to customization.

## How Buyers Rated the Most Important Features in an F&A System

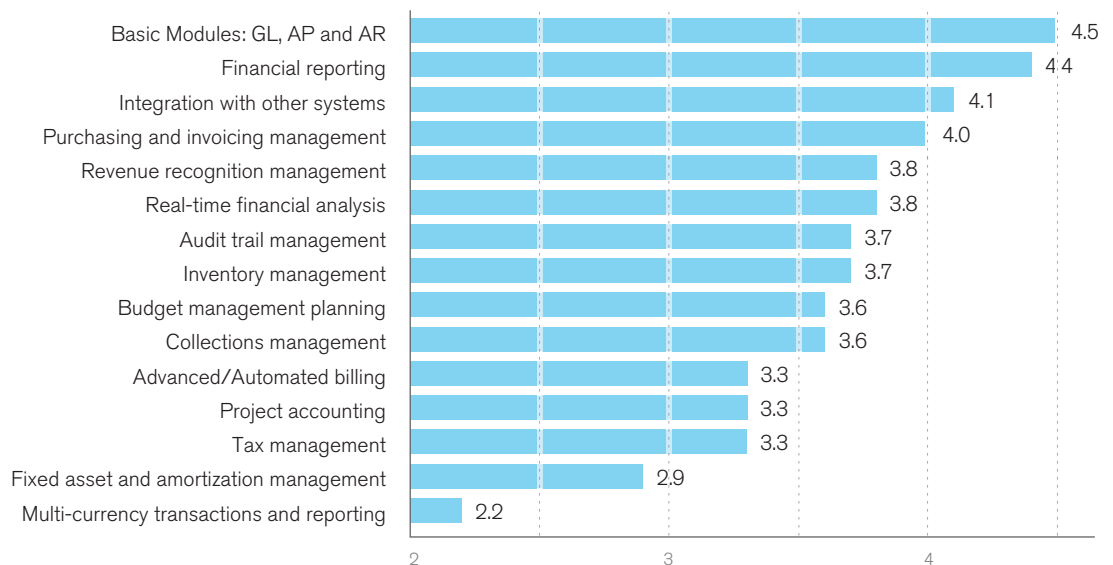
As the finance and accounting transactional data is maintained in and extracted from the basic modules – General Ledger, Accounts Payables and Accounts Receivables – these, no doubt, are the most important features of any F&A System. The primary objective of an F&A System is to summarize the transactional data into financial reports that can be used to manage the business. An F&A System investment will fail if it does not produce the kind of financial reports your business needs. Integration with other systems, necessary for smooth operations and “at-your-fingertips” information availability, is another important factor driving the success of an F&A System.

Our research revealed that the buyers give due consideration to these features and capabilities while evaluating different products. Buyers rated the basic accounting functionality (General Ledger, Accounts Payables and Accounts Receivables) and financial reporting as the two most important features considered for the purpose of evaluation and purchase of an F&A System.

However, when asked what most differentiated the vendors they reviewed, the buyers pointed to advanced features such as data integration capabilities and inventory management.

Buyers considered multi-currency transactions and reporting as the least important feature, probably because small and mid-sized businesses have very limited or no internationalization needs. They usually do not have multiple business units, subsidiaries or franchises in different geographies and hence the need for consolidation and reporting of multiple currency transactions is low.

## Buyers Rate Most Important Features to Consider



Based on a poll of SFA buyers ranking purchasing influences on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the least influential and 5 being the most influential.  
Focus Buyer Survey – SMB Finance and Accounting Systems, January 2009

## What Product Attributes Matter for Different Buyer Types

**Basics Buyers:** They look for ease of use and only the basic finance and accounting functionalities

**Fast Featurists:** They look for ease of use and desire some advanced features, such as payroll, compliance management, controlling and budget management, etc.

**Little Enterprisers:** Besides some additional features, they also look for customization, scalability and integration features

**Verticalists:** They look for systems that have industry-specific features/modules. For example, Non-profit organizations look for systems with “fund accounting”

## Cost Considerations

Cost is an important consideration and, to some extent, the effectiveness of your F&A System will depend on what you are willing to pay. F&A System prices range from less than \$100 for limited features, consistency and expandability to thousands of dollars, offering more advanced, reliable and scalable solutions.

For example, QuickBooks Simple Start for simple finances is priced at \$99.95. But, if you need more than just the simple basics, you can consider QuickBooks Pro priced at \$179.95 per user license which includes additional inventory and online banking features. On the other hand, Microsoft Dynamics GP Business Essentials edition is priced at \$2250 for each of the first 10 user licenses. The cost for 11 to 25 users is \$2025.00 per user and the cost decreases as the number of users increases. This edition includes core financial management modules such as General Ledger, Payables Management, Receivables Management, etc. and also includes essential modules related to Supply Chain Management, and, Business Intelligence and Reporting.

