

Curtain Rises On A New ACT

By Lauren Simonds

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It's time again for Sage's annual update of its ACT contact management software, but this time it comes with a slight twist. Today the company announced that, for the first time, it's simultaneously updating the entire ACT by Sage product family.

Sage says this upgraded line offers small companies "flexible deployment options" along with a series of new features and improvements. Larry Ritter, vice president of ACT product management at Sage, said that the company has 25 years of experience working exclusively with small businesses and has more than five million customers. "We've used our years of small-business expertise to improve the product across the line and make it easier than ever to find and work with ACT data," he said.

Sage designed the 2007 versions of ACT to let people manage contacts and customers from their desktop, notebook, Web browser or Palm device. The new product line includes:

- ACT by Sage 2007
Price: \$229.99, upgrade \$149.95
- ACT by Sage Premium for Workgroups 2007
Price: \$399.99, upgrade \$259.95
- ACT by Sage Premium for Web 2007
Price: \$399.99, upgrade \$259.95
- ACT for Palm OS 2.0
- Pricing: \$99.99

It's important to note that the ACT Premium for Web is a customer-hosted solution; a third-party provider does not host it. Reich said the application is designed for small businesses that want to provide Web-based access to ACT to at least five of its employees. The company buys the software and installs it on its own server — and that server must have a static IP address.

The biggest change is how ACT integrates with Outlook. Ritter says the software also focuses on improving productivity and data security. We

outline some of the features, as described by Sage, below.

Use Outlook E-mail Within ACT: The software opens the Outlook new e-mail message form when you want to send e-mail, send a letter in e-mail, conduct an e-mail mail merge or send an e-mail by clicking on hyperlinks. You can also send e-mail to an ACT group or company.

Create an ACT Contact from an Outlook E-mail Message: Act automatically fills in the contact name and e-mail Address fields. It can populate 10 additional pre-defined fields such as company, address, and phone number, and it checks for duplicates. (ACT Windows products only)

Split-Panel Note Preview: A split-panel within the notes tab lets you view the entire contents of a contact, group, or company note while scrolling for another note.

Specify Linked Contact/Company Fields: Specify which fields you want to link between contact and company records. When a field changes on the company record, ACT prompts you to change that field for all the contacts linked to the company.

Last E-mail Field: Identify the last e-mail send date from the contact detail view. The last e-mail field updates any time you create an e-mail history. The feature works when using the ACT e-mail client integrated with Lotus Notes, Outlook Express or through direct integration with Outlook.

Password Settings: Help protect valuable contact information by setting rules such as password expiration options, password complexity and password re-use.

Field-level Security: Restrict access by user or team and grant read-only access or no access to certain fields. Add employees to a team and permissions update automatically (ACT Premium products only).

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