

PROACTIS

Client-Server

Version II

an introduction

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Proactis II is a client server supply-chain program designed to manage sales ordering, purchase ordering, stock control and invoicing.

Introduction

Proactis II is a product of the PROACTIS Group Ltd (formerly Get Real Systems Ltd), who are based in Wetherby.

It is a mature and robust client-server supply-chain solution featuring numerous modules, including sales orders and invoicing, stock control, purchase ordering and invoice matching, credit management, accruals, intrastat, XML document import/export, an Excel-based Requisition Wizard and Excel-based reporting utilities.

It is the intellectual property of the PROACTIS Group Ltd, but is sold and supported by Suddensource Ltd under an agency agreement.

Background

Launched in 1996, Proactis II was originally called 'DreamSuite'. It was written by a small team including purchasing and financial professionals. The name Proactis was adopted when version II was launched, in 2000.

There are two versions:

- Dream: a version which integrates tightly with Dream financials (reading master data directly and posting via the Dream External DLL);
- Standalone: a version which contains all its own master data but can optionally integrate more loosely with other finance systems.

Proactis P2P (aka Proactis III) is the PROACTIS Group's new product which is an entirely different product about which we can supply information if required.

Philosophy

Proactis was originally designed as an order processing, stock control and invoicing add-on for Dream financials.

Dream uses the unitary ledger principle whereby all database entries are in one large table, the system being designed around the principles of a relational database not around the principles of traditional bookkeeping methods. It also uses the document-based approach rather than the batch entry system. Each document is entered individually, and the details on it (the values on each line) must sum to zero. Dream does not use previously necessary concepts like daybooks, control totals, etc.

Proactis uses the same document-based approach, where each entry represents a piece of paper flowing into, out of or around the organisation. The document-based approach assumes that a document is simply processed and then filed away.

Proactis defines documents and items (the things which can be added to orders and other documents). A document with items on it summarises into three or more 'lines': the header line (generally a sales or purchase ledger), the VAT line (self-explanatory) and detail line(s): one for each item on the document. Documents are generated from previous documents in a 'matchable set' where possible. For example a GRN is created from the relevant purchase order and a purchase invoice is created from (and matched to) both the GRN and the purchase order. Each document which represents a financial transaction can be 'posted' to the books. This includes invoices, credit notes, stock issues and stock transfers.

Proactis items can be defined as purchase items and/or stock items and/or sales items. Items which are flagged as stock items create stock transaction records when they are received or issued on an authorised document. All receipts or issues happen at a selected location and sublocation. All stockholding is defined by location and sublocation. Stock receipts update the average price of an item.

Features & Functions

Proactis II supports:

- multiple companies within a single database
- multiple trading currencies
- multiple delivery and invoice addresses for customer (and supplier) accounts
- multiple 'home' company addresses for delivery and invoicing
- multiple sales and purchase ledgers (but only one nominal per ledger for Dream users)

The Dream version uses master file data read from Dream to save duplication: e.g. VAT, customers, nominals, currencies, periods.

All master data is stored in Proactis in the standalone version.

Main Features

As well as supporting 29 different transaction types (as shown in bold type in the following sections) across the various purchasing, stock and sales modules, Proactis allows multiple document 'templates' (e.g. different types of purchase orders which can represent different types of purchase). After that, it also allows prototypes to be defined which are special versions of templates linked to certain accounts or items, or both (e.g. a 'New Employee' requisition for the items required for a new workstation).

Proactis maintains links between suppliers and items which contain a supplier description, a supplier reference and price data as well as price validity dates.

Proactis features price lists which can be updated easily from Excel and which can exist in many series and versions (e.g. a sterling distributor price list for each month, a sterling end-user price list for each month and a USD export price list for each month). Any given supplier or customer can be linked to any one of the three price lists (series) and will always use the latest version of that list. Discounts can be defined at system level and again applied to any given supplier or customer. Separate discounts can then be applied to each document and even each line.