Whatever your cost considerations are, keep in mind the maximum return on your investment while comparing the prices of different products available in the market and evaluating the pricing model. Usually, the actual cost of owning and implementing an F&A System is much

“**Cost is an important criterion. However, it should not be the major criterion. Businesses need to concentrate on their requirements and find a system that helps them today and allows for future growth.**”

**Thomas Hessen**

Business Development Manager  
Everest Software



higher than the price tag of the system. This is because of a number of hidden cost components that show up only during the implementation or post-implementation phase.

There are several F&A Systems available completely free of cost. Such systems can be downloaded free of cost from the vendors' websites, but they have a limited set of functionalities. These are more suited for start-ups and home-based businesses. Office Accounting Express 2009 from Microsoft is an example of one such free F&A System.

Focus Research asked buyers about the various aspects of "direct" or "indirect" costs that other buyers should be aware of. This is what the survey results indicate:

### The Pricing Model that is Right for You

As we discussed in the products section, there are two dominant delivery and pricing models in the F&A Systems market – on-premise and SaaS. The decision of which pricing model suits you best would depend primarily on three factors – cost, the amount of flexibility you require, and your security concerns. You should also consider factors such as corporate culture, personal preferences, future business growth and level of comfort.

- On-premise model: As the name suggests, an on-premise implementation resides on the buyers' internal server. The investment involves an up-front license fee based on the number of users, and an ongoing maintenance fee which is usually 20 percent of the license cost. Since the F&A System is managed in-house, there is an additional cost associated with the IT infrastructure and the IT staff. Although the on-premise implementation model requires big up-front costs, it offers greater flexibility and is cheaper in the long run than the SaaS model.
- Software as a Service (SaaS) model: SaaS is a subscription-based model in which the user pays a monthly/yearly subscription fee. The advantages of this model are that there are no initial investments



#### Buyer Monitor Comments

### “Watch Out!”

“

Implementation costs are huge! People underestimate what they will have to pay for.”

**Matt**

Director of support services at a consulting firm  
26-50 employees and purchased NetSuite

“

Hardware costs should be well thought of. I really had to fish for information. For instance the one thing they could not settle was on how much storage space I needed - 300 GB or 600 GB?”

**James**

IT manager at manufacturing company  
51-100 employees  
Selected Microsoft Dynamics

“

You have software cost. But there is also data conversation cost, implementation expenses with fees and per diem rates, and consultant fees. Consider all that.”

**Keith**

Project manager at a manufacturer  
51-100 employees and has short-listed a few vendors for final selection

Focus Buyer Survey – SMB  
Finance and Accounting  
Systems, January 2009



for a software license or IT infrastructure, and since the application runs on vendor's server, the responsibility of maintenance and software upgrades lies with the vendor. However, experts feel that sometimes SaaS implementations, trade lower initial costs for flexibility. The model is ideal for firms that do not have an elaborate IT set up; it would help them avoid huge initial costs and allow them to focus on their core competencies.

Although F&A System using the SaaS delivery model have much lower upfront costs, over a period of time it is the on-premise F&A System that is likely to be most economical for companies with robust IT infrastructures. However, the timeline of that crossover varies from company to company. For example, a company with a large IT staff and well developed infrastructure would, in most likelihood, push the balance of value toward an on-premise solution fairly quickly. However, in a smaller company, the costs of buying hardware and hiring and retaining IT staff could drive the real investment up and could push the point where on-premise would be the cheaper option far out into the future.

## Defining ROI

Keeping your company's receivables, payables, revenues and expenses under control is crucial. An F&A system that's a bad fit for your company can result in years of trouble, high expenses and business losses; a system chosen in according to your needs and suited to your budget can benefit you for years to come.

Purchasing and implementing an F&A System merely because it is a "good idea" or "everyone has it and we must buy too" will make it hard for you to justify your investment. As a prospective buyer, you need a reason to believe that the potential and expected benefits will sufficiently exceed the investment.



Defining Return on Investment (ROI) is important not only to provide an initial basis for making an investment in an F&A System to the decision makers within your company, but also to analyze how well your F&A System has paid off. If you are a small organization, this can help you validate your investment decision.

However, a problem arises when the F&A System is scrutinized using organization-wide criteria and soft benefits-related measurements such as improved productivity, greater customer/partner satisfaction, improved decision making or greater partner and employee satisfaction, criteria that are difficult to measure because they are not quantifiable in hard dollar terms. The old saying "you cannot manage what you cannot measure" is applicable to the F&A System as well.

