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An overview of how RAS_EDI works for Stationery Dealers who use SAGE Line 50 Accounts

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Introduction

In simple terms, RAS_EDI facilitates the transfer of data between Spicers' and VOWs' online ordering and customer management facilities and SAGE Line 50 Accounts. RAS_EDI comprises a number of interlinked modules each of which carries out an individual data transfer.

An updated version of RAS_EDI (designated as RAS_EDI_2010) was released in June 2010. This version increases significantly the number of data flows available and also takes advantage of automating some of the downloads using a ftp (file transfer protocol) process which can be easily scheduled at the dealer's site. Additional data flows were added in late 2010 and early 2011.

RAS_EDI_2010 includes a concise master menu and individual module launcher program which is designed to take up as little desktop space as possible and which may be positioned at a selected location on the user's desktop.

The 2010 version of RAS_EDI has been optimised for ease of use. Once it is setup, most of the data processing tasks take only 3 or 4 mouse clicks.

At the end of this document are several sections covering Frequently Asked Questions and IT related aspects of RAS_EDI.

Note re SPICERLinkWeb and SPICERVision.

SPICERVision is Spicer's 2010 web portal providing on-line access to dealer's 'Account' specific information. Spicers have been rolling out SPICERVision to new and existing dealers from early 2010. RAS_EDI can operate with both SPICERLinkWeb and SPICERVision.

Data flows in and out of SAGE - summary

Product and Pricing data into SAGE

Orders into SAGE

Transactions into SAGE

Orders out of SAGE

Back to Back Orders

Data transfers in more detail:

Product and Pricing data into SAGE

Spicers

- **The Spicer Product File into the Sage Product List**
- **Cost prices from the weekly EOS Excel file into the Sage Product List**
- **Automatically collect the SpicerFile and EOS.xls file from the Spicer dedicated ftp site**

VOW

- **The VOW Standard Cost Price CSV File**
- **Cost prices from the VOW Weekly Catalogue Generated Cost Price CSV File**
- **Automatically collect the VOW csv files from the VOW dedicated ftp site**

Other

- **Dealer special prices from Excel spreadsheets into Sage Customer Price Lists**

Orders into SAGE

- **OscarNet orders into SAGE**
- **OfficePoint orders into SAGE**
- **VOW Smooth-e orders into SAGE**
- **Ascii orders files from other sources**

Transactions into SAGE

- **Spicer EDI Invoices and Credits into the Sage Purchase Ledger**
- **Automatically collect invoice and credit batch files from the Spicer dedicated ftp site**
- **VOW EDI Invoices and Credits into the Sage Purchase Ledger**
- **Automatically collect invoice and credit batch files from the VOW dedicated ftp site**
- **Incoming transaction daybook and VAT compatible transaction analysis printouts**

Orders from SAGE to Spicers

- **Orders from Sage into SPICERVision or SPICERLinkWeb**

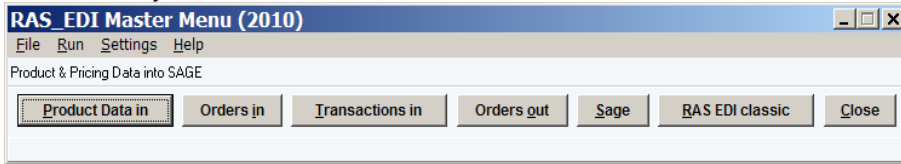
Back to Back Orders

- **Quickly create SAGE Purchase Orders from either SAGE Invoice or Sales Orders**

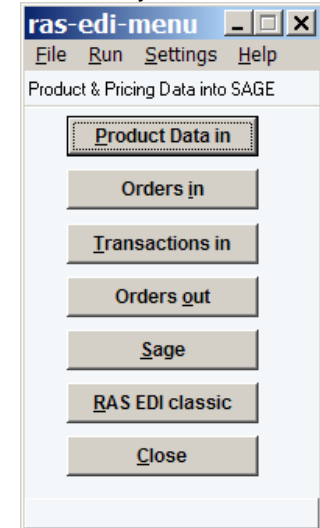
RAS_ED I master menu and program launcher

RAS_ED I 2010 includes a compact program launcher module which helps to reduce desktop clutter and provides access to lots of useful ancillary operations. The user can choose two different styles and can position the menu at any location on the desktop.