Proactis maintains a stock history for each financial period. Each item which moved in that period has a record of its closing stock and average price.

Proactis is on the way to making it possible for you to work paperlessly. How far you go is up to you.

Minor Features

Commitment accounting uses budgets to monitor expenditure against budget. This is available in the Dream version only. The Standalone version supports the holding of budget data, but only at present for external reporting purposes.

Orders and invoices can be imported and exported using the BASDA XML schema (version 3). This allows companies to pass documents as email attachments and save postage, time and re-keying. This is not a theoretical function – it's in use.

Credit Management (Dream version only) allows the generation of credit chasing letters.

Proactis produces the data necessary for the submission of Intrastat returns.

Most of the other functions are special to a single Proactis user, e.g. Dynamic Kitting, which allows a sales order to contain a sales 'bundle' made up from a set of rules not a predefined list of items.

Details of any of these functions and the relevant licence module can be supplied on request.

The 'Web Requisitions' module is no longer supported because support for the web interface programs has been stopped. Users of Web Requisitioning have all upgraded to Proactis P2P.

Supply-chain Transaction Types

The 7 main Proactis supply-chain transaction types are:

- **requisitions** flag up requirements and represent a paper requisition produced internally (created back-to-back from sales orders, from the Excel-based Requisition Wizard, imported or entered manually)
- **purchase orders** which are printed and sent to suppliers (created back-to-back from sales orders, from requisitions, imported or entered manually)
- **goods receipts** which represent your supplier's delivery note (created from purchase orders, imported or entered manually)
- **purchase invoices** which represent your supplier's invoices (created from goods received notes, imported or entered manually)
- **sales orders** which represent your customer's orders to you (imported or entered manually)
- **despatch notes** for you to print and send with your deliveries (created from sales orders, imported or entered manually)
- **sales invoices** for you to print and send to your customers (created from despatch notes, imported or entered manually)

There are also 5 types of returns transaction type:

- **supplier returns** allow you to print advice notes to return goods to a supplier (created from goods received notes, imported or entered manually)
- **customer returns** represent the advice note a customer sends you with returned goods (created from despatch notes, imported or entered manually)
- **purchase credit notes** represent the credit note a supplier sends you (created from supplier return notes, imported or entered manually)
- **debit notes** allow you to raise a 'request for credit' and send it to a supplier, and withhold part of a payment (created from supplier return notes, imported or entered manually, also possibly created during invoice matching)
- **sales credit notes** allow you to print and send a customer credit note (created from customer return notes, imported or entered manually)

Stock Transaction Types

The 6 main stock transaction types are:

- **internal issues** take items out of stock and apply the cost to a selected department/cost centre, e.g. maintenance, outwork, administration (imported or entered manually)
- **internal receipts** put items into stock and can re-apply the cost back to the stock nominal on the balance sheet from a selected department/cost centre (imported or entered manually)
- **external receipts** act as goods received notes for users without the purchase ordering licence module – they add items to stock and flag them as having been received from a particular supplier account (entered manually)
- **external issues** act as despatch notes for users without the sales ordering licence module – they remove items from stock and flag them as having been issued to a particular customer account (entered manually)
- **stock transfers** move a quantity of stock from one location and sublocation to another location and sublocation, creating an issue at one location/sublocation and a receipt at another - they can pass financial details to the books if required (imported or entered manually)
- **stocktakes** alter the quantity of an item in stock at a particular location/sublocation, creating an issue or a receipt as required (imported or entered manually)

Other Transaction Types

There are 4 other commonly-used transaction types:

- **Accruals**, reports which list items with certain purchase statuses at the end of a period:
 - they can be used to allow for the cost of delivered but uninvoiced goods
 - they can be used to allow for the cost of undelivered goods (commitments)
 - they can include certain document templates (types) only
 - they can be posted to the books
- **Invoice Adjustments** can be set up so that any difference in value between a purchase order and a related invoice.
- **Sales Contracts** or **Purchase Contracts** can be set up so that they can be used to generate multiple purchase or sales orders using the information in the contract as a base.