### What Unexpected Costs Could You Face?

**42% of all buyers experienced indirect costs that initially they had not taken into account.**

**Some of the indirect and unexpected costs pointed out by the buyers include:**

-  Slow response times
-  High support costs
-  Lack of support for customization

Focus Buyer Survey – SMB Finance and Accounting Systems, January 2009

Here are some finance and accounting-specific metrics that can provide more realistic insight into how well your F&A System is performing:

- **Reduced closing cycle** (Hours spent on monthly closing  $\times$  Percentage savings from use of F&A System = Savings on closings)
- **Maximize cash discounts** (Total vendor purchases  $\times$  Percentage purchase with discounts  $\times$  Percentage average vendor discount = Available discounts
  - Available discounts – Discounts taken = Additional discounts available)
- **Reduced credit losses** (Credit losses per year  $\times$  Percentage savings from use of F&A System = Savings)
- **Reduced time on collection** (Number of collection staff  $\times$  Average yearly wages  $\times$  Percentage time spent on collections  $\times$  Percentage reduction in time = Savings)
- **Executive time saved** (Number of executives  $\times$  Average yearly wages  $\times$  Percentage of time spent on finance/accounting data  $\times$  Percentage reduction in time = Savings)

## Understand Potential Benefits of an F&A System

This section will help you understand and identify the potential benefits of an F&A System.

**Hard Benefits:** These refer to the tangible cash benefits that result in hard-dollar savings.

- Reduced head count – reduction of costs associated with employees involved in the F&A process
- Reduced errors – reduction of costs associated with reviewing work, checking for quality or rectifying errors within the old F&A process
- Increased revenues – increased sales directly linked with the new F&A System
- Eliminated penalties – elimination of penalties that may otherwise be paid due to non-compliance

### What Product Attributes Matter for Different Buyer Types

**Basics Buyers:** Emphasis is on low initial cost and low maintenance costs

**Fast Featurists:** Emphasis is on low initial costs, with some budget towards integration; desire most of the features of a solution for small enterprises but lack the budget

**Little Enterprisers:** Emphasis is on low lifetime costs, with higher initial costs and considerable investment in IT resources and infrastructure

**Verticalists:** Emphasis varies by business size and the level of niche requirements

**Soft Benefits:** Soft benefits are not quantifiable in hard-dollar terms. Though they do not result in tangible cash benefits, they must be considered while evaluating the feasibility of investing in an F&A System.

- Improved productivity – reduction in the effort spent on the process
- Greater customer and partner satisfaction – improvement in stakeholder satisfaction, which results in healthy client and vendor relationships
- Greater motivation of employees – improvement in the motivation levels of workforce due to the easy access to information
- Improved decision making – improvement in the decision-making process as a result of the access to correct and timely reports/information

## Budget for Full Price of the Project

Make sure that you budget not only for the software costs, but also for various other costs associated with the entire project, including the implementation and the post-implementation phases. Budget the project cost from the perspective of the total cost of ownership (TCO).

In the on-premise model, the pricing includes the following components:

- **Software Costs:** These refer to all costs associated with either the purchase of the license from the vendor for using its software product, or owning the software code that is developed as per your business needs. The licensed software consists of only the core functionalities, and you may end up paying more for additional advanced modules and software add-ons to meet your requirements.
- **Internal Software Costs:** These include the costs associated with installing/upgrading the operating systems and other applications, such as MS Office, to meet the minimum system requirements.
- **Hardware Costs:** These refer to the costs associated with servers, network equipment and other physical infrastructure that are essential to implement and maintain the F&A System.
- **Implementation Costs:** These include the costs of customization and service charges of consultants associated with deploying a prepackaged F&A System.
- **Training Costs:** These include the costs of training end users, IT staff and other employees associated with either the usage or the maintenance of the F&A System.
- **Ongoing Maintenance and Support Costs:** These costs are incurred throughout the lifecycle of the system, and include costs associated with software patches and upgrades.
- **Systems Management Costs:** These costs include all the direct and indirect costs associated with making the necessary infrastructure available to make the F&A System function smoothly. These include security, storage, integration, messaging, help desk, backup and Internet connectivity.

In the SaaS model, the pricing comprises the following components:

- **Subscription Charges:** These include the usage fee for the F&A System, usually charged on a per- user per-month basis.
- **Support Services Costs:** Some vendors offer free support for the initial couple of months and start charging support fees after that period ends.

## Vendor

### What to Look for in a Vendor

Identifying a vendor that can best meet your requirements can be a challenging task, because most vendors offer a similar set of features and modules. In our Buyer Monitor survey, 59 percent of buyers did not notice any differences in the set of basic features while comparing products from different vendors. This is because the penetration of F&A Systems in the small and medium-sized business segment is high and the market is mature. Most products that could survive to this point are fairly feature-complete.

Thus, besides product and cost considerations, vendor attributes will become an influencing factor in your decision process. Make sure that you have all the requisite information and ask the right questions while evaluating a vendor.

The most important thing to look for is the vendor's market credibility in terms of stability, financial viability and track record. Checking this becomes even more important in case of the SaaS model of deployment. You would not want your SaaS vendor to go out of business with your critical financial data residing permanently on its server.