Horizontal style menu



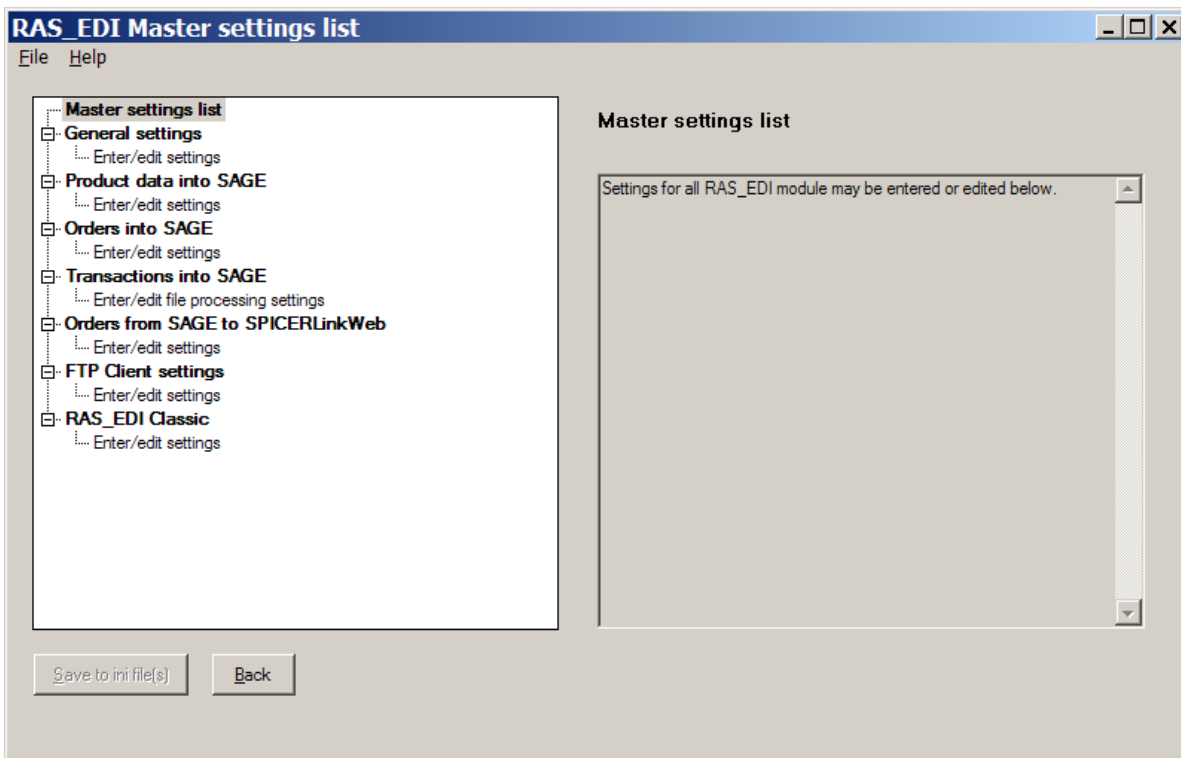
Vertical style menu



The RAS_ED I Classic button in the master menu provides access to the previous version of RAS_ED I (if installed) and can be switched off in the settings editor.

Settings editor

Also now fully incorporated is the comprehensive and easy to use settings editor originally introduced in 2008.



Automatic downloads from the Spicer ftp server

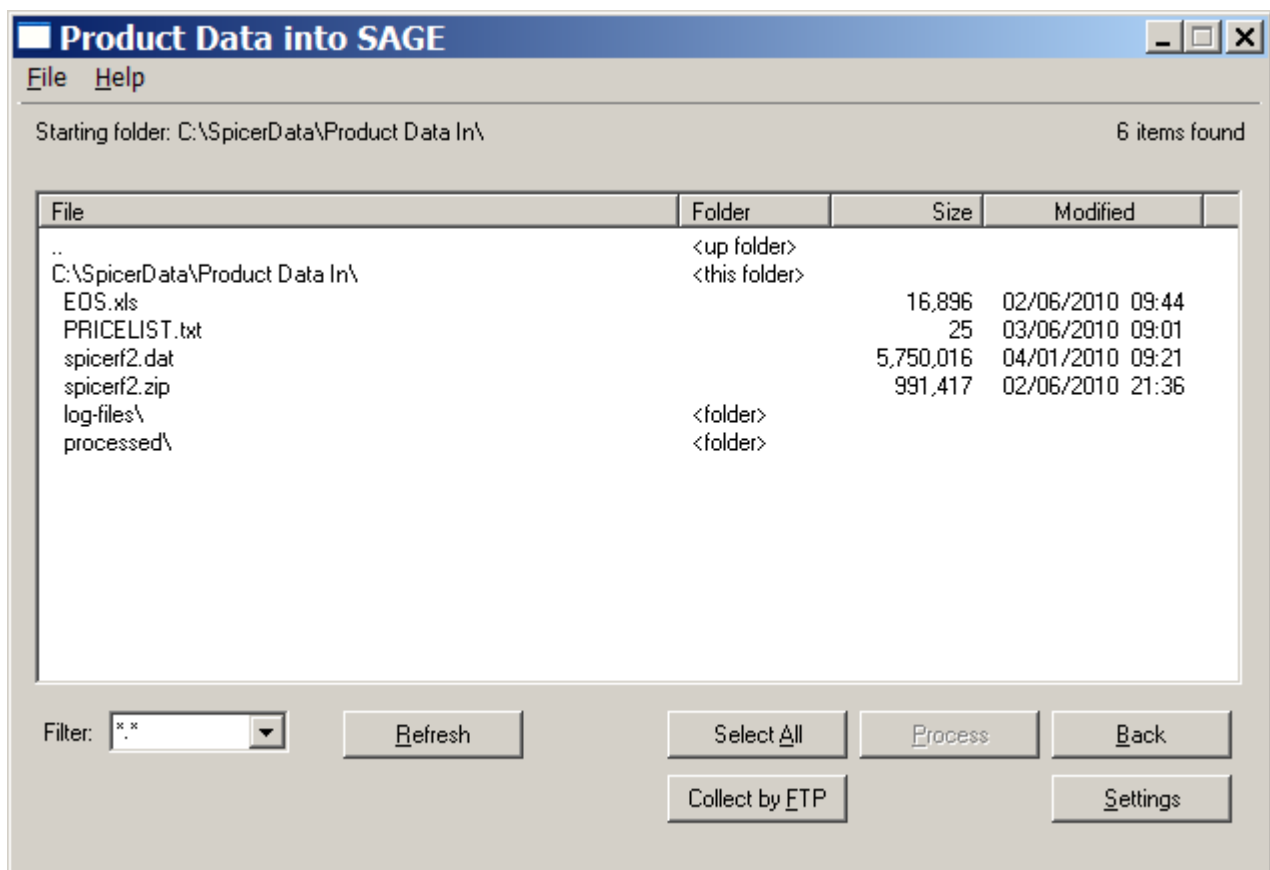
ftp stands for *file transfer protocol* and is a method for transferring data files from one computer to another via an internet connection.

