

ActiveTick.com

ACTIVETICK

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Product: Trading platform

Requirements: Broadband (cable, DSL, satellite). **System:** 1Ghz processing power, 1GB or more of RAM, 100MB of free hard drive space. **Operating system:** Vista (recommended); Windows XP (SP2 or higher). **Monitor resolution:** 1024x768 pixels or higher (1280x1024 recommended)

Price: \$19.95 a month

by Donald Pendergast

ActiveTick is one of the newer up-and-coming challengers to the market data/charting/automated trading niche. The product appears to be well thought out and offers many useful features that will appeal to a variety of budget-conscious stock and forex traders (intraday, swing, and position) — things like advanced charting with real-time data direct from the exchanges; integrated trading via TD Ameritrade, FXCM, and Gain Capital Forex; programmable indicators; trading strategies and backtesting; and more. Here's an overview of the main features.

FEATURES

ActiveTick (AT) makes much of the fact that the data they deliver is ultra-low latency, delivered directly from the exchanges. In running the software side by side with TradeStation 9.0, it appears that this is not an exaggeration. The basic demo version of the software provided US stock data without issue or delay. Quote screens can be easily modified with the column headers that are most useful to a given trader and the color/fonts of the screens can also be changed

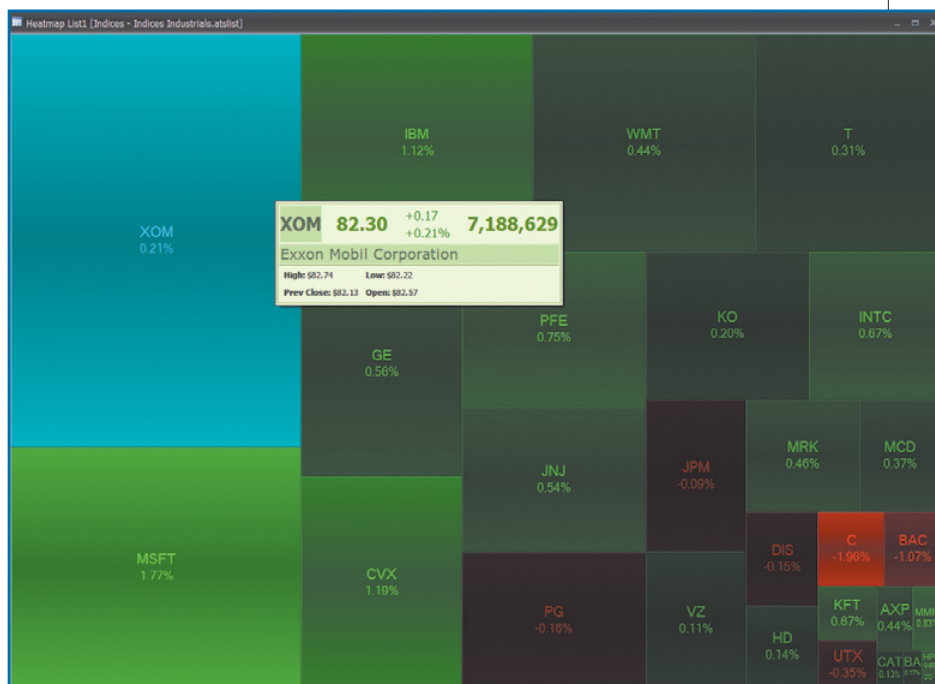


FIGURE 1: HEATMAP. ActiveTick's heatmap can help identify sector rotation. Here is a glimpse of the Dow 30 components during midday trading on May 14, 2012.

around to suit a user's preference, too. There is no limit to the number of streaming quotes that can be added to a quotes list; more than 250 preinstalled symbol lists arrive with the platform, making it easier to organize trading activities by index, sector, and industry groups — a nice feature for traders who watch for market rotation action.