Look for a vendor with a reasonably large installed customer base, which will indicate how well-accepted and well-known the vendor is. If you prefer SaaS, look for a vendor with a fool-proof mechanism for making a back-up of the primary storage system data to survive any contingency. The vendor should also offer advanced security features (such as role-based login authentication, revolving passwords, data encryption) to keep your financial data as secure as possible, and provide high uptime and transaction speed.

Secondly, look for a vendor that has relevant experience with companies in the industry your company belongs to. Different vendors have varying levels of experience. Therefore, do not be afraid to ask for customer references. Speak with customers who are currently under contract with the vendor. Have them share their experiences of using the product in the long run and of their working relationship with the vendor.

Thirdly, look for a vendor that can provide adequate support and training for your organization. A vendor which offers a direct helpdesk or support through its channel should be preferred. In case of medium-sized companies, where the consultant would be the primary source for technical support, vendor technical support is also important. Thousands of financial transactions take place every day on your F&A System. If anything goes wrong with the system, you should be assured that the vendor would fix it for you.

Further, look for a vendor that offers products with an open and flexible architecture to enable you to seamlessly integrate the F&A System into your existing technology setup. For example, your F&A System should be able to integrate with the payroll management system or inventory management system, so that you can share data within all the existing business applications. Also, try to ensure that the system is compatible with Microsoft and SQL database.

“Frequently, the selection of a F&A System is a political decision [or] haphazard. The better approach, is to **create an independent committee** that analyzes solutions in terms of company priorities and functional fit.”

**Sheldon Needle**

Founder and president, CTS

Expert

Lastly, do not forget to evaluate the vendor's product roadmap. Where will the product be in three years? How easily can the system handle additional user capacity? Can it manage the growing complexity in financial transactions and processes? When your business grows, you may need an F&A System with more features. Find out from the vendor whether the software can be upgraded whenever required. Knowing this from the outset can help your organization avoid spending a huge amount of money to buy a new F&A System as your business grows.

In addition to the above-mentioned points that you must look for in a vendor, weigh factors such as the ability, knowledge and professionalism of a vendor's sales representatives, the quality of its demo, availability of online documentation, etc. Focus asked F&A System buyers about the type of vendor information (other than product information) that they recommend other buyers to look for before buying its products.

**Buyers Say**

Other than product and price, top three things to explore with vendors during the sales process:

1. Vendor's **support processes**
2. Vendor's **product road map**
3. Vendor's **financial viability**

Focus Buyer Survey – SMB Finance and Accounting Systems, January 2009



**Buyer Monitor Comments**  
**“Watch Out!”**

“

The solution should grow with the company. It is very important. You don't want to be replacing systems every few years. Can it scale up? What is the roadmap of the product?”

**Darius**

President of a manufacturing company  
 Less than 10 employees and purchase Microsoft Dynamics

“

References. Be able to check references with people in a similar industry. What kind of buyers they serve?”

**Keith**

Project manager at a manufacturer  
 51-100 employees and has short-listed a few vendors for final selection

Focus Buyer Survey – SMB Finance and Accounting Systems, January 2009

## Starting the Buying Process

Though the buying process for F&A Systems often becomes a long, complex and tiring exercise, your company needs to handle it carefully in order to make the best decision. A well-informed decision can enhance financial planning and management across your organization, and maximize return on your F&A System investment.

The first and foremost thing in this process is to put together a project team to spearhead the entire buying process, from identifying the feature requirements to selecting the right F&A System from the right vendor. Since finance and accounting operations have a company-wide impact, people from all the departments involved should have a part in the process for effective customization and implementation of the solution.

Next, define the scope of the process in terms of overall time associated with activities such as requirements definition, evaluation of options, selection of the best option, implementation, etc. The timelines will vary depending on the complexity of your business, and the scope of your requirements. Also, determine what you are willing to spend on the solution. Remember to consider the hidden cost components such as hardware costs, implementation costs, etc., while defining the budget.

Know your requirements well. Your vendor should not be the only one telling you what you should look for. It is essential that you understand your functional requirements. If you don't, chances are that you will end up buying an F&A System having been influenced either by your vendor, your accountant or the senior managers, instead of buying a system that you and your business actually need. Make a formal list of the required features that your F&A solution must have to successfully cater to your business needs. Weigh this list and divide it into two groups of features – the “essentials” and the “additional requirements.” The essentials are those features whose absence will render the solution useless. The additional functionalities result in better performance and productivity but are not indispensable. This division helps prioritize the selection of modules during the buying process.

Once you know what you want, start compiling a list of different vendors and their offerings. Evaluate each of these and quickly eliminate the weak options. F&A Systems that are too complicated, too costly or too limited to fit your scope can easily be removed. For example, if your total budget is up to \$10,000, it makes no sense to spend time considering an F&A System costing \$100,000.