RAS_EDI 2010 incorporates a ftp client that permits the user to download Product and Transaction data files directly from Spicers' or Vows' ftp portals.

Not only is the ftp download process easier to use but it can also be scheduled and run as a background task.

We recommend the use of the ftp server whenever it is available.

Product and Pricing data into SAGE



Using the Product Data into SAGE module

Processing an individual product data file is very easy. In the screen above, the user simply clicks on the file to be processed. This enable the Process button. By then clicking on the Process button, the selected product file will be imported directly into SAGE without any further intervention by the user.

Before running any product or cost price import for the first time, the appropriate settings for the specific file type must be entered via the RAS_EDI settings editor. Once done, thereafter the day to day user does not have to worry about whether the import will operate correctly.

RAS_EDI can process product data files from both Spicers and VOW.

Product Files into the SAGE Product List

This is generally the first RAS_EDI data transfer that a dealer should use. What it does is to take the Spicer or VOW product file and puts it straight into the SAGE Product list. Once this RAS_EDI data transfer is run, the SAGE Product list holds all current Spicer/VOW products with up-to-date retail prices and the dealers buying prices.

Thereafter, the dealer immediately has all products available to look up inside SAGE and to incorporate in SAGE invoices or orders. Better still, once an invoice or order is created, the dealer can immediately see how much profit is being made on the order.

The process starts with the download of the Spicer or VOW Product File.

For Spicers, this download may be done manually using SPICERLinkWeb or SPICERVision or may be automated using the Spicer's dedicated ftp site.

Spicer Product files can also be obtained directly from the Spicer support team but often the version sent out by the support team only contains general trade buying prices rather than the dealer's own buying prices.

The downloaded SpicerFile not only contains up to date Spicer products with rrp's but also holds the dealer's own buying prices. The SpicerFile also holds other information which can be used to enhance the product list within SAGE.

For VOW, at the time of writing this document, the main product file is delivered by email whilst the weekly cost files come via the ftp server. However, it is anticipated that the main product file will be available via the ftp server by the middle of 2011.

So, what does RAS_EDI do:

- (i) It adds any new products to and updates all existing products in SAGE.
- (ii) Products can be added as either "stock" or "non-stock" SAGE product types.
- (iii) The dealer's buying prices can be added as the cost price for each the SAGE product. Having correct cost prices means that sales profit calculations within SAGE are accurate.
- (iv) The dealer can optionally add "dummy stock". Dummy stock ensures that the SAGE ledger updating process works correctly for those dealers who do not operate accurate stock control and provides an additional benefit of a stock usage history (noting that most small Spicer dealers rely on Spicers to look after stock control).

A typical SpicerFile import of over 21000 products with either cost prices or dummy stock added takes between 10 and 20 minutes on an average computer. If the computer being used has SAGE networked to a server and the networking hardware is only 100Mbps standard, the import will take longer - in such situations, it is always preferable to run the SpicerFile import process directly on the server computer (or even better - upgrade the network hardware as this will also significantly improve the performance of SAGE).

Cost prices from the weekly Spicer or VOW files into the Sage Product List

The main SpicerFile and VOW product data file holds a vast range of products where prices do not change too much in each 3 month period between updates. However, some products are subject to very variable prices and so, both Spicers and VOW issue weekly files containing the relevant products and the dealer's buy price applying for that week.

For Spicers, the weekly "EOS" file may be downloaded manually or automatically via the ftp portal. For VOW, the weekly cost price is delivered via the ftp portal.

RAS_EDI permits cost prices in the Spicer and VOW files to be quickly and easily imported into SAGE.

Dealer special prices from Excel spreadsheets into Sage Customer Price Lists

All stationery dealers give discounted prices to their good clients. Commonly, prices are banded into various levels of discount.