Special Transaction Types

In addition to the functions listed above, there are 7 more specialised transaction types:

The **Retail sale** is a specialised form of sales order for stock items which contains little data so it can be processed and printed quickly. After the customer has had a receipt and walked away, the retail sale is converted automatically by one click into a despatch note and a sales invoice. Cost of sales is added to the sales invoice.

Works Orders and **Works Order Updates** allow one or more stock items to be converted (by a factory or otherwise) into another item.

Stores Requests are only used by one user in place of sales orders.

Project transfers, **Remote deliveries** and **Revaluations** are no longer used by any current user.

Related Programs

There are three PowerBuilder-based programs which are shipped free with Proactis:

- The Change UoM utility changes the unit of measure of an item (within its own hierarchy), e.g. changing from kilos to tonnes or boxes of 10 to boxes of 24.
- The Database Manager is used to run Proactis database scripts, for example to create a new database or to upgrade the version of a database.
- The Report Viewer is a simple program for opening “.PSR” files. Any report in Proactis can be saved in “.PSR” format and viewed (like a PDF) by anyone with the viewer. If you need an installable version of the Proactis Report viewer, please ask support.

Import Control

XML import control is another PowerBuilder-based program. It is available as an optional but chargeable extra.

It monitors a specified mailbox and imports any data attached to messages arriving in that mailbox – it can import not only orders and invoices but also new items and new accounts (the latter being added to both Dream and Proactis).

This program is in the process of being re-written in the Microsoft .NET architecture.

Proactis Data Mining

Available as a licensed module of Proactis, Data Mining is a suite of reporting and data upload tools for Dream and Proactis.

Standard reports include:

- Dream/Proactis budget maintenance
- DREAM aged debtors/statements and aged creditors/remittance advices
- Standard document listings
- Master file listings
- Mail merge
- Item upload
- Item maintenance
- Stock reporting
- Stock replenishment settings
- System administration

Data Mining is much more than this however. Modules have been designed which:

- Maintain and report on controlled documents and their whereabouts/issues
- Relating items to certain tasks so a list can be generated to pick items when that task needs to be done
- Maintain additional data against customer and supplier returns
- Linking stock to projects
- Replenishing stock locations by means of transfers (within Proactis you can replenish by purchasing, but this is internal replenishment)
- Creating goods receipts and despatches at a remote warehouse
- Creating despatch notes based on invoices for goods received (which are delivered direct to clients)
- Import data to Dream such as petty cash returns, payments made into other systems, lists of cheques, journals based on calculations, allocation by query, etc
- Automatically send reports of outstanding orders to suppliers for them to review and comment

Requisition Wizard

The Requisition Wizard is a standalone Excel utility to let users create requisitions in Proactis. It can be used by existing Proactis users or other authorised users provided they have network access to the SQL Server database.

A separate and detailed document is available on this product.

Other related programs

The Worksheet Browser belongs to one user, but may be available under licence to others. It allows very sophisticated monitoring of sales contracts. It requires Dream.

The Excel Dream Poster is a stand-alone program for posting invoices from Proactis to Dream. It is available to supported users free of charge on demand.

Two Access-based programs are available at a modest charge:

- Proactis Stocktaking is a system for gathering and entering data for annual stocktakes.
- Dream Debtors is used to run aged debt analysis reports and prepare customer statements.

Customisation and Interfacing

Proactis input screens can be quite heavily customised to suit your business rules. Fields can be re-captioned, made mandatory, made read-only or hidden completely. Some fields can be configured as drop-down lists, date fields with calendars or as yes/no tick-boxes.

Database automation can affect data, for example data in one field can be updated based on data in another after a document is first saved or its status or any other details are changed. This is another technique for enforcing business rules. There are about 20 instances of this in use amongst Proactis users.

Minor enhancements can be made to Proactis under your support agreement, e.g. new fields, pop-up functions, validation rules.