Compare the features/functions that you need in an F&A System with the standard feature/functions offered by each F&A System being evaluated. Any system which does not have all or most of the capabilities you are looking for can easily be removed from the list. Look for a system that can expand and grow along with the growth of your business. Further, the system should have capability of integration with other applications (such as inventory management system) across the organization to enable data sharing. Look for a system that is flexible and customizable to suit your unique transactions and reporting needs. Ask each vendor for customer references, especially within your industry and similar to your company profile. Speak to these existing customers to get a clearer picture of stability and reliability of a specific F&A System and its vendor.

There are many F&A Systems available in the market. Do not settle for one that is unable to meet all your requirements. Narrow your choices as much as you can, so that you can spend sufficient time evaluating the likely options in detail.

Amongst the short list of vendors, ask each sales representative to present a demonstration of his/her products. Focus on features that are really useful to you. In addition, ask for a free trial of the product. This will give you an idea of how well the system meets your requirements and how user friendly it is.

Further, discuss with each vendor the maintenance, training, and support plans they have to offer. Negotiate the best price for the deal. Remember to use the software price adjusted after the vendor's standard discount as the starting point for your negotiations. Though cost is an important consideration, never buy an F&A System only on the basis of its price. After buying a reasonably-priced F&A System, you may discover that you are required to upgrade it to run it effectively. Be aware that this does not imply that an expensive F&A System is more appropriate for your business.

**72%** of buyers indicating that their decision was partially influenced by their **interaction with** interaction with the vendor's **sales person**.

Focus Buyer Survey – SMB Finance and Accounting Systems, January 2009

## Implementation Process

Once you have identified the vendor and the product, the next step is to ensure a smooth implementation of the solution. If you have not done your homework, this can be a frustrating exercise. The tasks required to ensure a seamless implementation include the following:

- **Prioritize Your Automation:** The system implementation should be carried out in steps to have a minimum impact on day-to-day operations.
- **Schedule the implementation appropriately:** Schedule the installation of a new system during the off-peak season of your business to minimize business interruptions.
- **Keep Everyone Informed:** Conduct regular review meetings during the implementation phase. Keep the users updated about the progress of implementation. This will help them become familiar with the new system and readily accept it.



### Buyer Monitor Comments

#### “Watch Out!”

“

We interviewed a bunch of different vendors and their ability to answer the questions was huge for us. There were vendors whose sales representatives simply had no idea. There was one vendor company whose three representatives did not know the answer to one question - red flag!”

**Jeff**

owner of a 10-person distributor and wholesaler, purchased Quickbooks

“

A lot of vendor sales representatives do not understand the business. They sound puzzled when asked questions.”

**Masa**

executive at an 11-25 person utility company; selected Epicor

Focus Buyer Survey – SMB Finance and Accounting Systems, January 2009

- **Get the Users Trained:** Targeted, systematic, and comprehensive user training provides the information and involvement required to get the most out of the system. Ask your vendor for a training plan for users with different skill sets and at different levels of the organization.
- **Have Detailed Documentation:** Ensure that the user documentation provided by the vendor is clear, easy-to-read, and contains all details of how the system should be implemented, used and controlled.
- **Address post-implementation concerns:** Ask your vendor for their post-implementation support plan, and a plan for ongoing review and evaluation of the system.

Based on Focus's survey results, experts and buyers recommend the following points to be kept in mind for the implementation phase:

- Take your time in the whole implementation process. Do not rush!
- Employ a consultant to move in the right direction
- Make sure that you are not just buying beautiful screens and leaving functionality behind
- Ask as many basic questions of the vendor as required
- Review case studies and talk to other users who have implemented products from the vendor.

### **Using a Third Party or Vendor Professional Services**

By using third-party or professional services provider, such a value added reseller (VAR) or implementation consultant, you can leverage their knowledge, experience and skills to make a better and smarter investment decision. The importance of third-party or vendor professional services is undeniable if your business needs are specialized and if required skilled staff is unavailable within your organization's pool of resources.

In general, Basic buyers usually do not require such professional services; they generally need off-the-shelf F&A Systems and have no integration or customization requirements. On the other hand, it can be extremely helpful for Small Enterprises to utilize these services. Their F&A System implementations tend to be very complex and they require advanced features and integration capabilities. Their implementation process could consist of activities such as customizing and configuring the software, historical data conversion and extensive user training.

You can buy from a VAR that provides implementation services in addition to reselling the F&A System purchased from a software vendor. Alternatively, you can hire an independent consultant or appoint a consulting firm to help you implement or install a specific F&A System.

### **Support Process**

Even if the F&A System your organization has chosen and implemented is easy to use and has a proven record of reliability and dependability, post-implementation, it may face issues at times.

#### **Buyers Say**

One thing that the **SMBs do not do** is – 'building an **in-house expert**'. This ends up costing them a lot more. They should designate someone to become their **subject matter expert in-house**.