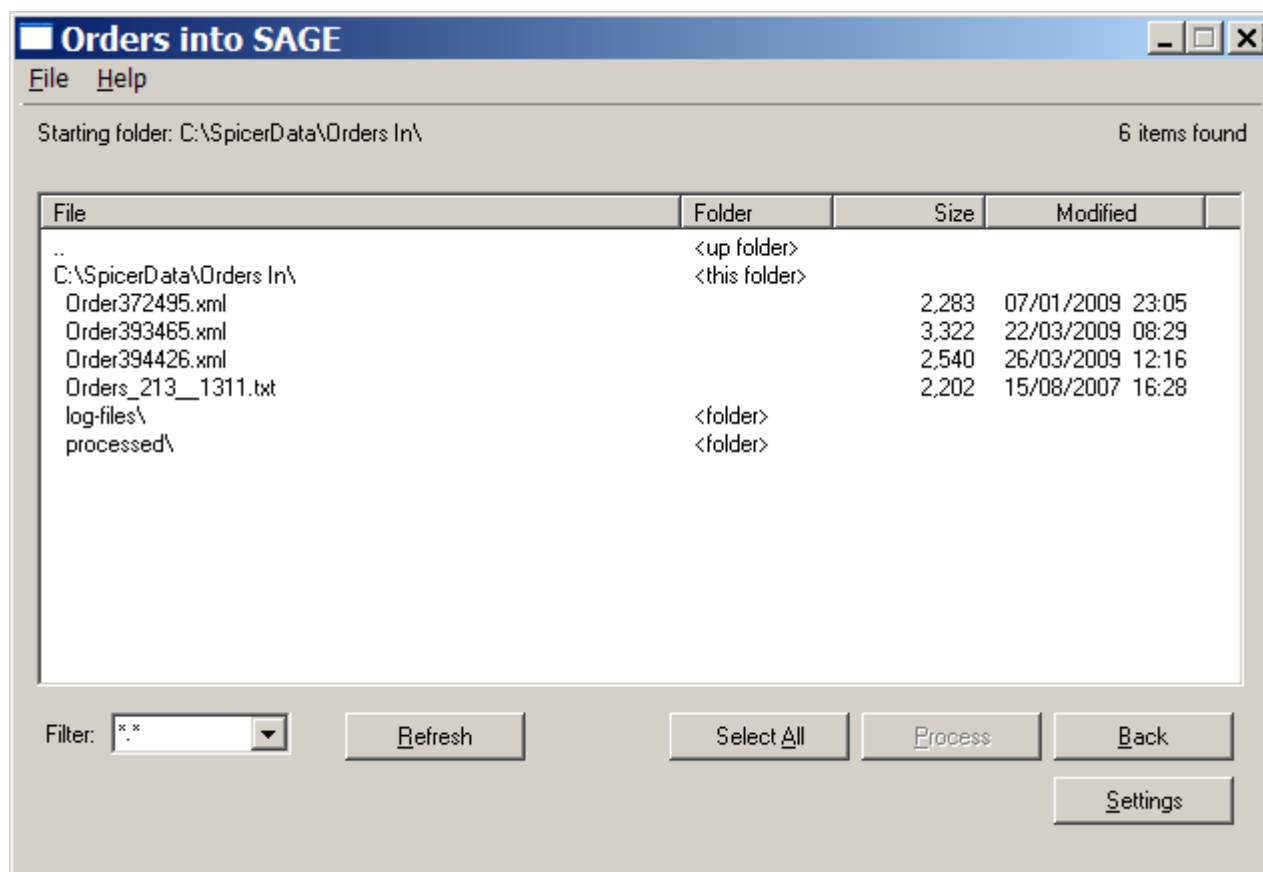
RAS_EDI provides the dealer with a method whereby:

- The dealer can maintain a list of "contract" or special prices in a an Excel spreadsheet – this file can be used to print off copies or to create pdf files for issuing to the customer.
- The "contract" prices can be imported directly into SAGE so that a contract price is automatically selected by SAGE when a related Spicer product is being entered into a SAGE invoice or order..
- Customer price data can be passed to Spicers to assist with setting up the pricing matrix within OscarNet.

Once a Contract or Special Price List is created for the first time inside SAGE, the user must allocate sales accounts to the list. Thereafter, in the SAGE invoice or sales order modules, the "contract" or special list price for any product in a price list is always adopted for a customer whose account is linked to that price list.

RAS_EDI can process any number of price lists.

Orders into SAGE



Using the Orders into SAGE module

Processing order files is very easy. In the screen above, the user would normally simply click on the Select All button, whereupon the Process button becomes enabled. By then clicking on the Process button, all the waiting order files will be imported directly into SAGE without any further intervention by the user. Different types of incoming order may be processed at the same time.

Before running any order import for the first time, the appropriate settings for the specific file type must be

entered via the RAS_EDI settings editor. Once done, thereafter the day to day user does not have to worry about whether the import will operate correctly.

