



# Marketing Bulletin

AMB2002-10

October 28, 2002

## **AlphaODBC™ Initial Release Available**

***Evaluate the Initial Release for FREE!!***

***Connectivity for AMOS Databases***

Dear Alpha Micro Dealer:

Alpha Micro Products proudly announces the initial release of AlphaODBC, another big step in enhancing AMOS® and Windows® integration. **This important tool for the AMOS community is the first in a series of releases that significantly benefit AMOS users by allowing data to be exported and imported into well-known, powerful products such as Microsoft Excel® and Crystal Reports®.**

This initial release of AlphaODBC allows ODBC-capable applications on other Windows systems to access AMOS data. The following sections summarize the “real world” benefits of AlphaODBC, its structure, and explain how AlphaODBC works and how you can begin using it immediately. Details of our limited time, free offer to use the product with your software is also explained.

### **What is ODBC?**

Open Data Base Connectivity (“ODBC”) generalizes database access. Software that “speaks” ODBC can read and write records or “rows” on any database system that has an ODBC driver. ODBC began as a Microsoft project and soon spread to databases not only on Windows, but also on many non-Windows platforms. In much the same way that TCP/IP has become the operating system-independent standard protocol for networking, ODBC has become the standard of the database access world.

### **Examples of ODBC Benefits**

Crystal Reports is a popular report-generating utility that uses ODBC to read records from underlying databases. Crystal Reports is database independent. It extracts information just as easily from Microsoft Access® as Oracle®, and now AMOS. As long as the database has an ODBC driver, Crystal Reports will be able to compose a report using information from that database. With AlphaODBC, your clients now use Crystal Reports or other similar ODBC-capable report generators to create their own customized reports from AMOS files.

Another example is Visual Basic®. VB programs can be written that read and write records from ODBC databases. Once again, the underlying database could be FileMaker Pro®, Sybase®, Informix®, or any one of hundreds of others with ODBC drivers. AlphaODBC will support the ADO method of accessing ODBC databases from within VB. Using Visual Basic, you write GUI programs that access your AMOS application files. Another powerful option is to create applications that mix data from AMOS and other data sources.

A third example is getting data into Microsoft Excel. Many AMOS users manually type data into Excel that originates in AMOS databases, such as sales, inventory, or general ledger figures. With ODBC, labor intensive keystroke entry processes are **eliminated!** Input errors (and finding them) become a distant memory from the past.

Some customers currently deal with relatively cumbersome automated transfers into Excel, such as importing comma delimited files. Still others use AlphaCONNECT or Monarch® parsing of report files. AlphaODBC greatly simplifies this procedure: Excel simply opens up an ODBC data source for input, and automatically brings in current data via just a few mouse clicks. AlphaODBC delivers a much simpler, faster, and more reliable process. *This feature alone significantly benefits almost every AMOS user, and is a compelling reason to install AlphaODBC.*

## Applying ODBC Technology to AMOS

There are a diverse variety of databases and filing systems in use in the AMOS world - everything from individual sequential files, to random files, ISAM, ISAM Plus, Metropolis™, ANDI™, and countless proprietary methodologies. We recognize that for ODBC to be useful to the AMOS community, it must be universally compatible. It must work with any and every file access method out there. As a result, we implemented an architecture that is flexible enough to provide ODBC compliance to most any filing method imaginable.

## How does ODBC work?

ODBC is a driver system that surrounds Structured Query Language (“SQL”). When a Windows program wants to talk to an ODBC database, it passes a request to an ODBC driver in Windows, which creates and passes SQL calls through the network to the database (see diagram below). SQL itself is a complex database language, with hundreds of verbs. Most databases only support a small fraction of the possible SQL commands, and most calling applications only expect four or five basic verbs to work. ODBC drivers are designed to tell the calling application which commands are supported so they only ask the driver to perform operations that it is capable of doing.

## AlphaODBC 1.0 Details

This initial AlphaODBC implementation allows ODBC-capable applications on Windows systems to access AMOS data. They can add, change, delete, and query AMOS records, depending on the abilities of the “AlphaODBC Processor” programs that you create. Additional details can be found in the AlphaODBC Technical documentation, available at our special AlphaODBC web page, <http://www.alphamicroproducts.com/ODBC>.

To use AlphaODBC, it first must be installed on both operating systems, AMOS and Windows.

## **AMOS Side Software**

On the AMOS side, an “AlphaODBC Processor” program is required for each database you will be accessing. AlphaODBC 1.0 includes fundamental, simple to use ISAM Plus and Metropolis processors, including some sample data bases. Also included is a generic AlphaBASIC Plus API, with source code, for creating customized AlphaODBC Processors.

Follow our model, and you can write your own AlphaODBC Processors for ISAM, random files, or whatever database system you use. We are even including a sample, simple Old ISAM inquiry only processor. Because this may be a lot to learn at one time, we have included an AMOS side only SQL processor (part of Good News SQL). This does not require a PC and lets you become familiar with SQL in the familiar AMOS environment.

