

Sage 500 ERP Intelligence
Reporting
Report designer Add-In v1.1
Frequently Asked Questions

03.04.2013



Question 1

What is the Report Designer Add-In and In-Memory Technology?

Answer

The Report Designer Add-In is an addition to the Report Designer module which is an alternative to the current report Layout Generator (Fig 1. below) to empower users to take control of all design aspects of their reporting layouts.

The Report Designer Add-In allows users to break down a report into reusable pieces and then control where and how these pieces fit together to create a report. These pieces are Excel functions which communicate with a new In-Memory processing engine which will guarantee performance by being able to crunch financial numbers very quickly.

While the Report Designer Add-In is installed separately, it enhances the Report Designer module.



Fig 1. The current Report Layout Generator

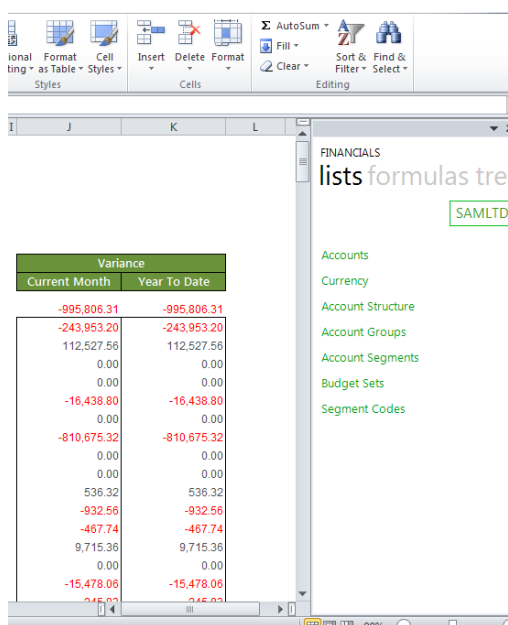


Fig 2. The Report Designer Add-In

Question 2

Who in my organization would typically benefit from using the Report Designer Add-In?

Answer

The typical user is the accountant, financial manager, financial controller and the finance team in the organization, who work extensively with Microsoft Excel (having intermediate to advanced Excel skills) and require their reports to be done in a specific way, need to make frequent changes to their financial reports and/or are looking for an easy-to-use multi-year and multi-budget reporting solution.

Question 3

What skills do I need to be able to use the Report Designer Add-In effectively?

Answer

- One would need to have the following skills:
- A good understanding of the Report Designer Add-In functionality as detailed in the **Report Designer Add-In User Guide**.
- Intermediate to Advanced Excel skills i.e. know the following Excel features:
 - Excel functions.
 - Excel fill handles.

- Cell referencing and absolute cell references.
- Conditional formatting.
- Accounting & Financial Reporting Skills:
 - Understand General Ledgers.
 - Understand budgets.
 - Understand typical management reporting needs.

Question 4

What are my first steps to getting started on the Report Designer Add-In?

Answer

The first steps to getting started with the Report Designer Add-In are to read the User Guide, (zipped with the Add-In download) and watch the [“How to” videos on the Sage 500 ERP Intelligence Reporting Group](#) on the BI Community. For further information you can refer to the Add-In Help file.

Question 5

Why is the Report Designer Add-In needed if I already have the current Layout Generator within the Report Designer module?

Answer

The Layout Generator serves the need for automated reports at the click of a button; however this automation cannot always cater for every single reporting requirement. The new Report Designer Add-In extends the Report Designer functionality, giving users maximum flexibility to design their reports from the ground up exactly the way they wish, without any design, fiscal year or budget set constraints.

Question 6

Where can I find the Report Designer Add-In functionality?

Answer

To access the Report Designer Add-In you will need to run the Report Designer Add-In report out from the Report Manager module. Once the report has been run out into Microsoft Excel the Report Designer Add-In features will be found in the Excel task pane. While the Report Designer Add-In is installed and run separately, it enhances the functionality of the Report Designer module.