Where orders originate from

RAS_EDI can process orders from the following sources:

- from Spicers' OscarNet
- from VOW Smooth-e
- from OfficePoint
- from other facilities

Typical order processing procedure (eg from OscarNet)

Spicers have provided their dealers with the OscarNet on-line ordering facility to permit the dealer's customers to quickly place orders via the internet. The dealer's customers see any special buying prices that have been approved by the dealer, and can also receive an email acknowledgement of any order that they have placed.

In order to process orders into SAGE, the dealer must receive a copy of all orders placed via OscarNet. This has to "switched on" in OscarNet, and once running means that all orders placed in OscarNet are confirmed to the dealer via an acknowledgement sent to the dealer via email.

Once the order acknowledgement email is received in the dealer's email client, a copy is saved in a folder designated for that purpose, so that when RAS_EDI is run, all unprocessed orders immediately show in a list and may then be imported to SAGE in a batch or one by one.

The dealer may choose to import the incoming orders to either SAGE invoices or sales orders. Incoming orders can be optionally marked as "ordered via OscarNet" (this latter facility relates to how orders may be selected for export from SAGE). New invoices or sales orders within SAGE are added with the next appropriate number within SAGE.

RAS_EDI includes "exception handling" and "substitutions". If an incoming order holds a sales reference or product code that is not present inside SAGE, RAS_EDI will automatically substitute a default "item missing" code. Orders with such items can then subsequently be corrected within SAGE. As well as handling missing items, RAS_EDI can also make sales reference or product code substitutions, eg an incorrect incoming sales reference can be automatically changed to the correct ref, similarly for product codes.

Orders from other sources

However, RAS_EDI is not restricted to only handling orders from OscarNet. Orders can be extracted from any regularly formatted ascii file. Once setup correctly, RAS_EDI can extract orders from different file types in one run.

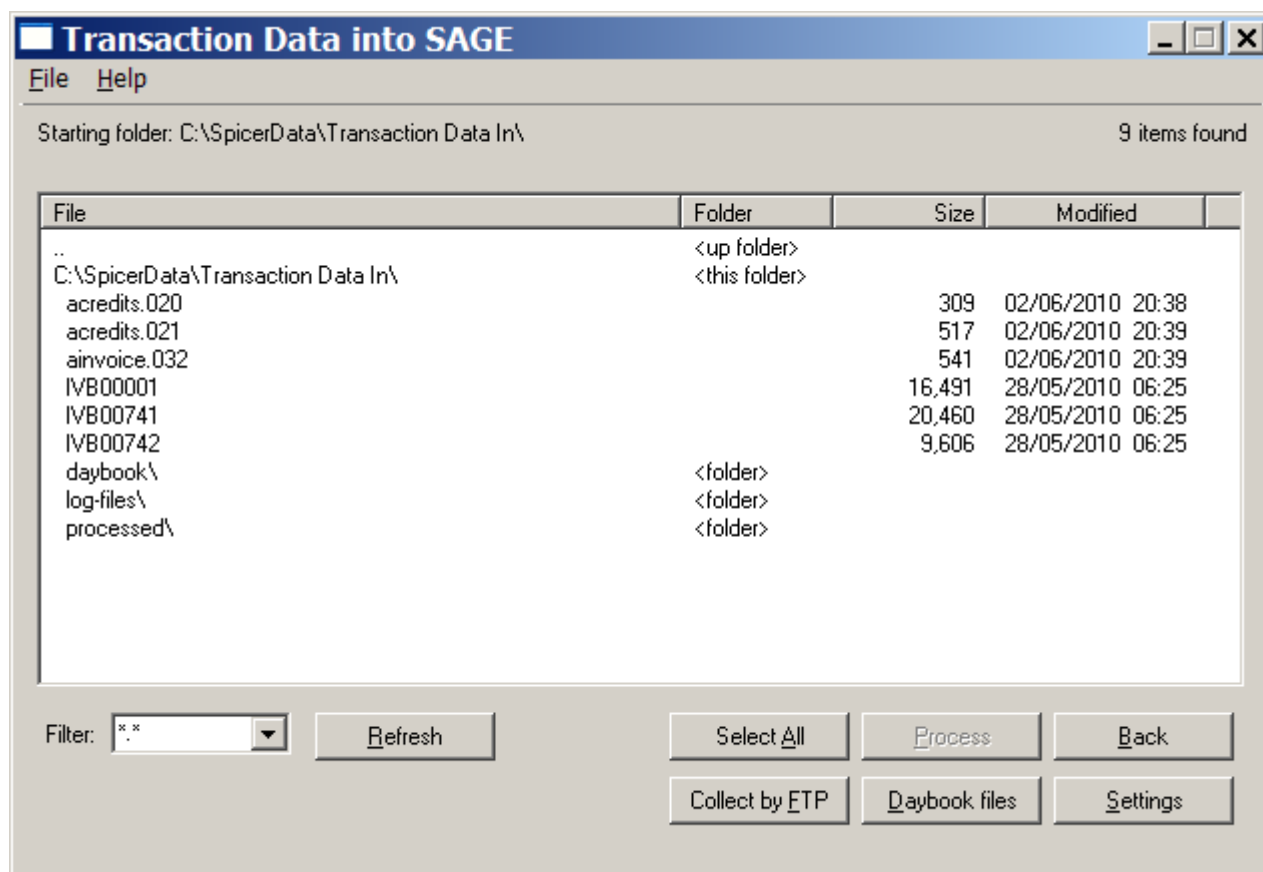
The OfficePoint group of office product dealers provide their dealers with digital copies of their customer's orders. These order files are in xml format but that makes no difference to the ease with which the orders are imported into SAGE. In fact, one of the OfficePoint import modules can adopt the incoming order number as the SAGE invoice or sales order number.

