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the 2006 version of the company's new Microsoft Office Small Business Accounting program.

Jan. 01, 2006

Monday, Jan. 16, 2006

Microsoft announced today a combination of perks intended to further push sales of the 2006 version of the company's new Microsoft Office Small Business Accounting program. For the next several months, purchasers of the system will receive one full year of unlimited personal support and an instant, in-store rebate of up to \$100 at major retailers. The program traditionally retails between \$179 and \$199 USD.

[[The CPA Technology Advisor compared Intuit's QuickBooks and Microsoft's Small Business Accounting in the article located here.](#)]

Microsoft is also reaching out to professional accountants by offering a Small Business Accounting Starter Kit with tools for assisting clients who are considering making the switch from other systems. Microsoft also offers the Microsoft Professional Accountants Network, a free program for accountants that includes one free license of Small Business Accounting, free CPE training on the system, free training on other Microsoft Office programs, and other benefits. Accountants will also receive a year of free live technical support under the new initiative. MPAN is free for accountants to join, but an optional Action Pack subscription that provides additional benefits.

"The beginning of the year is when many small businesses decide to change their accounting system," Guy Gilbert, Group Product Manager for Microsoft's Office Products, told *The CPA Technology Advisor*.

“Whatever their reason for considering a new accounting system, whether switching

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and process payroll, including timesheet management.

As a part of the Microsoft Office family, the system's interface is very similar to Outlook, and the system can directly integrate with other Office programs, such as Excel, Word and Outlook. A Startup Wizard enables importing data from QuickBooks or Excel.

Microsoft has made previous attempts to move into the small business market, but these programs “underscore Microsoft's commitment to the profession for those who doubted whether they were serious,” said Gregory LaFollette, CPA.CITP, Executive Editor of The CPA Technology Advisor. The rebates, free support and accountants program “are further indications of their commitment.”

“Switching from pen and paper or from another program seems like a very big step to many business owners,” Gilbert said. “We hope by providing full support for one year and offering a sizable rebate, that we have eliminated the barriers that may have held a small business owner back,” Gilbert said.

The technical support is available via a toll-free telephone number, which connects users to a team of support professionals that can assist with all aspects of Small Business Accounting, including installation assistance, product features, technical questions and migration tools.

Microsoft will be promoting the offer through a radio advertising campaign targeting more than 40 markets across the country. While not unique for a software company to use this medium, it is a new approach for Microsoft, says Gilbert.

“We wanted to make sure we reached small business owners and accountants, so we decided to partner our message [primarily] with news and talk radio programs.” The company will also sponsor special information breaks on many of the stations.

More information on Microsoft Office Small Business Accounting is available at the

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