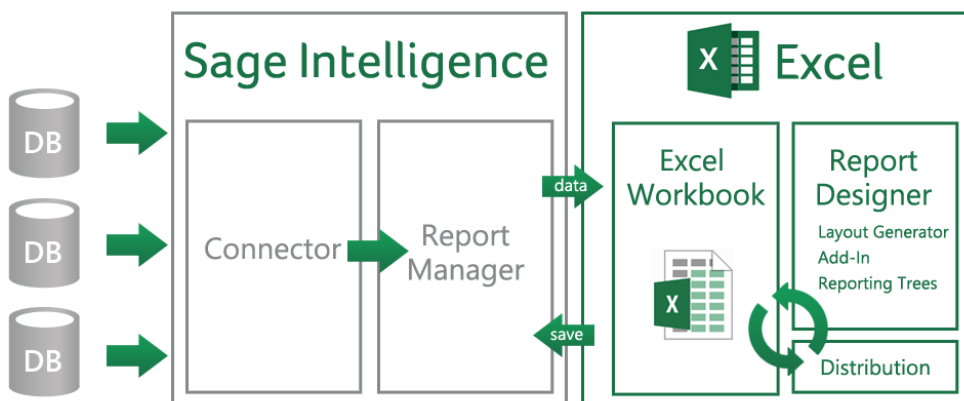


Fig 3. The positioning of the Report Designer Add-In within the overall Sage Intelligence product

Question 7

What are you solving and for whom with the introduction of this Report Designer Add-In?

Answer

Through this new Report Designer Add-In we are providing solutions to end-users who wish to take complete control of changing their reports in Excel but find it difficult to do so without help.

What we are solving:

Solve Area	Existing Intelligence Financial Reports	Report Built With New Report Designer Add-In
Performance	One large data request is sent to database which can sometimes be slow depending on GL account volumes.	Multiple small data requests are sent to database which are efficient and quick.
	Returned data is a single, usually large table.	Returned data is a set of smaller tables which contain no redundant data, greatly reducing report size and speed.
	GL data formulas inside report layouts can sometimes be hard to understand and slow to process if many reports are created within one Excel Workbook.	GL data formulas inside report layouts use simple Excel functions which utilize a fast In-Memory Engine to process data requests.
Ease of Use	GL data formulas are system generated and difficult to modify manually.	GL data formulas are designed for end-user usage and are simple to understand and use.
	Changes made in Excel after generating a report are not always easily reusable in new reports.	The reusable report pieces available can be copied and pasted from one report to another.
Accessibility to data	The current Layout Generator within the Report Designer module is a great tool but doesn't provide easy and complete control over all aspects of a report.	Allows users to dictate control over each individual Excel cell of the report ensuring maximum flexibility and control.
	Users need to invest much time in learning how to change the backend of reports to do requirements like multi-currency, 5 year trends and multi-budget reporting	Creating multi-currency, multi-year and multi-budgets financial reports will be easy via the use of simple report run-time options.

Question 8

Why performance of the Report Designer Add-In is better than the Report Designer module's current Layout Generator?

Answer

1. Less complex database queries are executed against the source database at run time, reports run out into Excel much quicker.
2. The Report Designer Add-In uses an efficient In-Memory engine which is much faster when calculating financial values.
3. Report layouts no longer require complex formulas to show financial data, Excel's performance is improved greatly.

Question 9

I have spent a lot of time building my own templates with the Layout Generator and have a list of my own reports now, how are they related to the Report Designer Add-In and can I reuse my prior work?

Answer

If you wish to change your existing generated layouts to take advantage of the new features, you will be able to do so by swapping out the formulas which currently return financial values with the new drag and drop Formulas instead.

Question 10

If the Report Designer Add-In can do everything the standard out-the-box Financial Reports can do, then why do I need the standard Financial Reports at all?