VOW provide their dealers with the Smooth-e online ordering system.

Over the last 2 to 3 years, a number of RAS_EDI users have requested special incoming data processing procedures. These have included:

- import modules for dealer's own on-line ordering systems.
- applying price uplifts by a specific % for a specific sales acc ref.
- translation of an incoming OscarNet account name and cost centre to a specific sales acc ref.

Transactions into SAGE



Using the Transactions into SAGE module

Processing transaction batch files is very easy. In the screen above, the user would normally simply click on the Select All button, whereupon the Process button becomes enabled. By then clicking on the Process button, all the waiting transaction batch files will be imported directly into SAGE without any further intervention by the user. Different types of batch file may be processed at the same time.

Before running any transaction import for the first time, the appropriate settings for the specific file type must be entered via the RAS_EDI settings editor. Once done, thereafter the day to day user does not have to worry about whether the import will operate correctly.

Transaction batch file types

RAS_EDI can import transaction batch files from:

- Spicers' SPICERLinkWeb or SPICERVision.
- Spicers' opXML format files as delivered via the Spicer ftp portal.
- VOW opXML format files as delivered via the VOW ftp portal.

Spicer or VOW EDI Invoices and Credits into the Sage Purchase Ledger

The process starts by the dealer either manually downloading the invoice and credit transaction files or alternatively, automating the download via the ftp process. In either case, the downloaded files should be saved into the designated folder within RAS_EDI, whereupon they will then appear in the Transaction Data In panel.

RAS_EDI permits the user to specify their own purchase and nominal ledger codes, VAT codes and department numbers for the incoming data. Invoice/credits containing mixed S and Z VAT codes can either be processed as one item or the S and Z values separated into two items. Carriage charge product codes

may be separated out into individual items.

Additional invoice/credit analysis information produced

As part of the processing procedure, RAS_EDI can provide the user with useful analysis.

Firstly, a summary of the data actually being imported into SAGE may be optionally stored in a monthly or weekly daybook file. This file is in csv format and may be opened for further analysis using Excel. RAS_EDI also includes a option to list all the transactions in any daybook file and to then produce a detailed summary as below sorted by purchase ledger reference and nominal ledger reference.

The screenshot shows a software window titled 'Transaction Data into SAGE' with a sub-window 'Daybook analysis'. The main window shows a file path and dimensions (cols: 10 rows: 11). The 'Daybook analysis' window contains a table with the following data:

PL Ref	NL Ref	Nett	VAT	Gross
000-VOW	5000	425.96	74.55	500.51
000-VOW	5001	0.00	0.00	0.00
000-VOW	5002	0.00	0.00	0.00
SPI000	5000	475.01	83.13	558.14
SPI000	5001	33.57	0.00	33.57
SPI000	5002	7.30	1.28	8.58

Secondly, each invoice or credit batch file is analysed into its separate documents and a VAT Input compatible file created. The information output is typically:

```
Transaction file C:\SpicerData\Transaction Data In\IVB00433 - processed on 29-01-2011 at 13:22:41

Supplier      : Spicers Ltd
VAT number   : 215142996
Document num : 99633415
Type         : Invoice
Date        : 13/01/2011
Order ref    : rowan
Del note num : 3640797
Deliver to   : A SAGE dealer, A business part, Somewhere in the UK, PP00 OPP
Items -----Qty--VC-(TC)-----Goods amnt---Product description--
378258      1   S (T1)          7.85   Rexel Prof Business Card Book2101131          PACK = 1
295861      1   S (T1)          0.57   5 Star Desk Tidy Black                        PACK = 1
902460      1   S (T1)          1.22   5 Star Office 217mm ScissorsBlack            PACK = 1
918540      1   S (T1)          0.83   5 Star H/Strip 20Sht PlstStapler Black        PACK = 1
668217      1   S (T1)          6.65   Fellowes Cryst Gel Kbrd WrstBlk 9112201      PACK = 1
423652      20  S (T1)          5.40   5 Star Office PP Index A4White 1-12          PACK = 1
790358      2   S (T1)         93.98   HP LaserJet Black PrintCartridge CB436A      PACK = 1
652477      3   S (T1)         58.56   HP No20 Ink Cart Blk ForDJ610 C6614DE        PACK = 1
192663      4   S (T1)         29.84   HP no.21 Ink Cartridge BlkC9351AE#UUS        PACK = 1
474184      4   S (T1)         38.92   Canon PG-37 Black Cartridge2145B001          PACK = 1
295969      1   S (T1)          1.53   5 Star Easy Tear Clear Tape25mmx66m          PACK = 6
640925      2   S (T1)         12.36   Duracell Ultra Power AA Pk1281235502         PACK = 1
734718      1   S (T1)         54.74   #TrexusIntro Dlx Mesh TiltOps Achr Lthr      PACK = 1

Goods value 312.45   VAT value 61.55
A settlement discount of 4.69 applies to this invoice.
```