Individual quotes can be called up for any given ticker, providing a snapshot look at key price data fields. There is also a time and sales view. AT also offers a Microsoft Excel add-in to enable users to handle serious number-crunching tasks directly from the AT feed. You can also download tick data and bar data that can be requested via an easy GUI and analyzed for patterns. An interesting feature is the "quick quote designer," which enables a user to custom design a specific quote layout for a given ticker symbol, with dozens of different market data inputs from which to choose.

AT also features an easy-to-use heatmap feature (Figure 1), similar to ones you may have used at Fidelity and other major brokerage firms. This also offers a way to analyze the market's stock components from a market cap or equal weight vantage and provides predefined sector and industry group components. Want to see how the individual component stocks of the gold industry group are faring? Just a few right-clicks on the heatmap screen will bring up the daily map of all the significant gold players, ranging from Barrick Gold Corp. (ABX) to Exeter Resource Corp. (XRA). It's a cool tool, indeed.

Another useful feature for intraday momentum traders is the "top market movers" window (Figure 2) that will display top percentage gainers/losers, top net gainers/losers, and top volume issues. Traders can select which indexes on which to focus their analysis,

including the American Stock Exchange (AMEX), NYSE/Euronext, NASDAQ, and OTC Bulletin Board in the US, and the Canadian TSX Toronto and TSX Venture exchanges (Figure 3).

CHARTING

ActiveTick’s charting capabilities are quite good. Compared to TradeStation 9.0 and MetaStock 11, AT has nothing to apologize for, and even newer traders and aspiring market technicians should

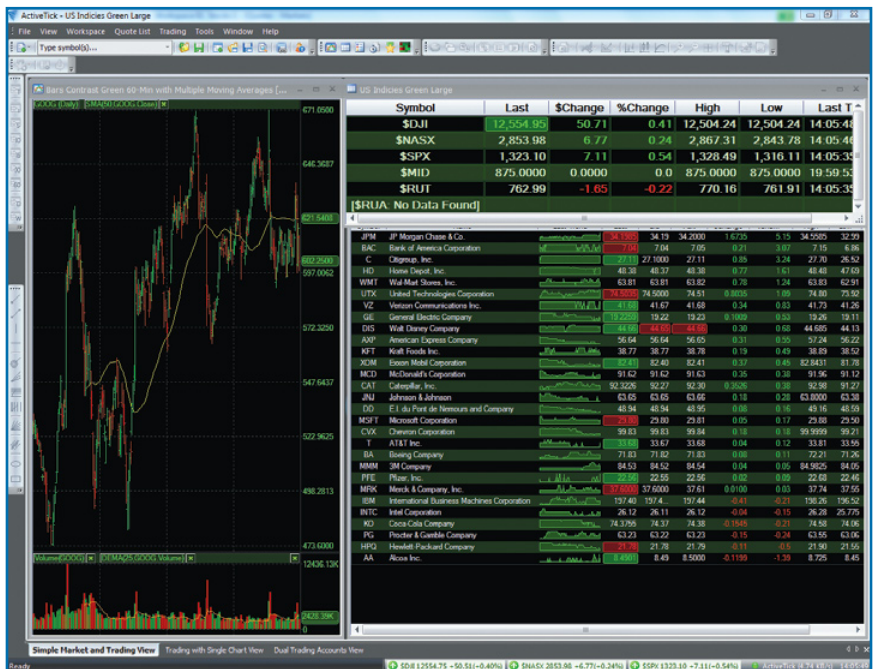
FIGURE 2: TOP MOVERS. Here’s an intraday look at the top percentage gainers in the NASDAQ on May 14, 2012.