AlphaODBC uses TAME-style software on the AMOS side to interface with the PC side. The ODBC daemon answers the initial TCP request, determines which AlphaODBC processor to use, and spawns a task to run that processor.

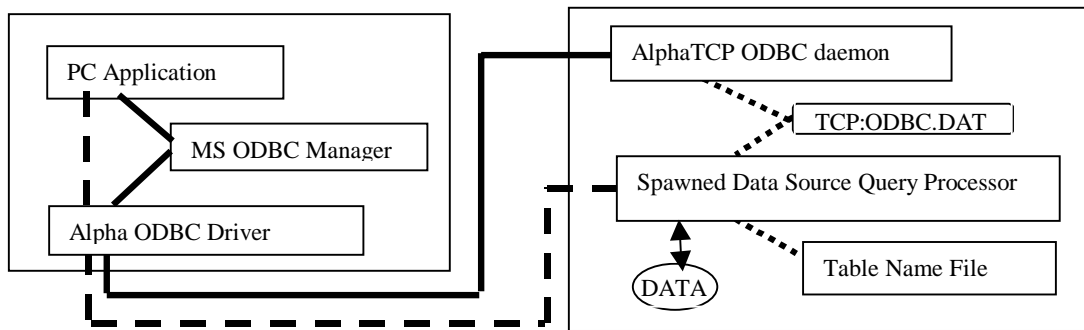
It is important to note that AlphaODBC 1.0 is a “Forward ODBC” implementation, meaning that the Windows side must initiate the connection to the AMOS database. Allowing AMOS to initiate a connection to a remote ODBC-compliant database is called “Reverse ODBC” and is not presently planned. If you have an application for Reverse ODBC, let us know. We need to know there is more interest in such a product before we commence development.

## **Windows Side Software**

On the Windows side, where an application will be reading and writing AMOS records, the AlphaODBC driver is installed. This driver supports all AMOS databases. The data may be handled by generic products, such as MS Access, Crystal Reports, or MS Excel, or by customized software using MS Visual Basic, MS Visual C++®, etc.

To become familiar with ODBC and SQL on the PC side, you may wish to download the free WinSQL Lite from IndusSoft Industries at <http://www.indus-soft.com/winsql/>. Like Good News SQL on the AMOS side, WinSQL Lite reduces what you need to know about the PC, so it is both a good learning tool and handy for troubleshooting.

## Alpha ODBC Process Flow



An ODBC session begins with the PC application talking to the MS ODBC Manager (solid heavy line) about accessing a specific data source. The ODBC Manager refers to the AlphaODBC Driver. The AlphaODBC Driver contacts the AlphaTCP ODBC daemon. After verifying it knows about the specific data source (finely dotted line), the AlphaODBC daemon spawns an appropriate processor instance to service the request (finely dotted line). This specific processor instance then communicates directly with the PC (heavy dashed line) and the DATA (double arrow line) using the Table Name File information.

## Free Introductory Evaluation Offer To Get You Started

AlphaODBC is PIC-coded on a per system basis. Pricing is shown in the *Reseller Supplement* attached to this bulletin. Since this is a strategic product in our evolving *AMOS Integration with Windows* strategy, we encourage all Alpha Micro dealers and developers to become familiar with AlphaODBC, utilize this tool in their own system environments, and provide feedback to us as we continue to implement additional features and functionality in AlphaODBC.

To assist you in learning about and deploying AlphaODBC, we are offering the product free of charge for your evaluation until January 31, 2003. After that date, you must purchase the product to continue to have full functionality. You will also be entitled to purchase a copy of AlphaODBC for your own in-house use (development / support) for 50% of the standard dealer price, as shown in the *Reseller Supplement*.

To obtain the software and documentation, we have configured a specific web page, <http://www.alphamicroproducts.com/ODBC>. You can download the latest AlphaODBC software and documentation (in HTML format) from this site to begin to get familiar with AlphaODBC. We encourage you to read the documentation soon in order to understand more fully the features and capabilities of AlphaODBC 1.0. If you require the software and/or documentation on tape or CD, contact our Technical Support department at (800) 487-7877.

We anticipate that AlphaODBC will unfold with new capabilities rapidly as you think up new applications for it. We are actively seeking your thoughts as to how AlphaODBC can grow to be of maximum utility to you. We are also happy to assist you in writing your own AlphaODBC Processors on a time-and-materials basis. The more experience we have, the better the next version!

## **A Historic Product.**

As you can see, ODBC is an important product that offers a wealth of important, far-reaching advantages for your customers. It is inexpensive and benefits a sizable portion of the AMOS community. This product is a powerful tool for adding value to virtually all your customers by enhancing the integration of your software applications with popular Microsoft compatible desktop products.

## **Call us Today!**

Alpha Micro Products has made every effort to make your evaluation of AlphaODBC as easy as possible. We are also available to answer any questions you may have.

Now it's up to YOU!

AlphaODBC will evolve based on feedback you give us -- so the sooner you get involved in the review of AlphaODBC, the quicker you'll see additional ODBC features based on your suggestions.. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rod Everett".

Rod Everett  
Director of Marketing and Sales