Analysis	TC	Vat Rate	Nett	Vat	NL
zero rate	T0	0.00	0.00	0.00	5001
std rate	T1	20.00	312.45	61.55	5000

=====

Orders from SAGE to Spicers

Orders from Sage into SPICERVision or SPICERLinkWeb

At the time of writing this document, this module is designed to work specifically with Spicers' SPICERLinkWeb or SPICERVision. If SPICERVision is being used, we recommend that the optional desktop based SPICERVision Assistant is installed.

As explained earlier, orders that originate in OscarNet can be easily and quickly processed into SAGE. However, what about those orders that result from personal sales visits or which are telephoned or faxed in.

RAS_EDI can also deal with these types of orders. The process starts with the dealer entering them directly into SAGE immediately upon receipt. Once inside SAGE, of course the order/invoice/delivery note paperwork for the order may immediately be prepared. RAS_EDI then enables the dealer to pass the order information directly from SAGE into SPICERVision or SPICERLinkWeb. Once an order is held within SPICERVision or SPICERLinkWeb, it can be submitted online to Spicers in the same as any other order manually entered to SPICERVision or SPICERLinkWeb. RAS_EDI can extract orders from the SAGE sales invoice, sales order or purchase order data sets.

When selecting orders to processed, RAS_EDI permits SAGE items to be selected by date, number or account reference ranges. Spicer order types, order header, special delivery instructions and delivery service codes can be specified for each batch. However, individual orders within a batch can have various settings overridden by values placed within the order. Delivery addresses are normally picked up from the

SAGE files - however one-off orders can also be processed with a delivery address entered at the start of the run. Finally, only items within an order where the product supplier code is associated with Spicers will be extracted.

As RAS_EDI completes a successful ordering run, those orders that have been accepted by Spicers are flagged as "ORDERED on dd/mm/yyyy". This flag then prevents those items from being re-ordered. The dealer may optionally flag orders as "NOT TO BE ORDERED" by RAS_EDI.

Inevitably the process of submitting orders through SPICERVision or SPICERLinkWeb can throw up problems. For example, all orders for direct delivery must have valid delivery address postcode included otherwise the order is refused by the Spicer's ordering system.

RAS_EDI handles this type of issue by splitting the upload process into two parts. The first part is concerned with getting the orders into SPICERVision or SPICERLinkWeb. Once that phase is complete, RAS_EDI pauses and waits for the dealer to process the orders through SPICERVision or SPICERLinkWeb. If there are any orders with problems, the problem order numbers can be flagged in the second part of the RAS_EDI upload process so as to prevent the relevant order being marked as 'Ordered'. This then permits the problem orders to be corrected and immediately re-processed.

Back to Back Orders

The screenshot shows a software window titled "SAGE Back to Back Sales orders to Purchase orders". The window has a menu bar with "File" and "Help". The main interface is divided into several sections:

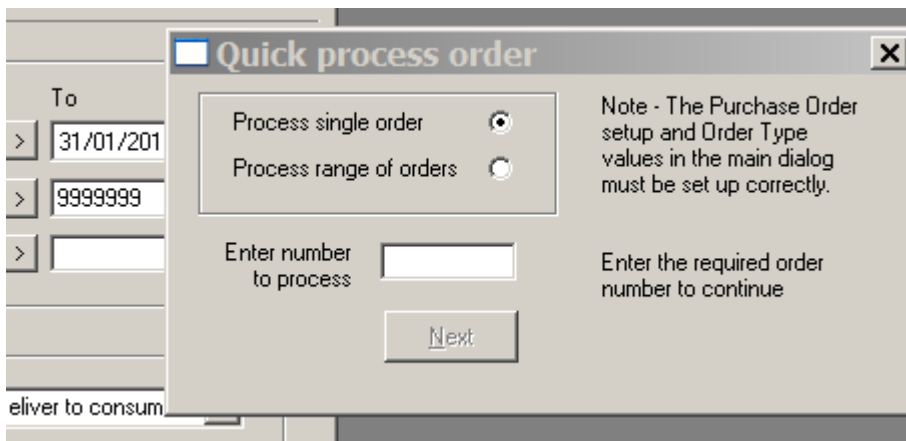
- Process orders for:** A group of radio buttons with "Today" selected. Other options are "Yesterday", "This week", and "Today +/- 7 days".
- Primary run filters:** A table with columns "From" and "To".

	From	To	
Date	31/01/2011	31/01/2011	!
Number	2010	9999999	!
Acc ref			!
- Purchase order setup:**
 - Supplier ref: SPICER
 - Order Type: T Pick + Wrap - Deliver to consumer
 - Transfer only items where the stock supplier matches the supplier ref:

At the bottom, there are several buttons: "Quick process", "Repeat last run", "Next", "Back", "B2B order files folder", "Override strings", and "Settings".