Symbol	Name	Last	\$Change	%Change	Volume	Last Time
ISRL	Isramco, Inc.	88.756	4.486	5.3234	350	10:44:43 05/14/2012
BMC	BMC Software, Inc.	44.03	3.63	8.9851	3,150,833	11:35:45 05/14/2012
ULTI	The Ultimate Software Group, Inc.	78.8001	3.3101	4.3848	216,283	11:35:43 05/14/2012
MDVN	Medivation, Inc.	85.34	2.37	2.8565	631,921	11:35:42 05/14/2012
VRTX	Vertex Pharmaceuticals Incorporated	64.3	2.27	3.6595	3,646,198	11:35:46 05/14/2012
IMOS	ChipMOS TECHNOLOGIES (Bermuda) LTD.	14.53	2.121	17.0924	437,526	11:35:43 05/14/2012
VTUS	Ventrus Biosciences, Inc.	13.077	2.117	19.3157	909,711	11:35:38 05/14/2012
BIDU	Baidu, Inc.	124.24	2.01	1.6444	1,915,423	11:35:48 05/14/2012
GEVA		38.59	1.59	4.2973	26,501	11:31:54 05/14/2012
KIOR	KiOR, Inc.	10.39	1.47	16.4798	114,067	11:34:21 05/14/2012
GOLF	Golfsmith International Holdings, Inc.	6.045	1.335	28.3439	429,814	11:35:17 05/14/2012
PLCE	The Children’s Place Retail Stores, Inc.	45.35	1.29	2.9278	242,664	11:35:46 05/14/2012
SSYS	Stratays, Inc.	50.7	1.23	2.4864	98,882	11:35:39 05/14/2012
CSBC	Citizens South Banking Corporation	6.2	1.2	24.0	210,639	11:34:50 05/14/2012
SYNC		10.4	1.16	12.5541	901,868	11:35:42 05/14/2012

have little trouble in setting up charting workspaces to give them the technical analysis tools for their market studies and trading regimen (Figure 4). Up to three years of data are available for intraday time frame charts (one to 60 minutes), while daily chart views can access up to two decades’ worth. Weekly views can access up to 50 years of data — a feature not available in some trading platforms, even at extra cost.

If you’ve ever wanted a 50-year view of IBM’s price data since it went public

FIGURE 3: FOCUSING ON AN INDEX. Here you have a view of the intraday action in the Dow 30 components plus a view of a daily chart of GOOG along with a snapshot of the action in the major indexes.



in 1962, here’s your chance. As far as technical indicators and drawing tools go, AT has more than enough (in excess of 50 indicators and 15 drawing tools in all) to help traders and investors home in on the technical dynamics that drive their

FIGURE 4: CHARTING TOOLS. AT’s charting offers many technical indicators and drawing tools. Here, a 30-minute chart of GOOG features a Fibonacci retracement grid and a Chaikin accumulation/distribution line.



ActiveTick offers many useful features that will appeal to stock and forex traders.