Answer

The out-the-box Financial Reports available with just a Report Manager license are great if you are happy with the template each report is based on. If you need to thoroughly customize these predefined templates then the Report Designer Add-In should be the preferred method of building your Financial Reports.

Question 11

If I have been using the Report Designer Layout Generator, why would I use the Report Designer Add-In now? If I haven't used the Layout Generator should I ignore it and always use the Report Designer Add-In?

Answer

Which feature you use will be determined by your reporting requirements and skills set summarized as below:

Report Designer Features – Which Features to Use and Why	
Use Layout Generator When...	Use Report Designer Add-In When...
Your reports have been built and you rarely ever need to change them.	The accounts within your ERP system change frequently and your reporting requirements change frequently, requiring you to tweak report designs and logic often.
You don't consider your reporting needs to be advanced or complex.	You need to be able to create and control advanced Financial Reports which suit your unique business needs.
You are happy for the cosmetic design and layout of your reports to be assumed, automated and you won't make many changes thereafter.	You want to have full control over the design of your reports and want to be able to add or remove elements of the design easily after you have created your report.
You only need to report off of a single budget code and don't need to report off more than just current fiscal year and prior year only.	You need to be able to easily do multi-year (3 years and more) and multi-budget reporting.
Can you do multi-currency reporting, but some customization required.	You can quickly & easily do multi-currency reporting with the drag and drop functionality.
You don't need to include more than 5 report layouts inside each Excel workbook.	You need to include more than 5 report layouts inside each Excel Workbook.
Basic Excel skills required	Intermediate/Advanced Excel skills required (must have an understanding of Excel functions)

Question 12

Does the Report Designer Add-In for Sage 500 ERP differ to the Sage 100 ERP Report Designer Add-In

Answer

The standard functionality is the same for Sage 100 and 500 ERP, so there is no steep learning curve. The product differs in the following ways:

- When drilling down to transactions in Sage 500 ERP you will need to enter your login credentials for Sage 500 ERP in the pop up screen.
- When running out the Report Designer Add-In in Sage 500 ERP, you will need to define the year/s you are running the report out for in the parameter window.
- Account Groups and Account Types differ as per the differences between the two Sage ERP's.
- There are two new Formulas in the Sage 500 ERP Report Designer Add-In - quality and quantity opening balance.

Question 13

What are the technical pre-requisites for being able to install the Report Designer Add-In?

Answer

System Requirements

One of the following operating systems:

- Windows XP SP3 32 bit
- Windows Vista SP2 32 bit
- Windows 7 32 bit
- Windows 7 64 bit

Microsoft Excel:

- Microsoft Excel 2007
- Microsoft Excel 2010 32 bit

Sage 500 ERP Intelligence 7.3, 7.4 or 2013 (7.5)

- Report Designer Site License
- Report Manager License

Question 14

How do I download the Report Designer Add-In?

Answer

The Report Designer Add-In is available for download on the Sage [Partner Portal](#) or [Customer Portal](#).

Please note: You will need to own the Sage Intelligence Report Designer module in order to download the Report Designer Add-In. The Release Notes and User Guide are available with the zipped Report Designer Add-in download file.

Question 15

If I am running Sage 500 ERP 7.3/7.4 (formerly known as Sage ERP MAS 500 5.6/6.0), do I need to upgrade my ERP version to Sage 500 ERP 2013 (7.5) to make use of the Report Designer Add-In?

Answer

No, the Report Designer Add-In is available for Sage 500 ERP version 7.3 and 7.4 Intelligence Reporting users and can be downloaded as per the steps listed in Q 14.

Please note: You will need to have installed the Report Designer Installer from the Sage 500 ERP customer/partner portal.

Question 16

What does the Report Designer Add-In cost?

Answer

For customers who have purchased the Report Designer module there is no cost for the Report Designer Add-In as this is an extension to the Report Designer module.

