



Elliott Strong In Distribution & Manufacturing

By Robert L. Wolff, Jr.

Targeting companies with \$5 to \$100 million in revenues, Elliott 7.2 from NETcellent Systems Inc. (888-595-3818; www.elliott.com) fits many industries. Its core strengths are distribution and light manufacturing. Built from licensed Macola Software, NETcellent expanded its capabilities significantly, building a hybrid GUI/text solution that is keyboard-fast and feature-rich. Elliott utilizes the Pervasive database.

The General Ledger (GL) offers 15-character accounts that allow up to eight characters each for the main account and two subaccounts (segments). Statistical accounts are not supported. Up to 99 budget revisions can be tracked. Budgets can be imported from a spreadsheet. Other budget options include progressive growth, same amount for all periods, and other common timesavers. Multi-entity consolidation supports percent merger and mapping non-identical charts. Bank Book offers an exceptional report called Cash Projection. In addition to customer invoices, it takes into account unpaid vendor invoices and purchase orders to generate true

cash expectations/requirements.

Accounts Receivable (AR) offers typical features, plus individual/shared invoice formats and recurring invoices (monthly, every N days). AR also tracks customer and sales rep statistics, including period and prior year sales, cost of goods sold, returns, average days to pay, and commissions. Accounts Payable (AP) mirrors AR. In addition, it tracks invoices by job and profit center. Vendors can be filtered several ways when selecting invoices to pay. You can defer an invoice if desired. AP supports MICR and electronic funds transfer through partner applications.

Inventory stands out because of its extensive capabilities, far more than can be covered here. In addition to typical capabilities, Elliott supports matrices for categories and subcategories to track such things as size and color, bar codes (on reports, labels), and data import from hand-held devices (sales orders, shipping confirmations, physical counts and more). Multiple pricing options are available, including retail price and cost-based prices, date-released future prices and promotion pricing. Availability quantities include on-hand, on-order, allocated to

customers (or work orders, and more). Forecasting methods allow you to compute future inventory balances or to employ exponential smoothing to calculate reorder levels based on sales usage statistics, safety stock, lead time, etc.

Customer Order Processing (COP) is robust. In addition to typical capabilities, it reserves inventory without creating an order and e-mails acknowledgments to customers. You can also e-mail shipping notifications, but the process is easier with the Starship Manifest module because it automatically passes the tracking number to Elliott (which includes it and a carrier link in the e-mail). Exceptional features include automatic (or on-demand) viewing of accessory items linked to one just ordered (e.g., batteries and bags for a camcorder), and the ability to view future inventory by date when making a promise to a customer. COP supports 17 commission codes and 10 levels of break points, effective dates for commissions, rate per line item and more. Finally, you can view virtually any customer, inventory, sales history or other information needed while entering an order.

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COP Supports 17 Commission Codes

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Purchase Orders supports regular, blanket and drop-ship purchase orders. Drop-ship sales orders automatically generate the purchase order in a two-step requisition/purchase order process. Receipts update inventory in real-time or in batches.

Reporting options include Crystal Reports and a WYSIWYG laser form designer. Output options include e-mail, "defer" and "spool to disk." E-mailed reports are text file attachments. Defer allows you to stack reports to print; save reports with filters for reuse later; and schedule the date, time and frequency for printing. Spool to disk is a special paperless office implementation that automatically names files (not in *.PDF format).

Web-based tools include eStore and

eOrder, online solutions for customer and business partners to place orders and check their status. ActiveX components are available for custom web applications.

Running throughout Elliott are features collectively called Relationship Management. These include eContact Manager, Notes, Tickler (to-do), Link (link anything to a record and assign a hot key), Attribute (user-defined fields) and Event Handling. The last capability supports business alerts for internal *and* external parties. For example, you can notify customers via e-mail when an out-of-stock item is now available; inform buyers when items fall below minimum levels; and display a reminder of a free gift for the first 100 customers. Notification options include e-mail, displayed message and

adding a tickler to a person's to-do list.

Menu navigation utilizes drop-down menus. Data screens are GUI but employ a text metaphor for maximum keyboard speed. The numeric keypad, Escape key, function keys, Enter/Tab/Arrow keys are all available. Clicking the right mouse button brings up a context-sensitive menu for fields.

Help is good but available only for conventional windows. For add-in functionality, you must use *.PDF manuals (installed with your software). Help layout needs some work; the monospaced Courier font and little formatting makes scanning hard. Printed and *.PDF manuals are available. While offering fair content, their screens and sample reports are too small. Overall, Elliott is a dark horse contender with surprising robustness. ■ ★★★★★

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Ranking	Description
★★★★★★	<i>The program has outstanding functionality. Innovation is evident. Product may set standards within its category. Legacy support, where applicable, is available, but not at cost to current functionality. Interface takes good advantage of environment and is intuitive. Product has an appropriate level of user customizations while providing a consistent and well-ordered design that clearly contributes to a good learning curve. Development tools are widely supported. Product is in the early middle to middle of the product life cycle, and the vendor's track record with this product demonstrates continued support and ongoing revisions as necessary.</i>
★★★★★	<i>The program is well suited for task(s) at hand and has some flexibility and features that extend its functionality. Some innovation is evident. Legacy support, where applicable, may be included, but not at cost to functionality. Interface utilizes current environments. May take advantage of some more recent features. Product uses state-of-the-industry technologies as well as currently available and supported development tools. Product may be at the beginning to middle of the product life cycle.</i>
★★★★	<i>The program performs at a base functional level. Will do all of the basic functions necessary for tasks at hand, but no more. Results from product may require additional processing for any specialized, yet expected, tasks. Probably only has minor new innovations. While most basic functions are available, there may not be a great depth of features. Very little leveraging of newer technology benefits. The product is somewhat out of date but not at the cost of functionality.</i>
★★★	<i>The program has marginal functionality. This product does what it is supposed to do, but why would you use it? It is based on interface designs 2 or 3 generations old, and it may be developed using tools that are no longer supported. It is in a very mature part of its product life cycle and is part of a dying breed because of Darwinian principals, not work ethic. It has a large enough customer base to maintain, but not one that can provide enough cash flow to innovate or upgrade to current technologies.</i>
★	<i>There is no functionality, and the user interface really doesn't work. It uses technologies that are 2 to 3 generations old. The product is dead; the vendor just hasn't realized it yet. The program, according to its vendor, will maintain its current design at all costs because "that is what the users want; they will scream if we change." It is at a version dead end. The software vendor may be also.</i>



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