PRODUCT REVIEW

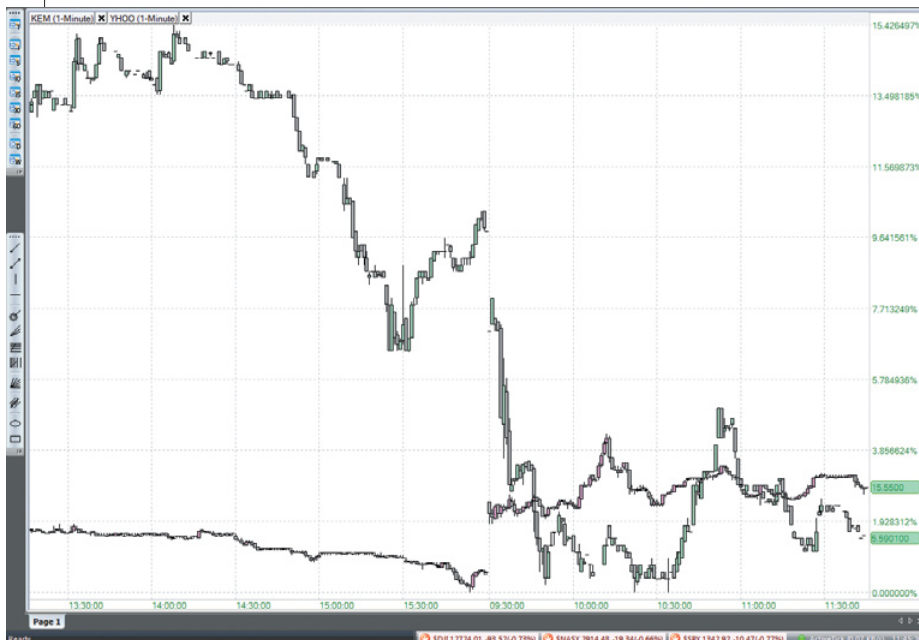


FIGURE 5: STACKING CHART WINDOWS. AT users can choose to plot two stocks on the same chart to compare relative performance; KEM and YHOO battle for supremacy on May 14, 2012.

unique trading style. One of the indicators I use is the Aroon, and I was pleased to find that it comes standard in AT.

There are numerous Fibonacci grids (time zones, retracement, arcs, and fans) as well as more typical drawing tools such as trendlines, linear regression, and so on. Do-it-yourselfers can create their own custom indicators using a JavaScript function in AT, and users can also add an indicator on top of another; if you want to, say, calculate the three-period moving average of a 50-period moving average series, you can do it.

All of the indicators are fully customizable, similar to other popular charting programs. Chart windows can be stacked vertically, horizontally, or cascaded, and multiple ticker symbols can be displayed in one chart window (Figure 5). If you'd like to compare the price performance of Freeport-McMoRan (FCX) with Caterpillar Inc. (CAT) or SPY with JPMorgan Chase (JPM), it's quick and easy.

TRADING

According to the AT website, integrated trading within the AT platform is enabled by the application programming interface (API) connectivity provided by TD Ameritrade, FXCM, and Gain Capital Forex. It's a fairly standard op-

eration, with the functions and controls for order entry and trade management in the right place, enabling a trader to take care of business in real time. The quick-cancel and quick-modify features will be appreciated by scalpers and day-traders. Virtually any kind of order can be configured, allowing everyone from tick chart scalpers to long-term weekly trend-followers to get in and out of the market with a minimum of fuss.

Once hooked into the API, traders will have complete access to their trading accounts, including their real-time account balances, available margin, positions, account activity, and open orders.

Traders who like to scale into or out of positions will value the way AT breaks up total positions into their individual lot components. This could be a big help at tax time, especially for traders subject to the wash sale rules. Basically, all of the information needed to manage a trading account is easily available once hooked to the API of the source broker. AT also offers "virtual trading," and it works like the trading simulators at other platforms.

SYSTEM TRADING/ BACKTESTING

Although the demo version of AT didn't allow access to the strategy building or backtesting features of AT, according

to the website, the platform will enable traders and developers to create, test, analyze, and trade the system, all while logged into the AT platform. Newer developers can rely on a strategy builder routine that can help them assemble one quickly, while more skilled programmers can work directly with AT's JavaScript editor and library.

Those traders familiar with TradeStation will appreciate the ability to handle all of their daily trading routine tasks from one platform, and AT users can enjoy nearly the same level of togetherness as they traverse the often unpredictable, trying, and extremely profitable world of automated system trading.

SUPPORT

The help section of the program is intelligently organized, no-nonsense, and generally helpful. There is a live support icon in AT that you can use to get a real live human on the phone, if need be.

BOTTOM LINE

Basically, everything that an equities or currency trader needs to develop a system, trade it, monitor it, and manage it is right here within ActiveTick.com. It may be the single best trading platform value available, especially if you already have (or are planning to open) an account at TD Ameritrade, FXCM, or Gain Capital Forex, and you only need to trade US/Canadian stocks or the forex markets. At only \$19.95 per month, you can't beat this deal with a stick.

Now, if ActiveTick would also consider offering access to equity options and futures/futures options trading and adding a few more broker-partners — well, AT might find themselves with more business than they can handle, especially in these budget-constraining times foisted upon us by the Great Recession.

Donald Pendergast is a trading system developer who offers emini strategies at Striker Securities and stock/emi strategies at the TradeStation Strategy Network. He may be reached at linearjax@gmail.com.

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