These may occur only rarely, but when they do, your entire business will be affected. In all such rare cases, you and your vendor must be well prepared to handle the problems.

Therefore, while you evaluate your F&A System options, do consider the support provided by each of the vendors. In most of the organizations, IT departments dedicate considerable employee time and vendor time to supporting F&A Systems to ensure their performance and reliability.

Some of the questions that you must ask regarding the vendor's support include:

- Does the vendor provide a 24/7 help desk?
- What is the headcount of the vendor's technical support team?
- What is the response time for queries or faults posted by customers?
- What are the working hours of the vendor's support team? What are the available options for after-hours concerns or problems?
- What are the different plans/levels of support and maintenance the user can subscribe to?
- Are product upgrades included in the support plan?
- Does the vendor provide a Web-based support portal for submitting online queries, downloading fixes, and product information?
- Does the vendor offer support for your particular geographical location?
- Are all escalation procedures properly defined in a Service Level Agreement (SLA)?

**Buyers Say**

Know **what you are getting into!** Our earlier purchase totally fell flat. When we started researching, we found out that other customers, too, had to work around a lot of problems to make their system work.

Focus Buyer Survey – SMB Finance and Accounting Systems, January 2009

**Buyer Dissatisfaction – What to Watch Out for**

An F&A System can be a profitable and successful investment for your business only if you ensure that you select the right system that suits your business needs. Purchasing the wrong F&A System not only leads to buyer dissatisfaction because it's a poor fit for the company, but it can also lead to exorbitant implementation costs. Small and medium-sized businesses are often disappointed by their investments in business software due to the failure of the software to meet their needs. The most common reasons why an F&A System fails to live up to expectations include:

- Ineffective evaluation of benefits and functionality requirements
- Poor implementation process
- Lack of adequate IT infrastructure
- Lack of training

Another important reason for buyer dissatisfaction is the inflexibility of some F&A Systems. A system should not be restricted to the boundary of the organization. It should be open to external parties such as customers and suppliers who may want to access the data.

# 4 Tools

Don't get left in the lurch with a lot of decisions to make and few tools with which to make those decisions. Below, we've included tools and worksheets that will make your product requirements, vendor choice and purchasing decisions easier. Rip these out, pass them along to others in your company or use them to justify your purchase. Whichever route you go, rest-assured that your decision will be a more educated one.

## **10 Steps to Purchasing an F&A System**

## **F&A Buyer Type Worksheet**

## **Product Requirements Prioritization Worksheet**

## **Vendor Landscape**

# 10 Steps to an F&A System

**1. Involve the right people from the very beginning:** Since an F&A System generates information that is used across the organization, participation from functional groups will help you select and implement the most suitable solution. Also, involve the auditor or the accountant of your business in the selection process. He/She can provide valuable inputs on the features your business needs.

**2. Identify the reasons for implementing a new system or replacing the current one:** It is most important to identify and understand the key reasons that drove you to decide to purchase and implement an F&A System. Whether you want to streamline your F&A process or have access to correct and timely information, the reasons should be aligned with your business goals and justify your purchase.

If you already have an F&A System and are looking forward to replace it, define the problems with your current system and keep these issues in mind while evaluating various options in the comparison phase.

**3. Prepare a time schedule and define your budget:** Create a schedule for various activities, such as evaluation, proposal review, product demonstrations, product comparisons, selection, implementation and training.

Define the budget range. While allocating the budget, it is important to consider all cost components instead of budgeting only for the software and hardware costs. Also, you should try to calculate the expected return on your investment.

**4. Identify your buyer type and define your product requirements:** Understand the buyer category you belong to. You can refer to our Buyer Type Worksheet in this report to help you identify your buyer type and prioritize your needs and preferences. This will enable you to understand your most important and highest-level needs, and those can serve as filters when evaluating various product options.

Also, identify your requirements in terms of both basic and advanced functionalities. You can use our Product Requirements Prioritization Worksheet in this report to lay out your detailed product requirements. This worksheet is intended to help buyers figure out their most important requirements and assist them in preparing to talk with vendors.

**5. Perform a cost-benefit analysis and decide the implementation model:** Evaluate and decide on the implementation model (on-premise or off-premise) that best meets your requirements. Do you want your vendor to host and manage your F&A System while you focus on your core business? Or do you want to deploy and manage your F&A System in-house because of your organization's data security concerns? Do you prefer a prepackaged, out-of-the-box solution, or do you want some customization to suit your needs? A detailed analysis and comparison of solutions will help you zero in on the right option.