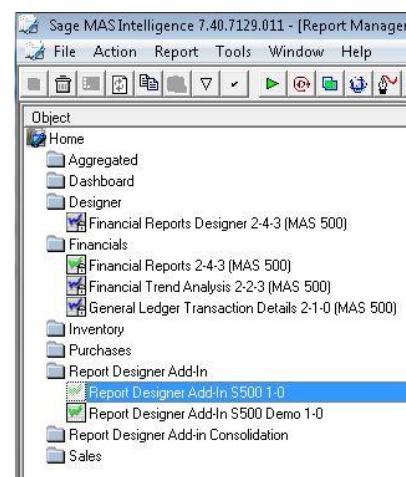
Question 17

Why does Sage Intelligence have 3 methods to achieve the same financial data extraction objective?

Answer

Sage Intelligence Report Manager is required to run any reports real-time from the data source delivered into Excel. For financial reporting Sage Intelligence offers 3 methods for creating financial statements:

1. **Financial Reports'** is for users who don't want to incur any additional costs (i.e. have not purchased the Report Designer module). The financial reports are run real-time from the data source into Excel, and editing of these reports is limited to using your native Excel skills.
2. **Report Designer Layout Generator** is for users wanting to push data into Excel and automate layouts quickly. The Layout Generator gives users the option to design/edit the report layouts from the Graphical Layout Generator tool as well as edit the reports in Excel
3. **Report Designer Add-In** is for users who to take full control of all the design aspects of their report layouts and take the complexity out of designing financial reports inside Excel.



In summary:

Module Needed	Report Options	Ease of Use Rating *	Power & Flexibility Rating
Report Manager	Standard Financial Reports	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Report Designer	Report Designer Layout Generator	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
	Report Designer Add-In	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

*Assuming you have the pre-requisite skills listed in Question 2.

Question 18

How does this Report Designer update apply to Reporting Trees and Distribution?

Answer

The Add-In will be able to leverage your existing reporting trees, ensuring powerful organizational filtering in your reports.

Distribution functionality will remain untouched by the inclusion of the Report Designer Add-In and will distribute reports regardless of how they are designed.

Question 19

Can I create user-defined fields or add new columns to a report

Answer

No. This is not something you are currently able to do, but is something we are investigating for a future build. If you have examples of how you are wanting to use this feature that you are currently using and would be happy to share with us, please post on our [idea portal](#).

Question 20

How would I access the Consolidated Report Designer Add-In reports?

Answer

In order to use the Report Designer Add-In for multiple company consolidations, you will need to run the Report Designer Add-In report which is saved under the Report Designer Add-In Consolidation folder in the Report Manager Consolidations link within Sage 500 ERP.

Question 21

I already bought the Connector module, why do I need to buy the Report Designer module license if all I will be using is Excel?

Answer

The Connector module enables you to consolidate data, connect to other systems beyond your ERP and connect to modules/tables within the ERP that are not catered for within the out the box 'Financial Reports'. The Report Designer Add-In introduces additional functionality to the Report Designer module giving users the option of simplified "drag and drop" report creation or being able to design reports from the ground up. This will only work if the Report Designer is active

You will be using Excel however you will also be leveraging the power and flexibility of the drag and drop lists and formulas made available via the Report Designer Add-In.

Question 22

Why would I choose to start a report from scratch rather than run the pre-existing reports like I do in my ERP? I hardly use Excel except to export my data out of my ERP, and I don't know how to use formulas.

Answer

While predefined Financial Reports are available, they are rarely found to fit the needs of specific businesses as they need to be generic or require manual mappings between ERP accounts and reporting groups. These are more commonly used as the basis for customization to meet specific needs. A set of predefined layouts based on a Sage 300 ERP demonstration company are shipped with the install of the Report Designer Add-In and will allow you to copy the layouts into your own reports and tweak them.

The following demonstration layouts are made available:

- Income Statement
- Summarized Income Statement

- Balance Sheet
- Statement of Cash Flows
- Categories
- Trial Balance
- Statistical Report

If you are not familiar with Excel Formulas then the automated Layout Generator feature within the Report Designer module is for you.