Interfaces

Proactis has a number of interfaces to other systems, apart from the in-built interface to Dream.

Proactis can be interfaced in the following ways:

1. Export data to files for import to Open Accounts;
2. Import suppliers from data exported by Open Accounts;
3. Export of documents via standard XML formats;
4. Import of documents from standard XML formats;
5. Automation of import of documents from standard and custom XML formats;
6. Export of documents to a general interface table for use with other finance systems such as Masterpiece, CODA Financials;
7. Import of sales orders from a CRM system using a programmed interface;
8. Import of various documents from Data Mining;
9. Import of requisitions from the Requisition Wizard.

A separate document discusses the first 5 items above.

Reporting

Inbuilt reporting is quite task-specific, though some of it may be relevant to what you want. This is all explained during implementation.

A system called "Console reporting" was reporting using server-based Crystal Reports and program components. It is now largely abandoned due to its complexity, and the arrival of Microsoft SQL Server Reporting Services.

Both Microsoft SQL Server Reporting Services and Proactis Data Mining can be used to deliver bespoke reports quickly and cheaply.

Bespoke reporting is down to you. Support can advise about table structures if necessary.

Miscellaneous Information

User Help

Supported users will have a password for the "proactisusers" website which holds a lot of historical information about Proactis II and its use.

If necessary we will provide a document called "My Proactis" which has details of how specific tasks are to be carried out by the user.

A documentation CD is replicated on the Proactis installation CD.

A range of Proactis "HowTos" are also on the Proactis installation CD.

Tips

Proactis has hundreds of right-click menus. There is lots you can do from these menus to save time and effort.

Make full use of all three on-screen enquiries (Item Enquiry, Stock Enquiry and Account Enquiry) where you can, for example:

- double-click through to documents listed
- right click to see transaction histories or stock balances
- make notes about correspondence in the 'diary' on the account enquiry

There is a HowTo on correcting mistakes in Proactis. A mistake is not usually terminal.

Support

A standard support contract gets you:

- helpdesk services (by phone and email);
- bug-fixes;
- minor enhancements;
- new releases of Proactis and the Excel utilities;
- user-specific documentation;
- an annual one-day complimentary health-check or consultancy visit.

Support is much more effective if you can arrange for us to have VPN access to your server.

Licensing

Proactis is sold on the following basis:

- A system licence is required.
- Licences can be bought for modules as follows:
 - Purchase orders
 - Invoice matching (purchase invoices)
 - Stock
 - Sales ordering
 - Sales Invoicing
 - Accruals
 - Credit Management
 - Data Mining
 - Works Orders
 - XML import/export
- A number of concurrent user licences are required
- Support is charged at 20% of the list price of the modules bought
- Discounts are available

System Requirements

Proactis II is currently developed using Sybase PowerBuilder (version 9.0.3).

It accesses the database natively using MS SQL Server 7/2000 client. Before it's run for the first time it needs the 'PowerBuilder Runtime' installed – this also then supports several related programs.

In the case of the Dream version, Proactis shares a database, and users, with Dream.

Server Requirements

- Microsoft SQL Server for its database (versions 7, 2000 or 2005).

Network Requirements

- Direct wired connectivity (recommended) to the server for all users of Proactis
- Broadband or better connection to the server for all users of the Requisition Wizard and Data Mining

Client PCs (Proactis 2)

- Microsoft SQL Server 7 or 2000 client software
- Microsoft Windows 2000 or later
- Microsoft Excel 2000 or later
- Microsoft Word 2000 or later
- At least 512 Mb of memory
- Main user to be machine administrator during installation

Client PCs (Requisition Wizard or Data Mining)

- Microsoft Windows 2000 or later
- Microsoft Excel 2000 or later
- At least 256 Mb of memory

For DREAM users

- One or more user groups with zero level Dream access so that varying Proactis access can be configured.
- A Dream period must exist covering document dates to be used.
- A Dream VAT period which is open and automatic must exist to cover the current date.
- Select permissions are required on several Dream tables.