- 6. Compile a list of potential vendors and their solutions:** Prepare an exhaustive list of all vendors in the market whose product offerings seem to meet your requirements. It is important to have sufficient knowledge about the market and the many unique solutions that are available. Initially, include all possible vendors and their solutions, ensuring that you do not miss a product that may be a good fit for your business needs.
- 7. Eliminate the obvious poor choices:** Compare the listed solutions with your requirements and remove the options that do not match your needs. You can cull vendors from your list for missing modules, missing functionalities, poor vendor reputation or high cost. Selecting the right solution often translates into eliminating the solutions that don't survive the cut.
- 8. Have a product demonstration:** Once you have shortlisted the solutions that best meet your needs, ask the vendors' sales representatives to provide a demonstration of the product. Have each sales rep give you a live walk-through of the product offerings, and make sure they focus on the features that are most important for your organization. Ask the tough questions about the installation process and the vendor's track record on implementation time, and get customer references with whom you can speak. Most importantly, take the demo for what it is – just a sales pitch!
- 9. Ask for a trial:** Demonstrations do not always provide the complete picture. If you really want to know how an F&A System will work for you, ask for a free trial of the product. Most vendors offer this facility for 30 to 90 days. This will give you a fair idea of how well the system would meet your needs once it is fully deployed. Keep in mind that you will be testing a system that you have never used before. Therefore, if you are unable to perform a task the way you want to, do not assume that the system is not capable of performing it. Instead, take the vendor's assistance in all such situations.
- 10. Negotiate:** Negotiating the best price for your F&A System can save you a lot of money. Use the software price after adjusting the vendor's standard discount as a starting point for your negotiations. Many vendors give huge discounts if you are willing to serve as a customer reference.

# Buyer Type Worksheet

In order to determine what kind of an F&A Buyer you are, it's important to consider what kind of an F&A user you plan to be. This hinges on several key points. Below, we've listed them, with points for each answer. The goal here is not to have the most or fewest points – it's to emerge from the exercise with a better idea of how your company fits into the buyer types discussed in our F&A Buyer's Guide.

### 1. How big is your F&A staff size?

- 1 point  < 1 employee (only a bookkeeper)
- 2 points  2 - 5 employees (full time controller and bookkeepers)
- 3 points  > 5 employees (high level controller, assistant accountant and accounting staff)

### 2. What is your flexibility in terms of budget vis-a-vis feature requirements?

- 1 point  Fixed budget, require only core features such as GL, AR, AP, etc.
- 2 points  Balanced trade-off between cost and additional features/functionality
- 3 points  Flexible with budget, feature match is most important

### 3. How integrated will your F&A solution be?

- 1 point  Not much integration is required – this would be a stand-alone solution
- 2 points  We require some basic integration with a couple of business applications
- 3 points  We require advanced and complete integration with all business processes

### 3. How integrated will your F&A solution be?

- 1 point  Not much integration is required – this would be a stand-alone solution
- 2 points  We require some basic integration with a couple of business applications
- 3 points  We require advanced and complete integration with all business processes

### 4. How much internal support will your F&A system have?

- 1 point  No internal support
- 2 points  Limited internal support, but we lack advanced resources
- 3 points  Full internal support resources

### 5. How geographically diverse are your business operations and customer base?

- Within the same state; require compliance with single state laws only
- 1 point  In multiple states within U.S.; require compliance with state laws across U.S.
- 2 points  In multiple countries; require compliance with different laws applicable in different jurisdictions and countries
- 3 points

**Results:** Based on your final points total, your organization probably fits into the following buyer types:

<b>Basics Buyer</b>	<b>5-7</b>	You are looking for a standalone F&A System with basic features which you can implement in the quickest, easiest and the least expensive fashion. You have no internal support.
<b>Fast Featurists</b>	<b>8-11</b>	You would like to take advantage of an F&A System with additional functionalities and which can integrate with some of your business applications. You have limited internal support but aim to quickly streamline and structure your F&A processes.
<b>Small Enterprises</b>	<b>12-15</b>	Your primary focus is to deal with issues such as business complexity, integration, scalability, and internationalization, etc. You have operations and customer bases in multiple countries and look at F&A System as a long-term investment.

A buyer would be classified as Verticalist, if it has some industry-specific requirements. However, every Verticalist can be categorized under one of the above mentioned buyer categories.

# Product Requirements Prioritization Worksheet

Using this worksheet, you can evaluate your feature requirements in relation to how well vendors meet those needs. Score how well vendors perform on the categories you have identified by filling in your ratings in the columns to the right, using a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the best. If the feature is not important to your particular F&A implementation, simply leave the field blank. When you are done, add up the columns; your final score should give you an idea of which vendor's solution best fits your needs.