The Back to Back orders module enables the quick creation of SAGE purchase orders from one or more orders held in either the SAGE invoice or sales order files.

As well as picking a range of orders, there is also a quick process procedure which permits a single invoice or sales order to be easily selected and processed:



The b2b order process operates in two stages. The first stage applies the user filters (as in the range screen) and checks that any invoices or sales orders thereby identified have not already been processed.

The second stage then creates a purchase order for every invoice or sales order passing the filter check. Various items of data held in the source document can be transferred into the new purchase order, including delivery address and customer contact and order reference. Items in the source document can be optionally filtered by supplier PL reference. RAS_ED1 override processing strings can also be transferred, thereby making the task of outwards processing the purchase order much easier.

As RAS_ED1 completes a successful b2b order run, the source documents that have been processed are flagged as "ORDERED via PUO on dd/mm/yy". This flag then prevents those documents from being re-ordered. Noting that the dealer may optionally flag invoices or sales orders as "NOT TO BE ORDERED" - obviously this flag then excludes the relevant document from being processed by the b2b module.

Inevitably the process of submitting orders through SPICERVision or SPICERLinkWeb can throw up problems. For example, all orders for direct delivery must have valid delivery address postcode included otherwise the order is refused by the Spicer's ordering system.

Frequently asked questions

The first question to be answered in this section is "*How does RAS_ED1 get the data in and out of SAGE - does the dealer have to rekey any data, or does the SAGE file import routine have to be run?*"

The answer to all of the above questions is that RAS_ED1 incorporates special routines which read and write directly to and from the SAGE files. These routines are SAGE user and network aware – when RAS_ED1 is accessing the SAGE files, it takes a designated SAGE user and carries out the operations as if that user were doing them. When running SAGE on a network, the techniques used by the RAS_ED1 import module reduces or in some cases eliminates record and file locking interference with other users concurrently using SAGE.

Another frequently asked question is "*How difficult is RAS_ED1 to use?*"

The answer to this question is – once RAS_ED1 is setup, day to day use is extremely simple – just select the file(s) that you want to process and click the Process button. That is all there is to do in normal operation. The hard work in using RAS_ED1 is all done by Richard Rowan at time of installation – however, if the user feels competent to tweak RAS_ED1's operation, then he/she can access the very comprehensive setup routines.

RAS_ED1 compatibility with SAGE and Windows

RAS_ED1 is available for all versions of SAGE from version 8 onwards - noting that SAGE versions from 13 onwards are known by the year – so, version 13 is 2007, version 14 is 2008, version 15 is 2009 and version 16 is 2010. However, it should be noted that versions of SAGE earlier than version 11 may not

support all the operations that RAS_ED1 can carry out.

RAS_ED1 can either be installed on a single computer or can be installed to run over a network. When installed in network mode, one copy is held on the server in such a way that all attached workstations are automatically kept up-to-date with the central version

RAS_ED1 will run on Windows 2000, XP, Vista and Windows 7 (both 32bit and 64bit versions). It has also been installed on Windows 2003 and 2008 servers. Computer processor, RAM and hard disk requirements are very modest – if SAGE will run ok, then RAS_ED1 will have absolutely no problems. However, it is worth noting that the memory requirements for SAGE from version 2008 onwards are much higher than for earlier versions of SAGE.

Installing RAS_ED1

The purchase price of RAS_ED1 includes installation. Installation is carried out entirely over the web.

RAS_ED1 is installed from several setup files. These files can only be obtained via download from a private area on Richard Rowan's website. Once a new user purchases RAS_ED1, an account is set up on the private area – this account provides access to various setup files and other information and does not expire.

The early 2011 RAS_ED1 update also incorporates an Additional program installation facility. This makes it easier for the user to install elements of RAS_ED1 that are not included in the main installation setup file, eg the Back to Back Orders module.

RAS_ED1 maintenance

The purchase price of RAS_ED1 one year's full on-line help. Support is provided entirely over the web.

Subsequent year's support and download entitlement is available. If you do not take out RAS_ED1 maintenance in any year, you will still be able to access the private area but you will not be able to download any executable file.

If you decide not to take out annual maintenance, then any support required will be subject to a consultancy fee which will depend on how much time is spent solving the problem.

Please note that if you change your SAGE version, you may require updated routines for RAS_ED1 – these are only available if you have maintenance at the time you carry out the upgrade.

For current information on RAS_ED1, please keep an eye on:

www.rowanassociates.co.uk/ras_edi.htm

Footnotes

Spicers' SpicEDI.

SpicEDI was the forerunner of RAS_ED1 - in fact, the version of RAS_ED1 prior to 2010 incorporated all of the SpicEDI modules and on a like for like basis operated in a very similar way. It is worth noting that SpicEDI is not fully compatible with versions of SAGE from 12 onwards.

Windows 7 64bit versions.

It is very likely that RAS_ED1 versions earlier than the 2010 version and SpicEDI will not run properly on 64bit versions of Windows 7.