*Requirements	Vendor 1	Vendor 2	Vendor 3
<b>Core Functionalities</b>			
General Ledger (GL)			
Accounts Receivable (AR)			
Accounts Payable (AP)			
Job Cost			
<b>Section Total</b>			
<b>Additional Functionalities</b>			
Purchase Order (PO)			
Sales Order (SO)			
Stock/Inventory Management			
Fixed Assets Management			
Payroll			
Cash Management			
Expense Management			
Fund Accounting			
Time and Billing			
Point of sale (POS)			
Controlling and Budget Management			
Revenue Recognition Management			
Collections Management			
<b>Section Total</b>			
<b>Reporting, Compliance and Business Analytics Functions</b>			
Analytics and Advanced Reporting			
Data Integration			
Consolidation			
Maintenance of Full Accounting Records			
Compliance Management			
Advanced Financial Planning			
Financial Forecasting			
<b>Section Total</b>			

# F&A System Vendor Landscape

Many vendors have different F&A System solution offerings catering to the needs of all size of businesses - small, medium as well as large. Also, most of the solutions offered by midmarket focused vendors may be targeted at small businesses. Likewise, the solutions developed by enterprise-focused vendors may also be targeted at medium-size businesses.

Following is a list of the top vendors with their F&A System offerings

## Vendors with F&A Systems focused on the needs of individual users and small businesses

### **Exact Software**

Exact Online

### **Intuit**

Quicken

Quickbooks Simple Start

QuickBooks Professional

QuickBooks Enterprise

QuickBooks Online\*

### **Microsoft**

Office Accounting Express (free)

Office Accounting Professional

### **MYOB**

MYOB Premier Accounting

MYOB FirstEdge

MYOB BusinessEssentials

MYOB AccountEdge

### **NetBooks\***

#### **Sage**

Peachtree by Sage 2009

DacEasy

Simply Accounting 2009

ePeachtree

Peachtree First Accounting 2009

Sage ERP X3

#### **SAP**

SAP Business One (midmarket focused as well)

*\*SaaS offering*

**Vendors with F&A Systems serving the need of medium-size businesses**

**CODA**

CODA 2go (for all sizes of business\* — acquired by Unit 4 Agresso)

**CYMA Systems**

CYMA Accounting Software

**Epicor**

Financial Management

**Everest Software**

Everest Financial Management

**Intacct**

**Microsoft**

Dynamics GP  
Dynamics NAV

**NetSuite**

NetSuite OneWorld\*  
NetSuite\*

**Sage**

Sage MAS 90 ERP  
Sage MAS 200 ERP  
Sage Accpac Extended Enterprise Suite  
Sage BusinessVision 50 Accounting  
Sage BusinessWorks 50 Accounting  
Peachtree Quantum 2009

**Softrak Systems**

Adagio Accounting Software

**Workday**

Workday Financial Management

*\*SaaS offering*

**Vendors with complex and advanced F&A Systems focused on the needs of large enterprises**

**Exact Software**

Exact Globe

**Epicor**

Financial Management

**Infor**

Financial Management System

**Microsoft**

Dynamics AX

**Oracle**

JD Edwards EnterpriseOne Financial Management  
Oracle E-Business Suite Financials  
PeopleSoft Enterprise Financial Management

**SAP**

SAP ERP Financials Solution

*\*SaaS offering*

**Specialized vendors offering F&A System to meet industry-specific requirements**

**Blackbaud Inc**

The Financial Edge (for non-profit organizations)

**Intuit**

QuickBooks Premier (can be tailored to any industry requirements)

**Lawson**

M3 Financials (for manufacturing and distribution-related industries)

S3 Enterprise Financial Management (for services sector industries)

**Microsoft**

Dynamics SL (for project-driven organizations)

**Sage**

Sage PFW ERP (for manufacturers in paints and coatings, specialty chemical, consumer packaged goods, foods, and nutraceutical )

Sage Pro ERP (for manufacturing companies)

Sage MIP Fund Accounting (for non-profit organizations)

Peachtree Premium Accounting for Distribution 2009

Peachtree Premium Accounting for Manufacturing 2009

Peachtree Premium Accounting for Construction 2009

Peachtree Premium Accounting for Nonprofits 2009

**SYSPRO**

for SMB manufacturers and distributors

*\*SaaS offering*

# About FOCUS

## Our Mission

Our mission is to support business professionals' critical purchase decisions by creating and distributing the highest quality, most relevant purchase research and tool sets.

## Our Approach

To ensure maximum insight and relevancy, Focus has designed a four factor approach to buyer-centric research. All research at Focus begins with defining the buyer factor. Categorized in our research as Buyer Types, the buyer factor identifies the buyer needs and preferences in a market that make a difference in selecting the right product and vendor. Buyer Types are studied and developed based on Focus' interaction with thousands of buyers across a category. The buyer factor in turn shapes Focus recommendations on how buyers approach three other critical factors: 1) product requirements, 2) cost considerations and 3) vendor relationships.

## Buyer Feedback

In addition to speaking with industry experts and other participants, a critical priority is to integrate feedback from experienced buyers. We speak with thousands of buyers each month and conduct our formal buyer surveys throughout the year.

For more information on our research approach, please visit [Focus](#).